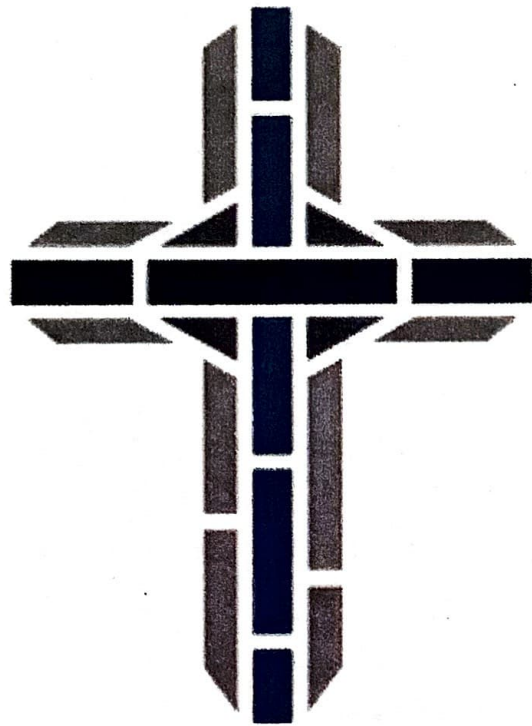


Chancel Choir Handbook 2024-2025



**UNIVERSITY
METHODIST CHURCH**

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Welcome to the Music Ministry Team

You have been called by God to be in this ministry program, and He has placed a desire in our congregation for music that glorifies Him. Please help us achieve the highest level of musicianship possible by adhering to these guidelines. God bless you for your servant heart!

This handbook should answer your questions about the program. If there's additional information you would like to know, feel free to contact your section leader or other officer. We are delighted you are joining us. Thank you for sharing your time and talents with this incredible community.

The Music Ministry of UMC consists of many adult teams—Chancel Choir, Chamber Choir, Silver Bucket Singers, Handbell Choirs, the Fine Arts Center, and the UMC Orchestra. We are here to glorify God and to serve as worship leaders through music. We are in every sense of the word a team, offering musical excellent to God in Worship.

We strive to maintain a high level of commitment and professionalism, balanced with our deep concern and love for all those serving in this ministry.

Music Staff Contacts

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Ensembles:

Adult Handbell/Handchime Choirs
Student Handbell/Handchime Choirs
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Why is there a Chancel Choir At University Methodist Church?

Why do we have a choir?

The Levites were musicians who sang and played instruments in worship. As they sang the words, "He is good! His faithful love endures forever!" a cloud appeared and filled the temple. The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of God. --2 Chronicles 5: 12-14.

God waited to be present in worship until he was welcomed with instruments and song. As we sing in worship, we ask for God's presence to come into our sanctuary.

What is the role of the Chancel Choir?

The Chancel Choir's role is not to impress, but to inspire the congregation to unite into a closer community with God.

The choir is not meant to worship TO or FOR the congregation, but to worship WITH the congregation. You have joined the choir because you have been called by God to serve as a Worship Leader. Because you have been called, you are not making a commitment to the choir; you are making a covenant to answer God's call.

As a called person, you have been set apart and fully empowered by God to accomplish a significant spiritual task. A covenant is created when a person responds to that call. You come to rehearsals and serve in worship because God is expecting YOU!

As a WORSHIP LEADING choir, we are to:

- 1) Sing vertically to the Lord and with the congregation.
- 2) Be a passionate partner in worship.
- 3) Acknowledge those serving with you as part of YOUR family.
- 4) Search for faithful members to join.
- 5) Aspire to be a disciple-maker:

"The crying need in the church today is the need for true discipleship. In Matthew 28, Jesus didn't tell us to go into all the world and make converts. He told us to go make disciples. Discipleship is not a by-product of conversion; conversion is a by-product of discipleship."

UMC MUSIC MINISTRY RESPONSIBILITIES

These responsibilities allow all of those in ministry to serve God to their fullest potential. We ask that you take very seriously these responsibilities to strengthen what we can offer to God through music.

- 1) Be on time for rehearsals. This means being in your seat and ready for warm-up before we begin.

- 2) Give your attention to the director and refrain from visiting during rehearsals—it is very distracting to those around you and is disrespectful to the director.
- 3) Come to rehearsal prepared. Prior to rehearsal starting time, read your Rehearsal Notes; have your music ready and in the order specified in your rehearsal notes; have a sharpened pencil at hand.
- 4) If you miss a rehearsal, get appropriate music markings from a fellow section member before rehearsal begins.
- 5) Mark your music in pencil. Do not depend on your memory for details.
- 6) Be ready for entrances and sing with enthusiasm!
- 7) Hold your music in front of you. Sing over the folder and hold your head upright.
- 8) Many times, a rehearsal CD has been prepared for you and an email sent out with sheet music and audio recordings. Please use this as a tool to help practice your music between rehearsals and strive for constant improvement. The choir website (<https://www.universitymusicsatx.com/>) also has PDFs and recordings of current and upcoming music.
- 9) Make attendance at rehearsals and Worship Services a priority. If you need to miss Worship, please sign-out on the bulletin board outside of the Recital Hall. If you are UNABLE to be at rehearsals, contact your section leader.
- 10) AS A COURTESY TO OTHERS, PLEASE MUTE CELL PHONE & PAGERS DURING REHEARSALS AND WORSHIP SERVICES. AVOID TEXTING IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.
- 11) If you are not able to make Sunday warm-up and cannot enter the sanctuary with your assigned section, please do not attempt to join the choir after we are seated in the chancel area. Instead, be a member of the congregation and enjoy the service.

