

# **Riverchase UMC Sanctuary & Chamber Choirs**

## **Handbook**

*Sharing the Joy of Christ  
Through Music*

**Riverchase United Methodist Church**

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# **Riverchase UMC Sanctuary Choir**

## **Officers and Board of Directors**

**July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022**

**Minister of Music/Director - Dr. Jeff Reynolds**

### **Officers**

President – Lynn Coffey  
Vice-President/President-Elect – Linda Lunsford  
Secretary – Barbara Bullock  
Treasurer – Roy Tofflemire  
Social Chairman – Clark French  
Librarian - Dianne Roberts

### **Accompanists**

Pianist - Kathy Wallace  
Organist - Walt Rogers

### **Assistants**

Assistant Librarian – Barbara Bullock  
Assistant Librarian – Cathy Henry  
Robe Coordinator – Dianne Roberts  
Facebook Moderator – Beth Chmura

# Sanctuary and Chamber Choirs Handbook

## Philosophy

The Sanctuary and Chamber Choirs provide musical leadership for Sunday morning and other worship services. As leaders in worship, the choir members are not only congregants, but ministers. Regular rehearsals are held to perfect our offerings to God and our congregation and to enhance the worship experience with the finest choral music possible.

## Membership

**Sanctuary Choir** membership is open to all adults in the church who are willing to commit to rehearsal and worship schedules. Ideally, applicants will possess some music-reading skills and have some background in choral singing.

**Chamber Choir** requires an audition. Membership is limited to keep a musically balanced ensemble.

Persons interested in either choir or who have questions about the requirements are encouraged to contact the choir director.

No specific attendance is required to maintain choir membership. However, singing in either choir is regarded as a ministry and members are expected to attend whenever possible. It is understood that work and/or family obligations may necessitate absences on occasion. Members who miss a rehearsal are encouraged to sing on Sunday, as anthems are rehearsed in advance on Wednesday and reviewed on Sunday morning prior to services. Advanced anthem rehearsals make Wednesday attendance important even when participation on the following Sunday may not be possible.

Sanctuary choir members are expected to sing at both the 9:40 and 11:00 services each Sunday. Choir members are also encouraged to sing once a month at the 8:40 service. For the 8:40 service, the choir is divided into Group A (SC/A) and Group B (SC/B). SC/A sings on the second Sunday of the month and SC/B sings on the fourth Sunday of the month. If you find you will be absent on your assigned Sunday, it is essential that you secure a substitute from the alternate group. A list is posted on the choir bulletin board to assist in finding substitutes. Since SC/A and SC/B are small groups, it is essential that you secure a substitute when absent.

**Recruitment of new members:** The choir is constantly looking for new members who enjoy singing. Choir members are encouraged to help by talking about their fun, rewarding, and uplifting choir experiences. Potential members should be encouraged to come and experience a rehearsal or two. Be a recruiter for our choirs and music ministry.

### Sheet Music

Music is distributed to all members from the Choir Library. A bin (slot), robe, plastic folder and three-ring binder (all bearing the same assigned number) are provided each choir member. Music should be marked **in pencil** at rehearsal as instructed by the choir director. Music may be taken home for study. The choir sings with music except on rare occasions. Once an anthem has been sung, the music **is to be returned to the choir room, removed from the three-ring binder, and placed lengthwise and visible in the bin.** The librarians will collect this music weekly and distribute new music as directed. If music is needed by a member on Wednesday or Sunday, please notify one of the librarians.

### Robes and Stoles

**Choir robes** are assigned and identified with each member's bin/music number. Choir robes are machine washable and choir members are responsible for keeping robes clean. Instructions for robe care are provided below. Please report any robe problem to the Robe Committee Chairman or a Librarian.

**Stoles** are on a hanger separate from the robe in each bin and are changed according to the liturgical season. **Please do not wash the stoles.** The Robe Committee is responsible for dry cleaning them.

**To care for your choir robe, please follow these guidelines:**

- **Do not eat** in choir robes or stoles.
- Robes should be laundered at least twice per year, preferably prior to Hanging of the Greens and prior to Easter Sunday.
- Launder immediately if robe becomes stained.
  
- **Washing instructions:**
  - The robes wash well with regular detergent in warm water.
  - Before washing, please check for any stains, especially around the neck. Stains can be safely pretreated with a little Shout.
  - The robe may be hung to dry or tumbled dry at a low temp. If tumble drying, remove the robe promptly to prevent wrinkles.
  
- **Instructions for removing candle wax from robes:**
  - Once wax has dried on your robe, several steps are required to remove it properly and completely. The first thing to do is to apply an ice cube or ice

pack to the wax. This will make the wax brittle, allowing you to scrape off what you can.

- Use a credit card or a thin butter knife to gently scrape away as much of the wax as you can. Never use a regular dull knife that has serrated edges since this may damage the cloth.
- Once you have carefully removed as much of the wax as you can, it will be necessary to get your iron and a few clean paper bags. Place one paper bag underneath the cloth while you set the iron to heat on a medium to medium high level, depending on the fabric. Place a second paper bag on top of the wax.
- Gently iron the area until the wax has been transferred to the paper bag. Throw the paper bag with the wax residue into the trash once it has cooled. Repeat the process with another paper bag until all of the wax has been removed.

### **Rehearsal Schedule**

Regular rehearsals for Sanctuary Choir are held every Wednesday night from 7:00 pm to 8:15 pm in the choir room. Chamber choir rehearsals are immediately following, from 8:20 pm to 9:00 pm. Anthems to be rehearsed will be written on the dry-erase board in the choir room. Please check the board and have your music in the order listed. When extended and/or extra rehearsals are needed, members will be given ample notice.

Sunday morning warm-ups/rehearsals are as follows:

8:40 service – warm-up begins at 8:15 am

9:40 service – warm-up begins at 9:15 am

11:00 service – please return to the choir room to process to the choir loft

### **Additional Opportunities in Music Ministry**

In addition to singing in the Sanctuary and Chamber Choirs, members are encouraged to participate in the handbell choirs, orchestra, and special productions such as musicals or the Riverchase Revel. There are opportunities to help with children's and youth choirs. The music ministry of Riverchase offers many places for fun and service.

### **Worship Behavior**

#### **During Worship:**

*Please...*

- Be attentive. You are always in view of the congregation and there may be surprises. When singing, **ALWAYS** watch the director. Avoid looking around the congregation!
- **Don't talk! The microphones pick up the slightest sounds.** From the moment you enter the sanctuary, you should establish decorum for worship. Smile, be warm, but don't distract from any part of worship. Watch the one speaking, singing or playing. Help the congregation focus.
- Stand/sit when asked to do so or with the director.
- For anthems and hymns, please stand with folders open and ready to sing. No separate cue is given for "folders up."
- Don't add or remove music during the service. Three-ring binders make noise when opened/closed.
- Avoid perfume or scented aftershave and hairspray on Sunday mornings or during practice. These often don't mix well with allergies, warm temperatures and close quarters.
- Lead in worship: Hymns--sing fully and with confidence. Sing first and last verses in *unison*; middle verses in *parts*. Responsive Readings--read clearly, leading the congregation.
- Allow the Spirit to move you. Pay attention to and follow the words and tempo of hymns, prayers and responsive readings; discover the obvious and less-obvious themes of worship, singing not only right notes and rhythms but also expressing the meaning of the music. As worship leaders, we are ministers and should set examples in worship.

## Choral Singing Basics

### Proper Score Marking:

Ideally, any choir never simply reads a work - we perform it each time we sing. Rehearsals, then, become private performances in which everything is done exactly as it would be in public. The only difference is that in rehearsals we are free to stop and receive instructions on how we agree to perform the piece next time. In the best of circumstances, the instructions on the page, i.e., notes, dynamics, and other markings, are but an inexact blueprint of the composer's wishes. It is our job to interpret these wishes into music. The moment we get past the instructions is the moment true music-making begins.

The special magic of choral singing is the awareness on the part of the singer that he or she is contributing, in part, to a whole or end product that is much greater than the sum of its parts. This contribution takes intensive listening, watching, and singing to the best of our abilities. The more the singer is aware of how their contribution fits into the totality of the music, the better and more sensitive the music will be. As glorious as is the product, the journey can be equally as frustrating. It takes great time, concentration, and attention to the most minute of details to produce a public performance of which we can be proud. It means opening our minds and our ears (as well as our mouths) in the ultimate effort of bringing a great work of art to life.

The following are points that should become second-nature to you. Please read and study them carefully. Have them always in the back of your mind.

### Mark Your Music!

A pencil is a must at all rehearsals. Have it handy and always mark your music at every mistake even when not told to do so. It is much better to mark too much than to come to performance and have questions about, for example, where to breathe. Here are a few markings that you might find helpful:



Watch! A surprise entrance, tempo change is about to occur. Fooled me once shame on you. Fooled me twice ...

V.S.

“*Vuoto subito!*” Turn the page quickly!

TEMPO

Watch the tempo. Tendency here might be to rush or slow down. Be especially sensitive to the conductor here.

*f* *pp*

Follow the dynamics-not your instincts. (Circle the printed dynamic marking)



Forte release or crescendo release. In other words, do not decrescendo before this heightened cut-off.

*p* ||

Piano release.



Place above a pitch, meaning that your tendency is to sing it flat.



Place above a pitch, meaning that your tendency is to sing sharp.

N.B.

No breath. Carry the phrase beyond point where you may want to breathe.





Indicates whole phrase. Carry the thought or phrase to the very end. Sing the whole thought.



Hold this note fully to the downbeat of the next measure. Final consonant reminder.

Shou      T

**Hold - d**

Specific placing of the final consonant. In most cases where breath is indicated but no rest is supplied, the previous note should be reduced by an eighth note and final consonant placed on an eighth rest.



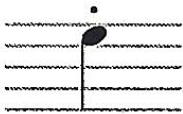
No accent (anacrusis). This is used in places where tendency might be to accent certain notes or syllables incorrectly.



Stress (Thesis). Used to identify proper word or syllables stress, just like the reading of poetry.



Accent. Usually separated, but always heavy.



Staccato. Short and dry.



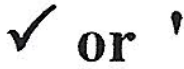
Crescendo or cresco. To gradually get louder. Draw the "hairpin" all the way to the place where the crescendo should culminate.



Decrescendo or decresc. To gradually get softer.



Hold or fermata. Never let the sound die through a fermata unless instructed to do so.



Breath markings.

### **Study!**

Each new rehearsal should begin exactly where or even ahead of where the last one left off. We should never have to go over the same ground twice. Take the time to study your music- even if it is just reviewing your markings before rehearsal. Ideally, you should sing through your part making corrections where necessary.

### **Know Your Music!**

Become as familiar with your music as possible. By the time of performance, you should spend about 95% of your time watching the conductor and about 5% glancing at your music, reminding yourself of that which you already know. Challenge yourself, even in rehearsals, to quickly memorize as much as you can before you look up. You'll be surprised at how much you can get from a glance. Finally, hold your music high. Your head should never move as you look from the conductor to your music.

### **Listen!**

The key to any good musical ensemble is their ability to listen while singing. Be sensitive to others. Never sing so loud that all other parts cannot be heard. Always tune into more than just singing your part. Use your musical ears to their fullest potential in every rehearsal or performance situation.

### **Speak/Sing The Text Clearly!**

Seek to match your speech speed to the choir's. Never "drawl" the vowels or be slow on diphthongs or triphthongs. Place all consonants before the beat with vowels occurring directly on the beat. Never linger on consonants, especially initial M's and N's or final R's. Speak quickly and together.

### **Count!**

For people to sing together there must be exactness. Counting and attention to the beat and its subdivisions (as exemplified by our count singing) is the *sine qua non* to accurate, homogenous choral singing. This is what most often separates the great choirs from the

mediocre ones.

## A Philosophy of Church Music

*Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.*

-Martin Luther

Music is an extensive part of our everyday lives. It wakes us, accompanies us to work, and enhances our favorite shows and movies; we study it, practice it, perform it, and are inspired by it. Church music - hymns, chorales, anthems, oratorios, and sacred instrumental music - is one of the greatest legacies of the Christian faith. Embedded in this music are some of the greatest tenets of our faith and the foundation of our corporate theology. Music, coupled with the great texts of the Bible or poetry, becomes the subtle carrier of deeply-held beliefs that over time shape our lives and our view of the world. Though absolute music in and of itself is powerful, church music, at its best, can change lives.

Music is first and foremost ministerial. When heard with open hearts, it has the power to soothe, empower, excite, and pronounce forgiveness. Church musicians stand in a long lineage of those entrusted with such talents. In the Old Testament, there was a special tribe of Israel - the Levites - whose responsibility it was to supply music in the temple for the purpose of stirring the faithful to worship and to lead in the praise of God through music. These were not necessarily "professionals"; they were people of God with special gifts and talents for making music who desired to do so in the temple.

*(2 Chronicles 5:12) "Also the Levites which were the singers, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth forever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord. "*

Church music is educational. Martin Luther once remarked, "You may teach them whatever theology you wish through your books, let me teach them mine through the songs they learn and sing". Luther knew the power of music on children. It is important that children learn songs that are theologically sound, for they, like us, come to believe what they learn, memorize, and repeat ... especially when allied to music.

People of all ages and talents should have opportunity to participate in the music of the church in some way, whether in an organized graded choir program, an instrumental ensemble, the more serious study of an instrument or voice, or simply

through regular hymn singing. As they are educated, all should be exposed to the best of all possible music - new and old - that they may grow musically and spiritually.

Music of the church should be of the highest quality possible. Not all who participate in the music of the church are professionally trained - nor should they be - but that does not excuse us from offering our very best to God and to His people. The music we sing and play should be good - aptly composed, based on quality poetry or prose, rehearsed, meaningful, worshipful, and appropriate.

From the earliest Christians, we learn that the gathering of the believers for worship was the most important time in their lives. Worship is still the most important time for our church - a time of fellowship, but more - a time of gathering to allow our spirits to be elevated, a time for our hearts and minds to soar. Good church music should help transport us to a larger God. Church music should be ministerial, educational, and of the highest quality possible. Great church music is to what we all aspire.

Good Luck!  
See you at the downbeat.....

Jeff W. Reynolds, DMA