Welcome to the Chancel Choir at University Methodist Church. We are happy you have joined this exciting ministry! Here is some information to help you get started.

UPON JOINING...

Music, Folder, Box, and Robe Numbers

When you join, you will be assigned a folder number. This number is used in three different places:

1. In the upper right-hand corner of your music. This ensures you will get your personal copy with your markings when we sing it, as long as you are an active choir member.
2. On your music slot/box. You should keep all your music, your folder, and any small single personal items in it (for example, eyeglasses, Kleenex, lipstick, pencil, etc). Keep any large and/or valuable items, keys, or backup supplies and cell phones in your locker (see below).
3. On your robe hanging marker in the robe room. Always place your robe to the RIGHT of the white tag that corresponds to your folder number. This helps ensure your robe will not accidentally be taken by someone else. Inside the robe, there is another number the staff records to know what robe has been assigned to you. This number may not match your folder number. Again, your robe should always be placed to the right of the tag that corresponds to your folder number, not your robe number.

Storing Valuables

Lockers are provided for all music volunteers simply by checking the appropriate box on the Information Sheet or by leaving a note for Kieley Morales (Box 2). **Please do not carry your valuables, especially purses, into worship. Also, do not leave them in your choir music slot or other unsecure areas.** It is distracting to carry these items to/from the chancel choir area. Zippered pouches that fit in your music folder are provided for a few small items you may need to bring with you. Pouches must lay flat; otherwise, folder binding is stressed and torn. If desired, you may bring your Bible.

Questions and Concerns

Always go to your Section Leader first. If they can't help, please feel free to speak with the Choir President or Vice President.

REHEARSALS

Day/Time of Weekly Rehearsals

Chancel Choir rehearses on Wednesday evenings from 6:30pm to 7:45pm in the Recital Hall (Room W208). Please arrive a few minutes early to pick up your music, read your Choir notes, greet your fellow Choir members, and get settled in. Rehearsal is very important and is **mandatory** for all choir members.

Children in Rehearsals

While we love children, they are not allowed at rehearsal. Childcare is provided with a reservation. **Indicate on your Information Form if you will need childcare and contact our Childcare Manager, Elizabeth Giles, at egiles@universitysatx.org.**

Assigned Seating in Rehearsal and Worship

Choir members will be assigned a seat in the Recital Hall. As you face the choir, **Altos** are in the far left section, **Tenors** are in the middle left section, **Basses** are in the middle right section and **Sopranos** are in the far right section. The same basic arrangement is used in the Sanctuary.

Restrictions on Food and Beverages

Food and beverages (other than water) are not permitted in the Rehearsal Hall or Sanctuary. Our goal is to ensure our congregation has the best worship experience possible and is not distracted by our appearance and/or actions. If you need water for your health or to enhance your vocal performance, you may bring your own water bottle. The music ministry will provide water for the good Friday and Christmas Music Sunday services. Water containers should be small (16.9 oz/500ml or less), preferable clear plastic, and should have a lid. **PLEASE TAKE BOTTLES WITH YOU WHEN YOU DEPART THE CHANCEL AREA!**

If water is spilled, please clean up immediately. If you need assistance, please ask your section leader or music staff. Chewing gum is not permitted in rehearsal, nor on the Chancel.

Use of Phone and iPads on the Chancel

The purpose of the UMC Chancel Choir is to use our musical abilities to ensure our congregation has the most meaningful worship experience possible. When we are on the Chancel, all choir members are worship leaders. Therefore, we should act reverently and respectfully toward the congregation and our

fellow choir members at all times. Inappropriate use of phone and iPads can be distracting to others and may, however unintentionally, show a lack of reverence in the worship setting.

Silence or turn off your phone before entering the chancel area and only use it for emergencies. For example, a loved one going to the hospital is probably an emergency. Determining where you are going for lunch after worship is not.

iPads are to be used only for singing. Surfing the internet or reading emails is not appropriate. If you need help downloading music to your iPad, ask for help **before** going on to the Chancel.

Please refrain from "signing in your attendance" for the worship service until you are off the Chancel area.

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

Select the Services You Wish to Sing!

You choose which service or services you would like to sing. Some people sing only one; however, many people sing all 3. We encourage you to support and participate in our wonderful Sunday School programs and other church activities. On your Registration Form, please indicate at which service(s) we may expect you. In the event you cannot make that service and have not previously signed out, please leave a voicemail (210-696-1033) or e-mail (mmckay@universitysatx.org) for Mary and notify your section leader. **It is very important that we know if you will not be here on any given Sunday!!!**

When to Arrive for Warm-ups

Be in your robe (August-May) with your music 30 minutes prior to the service at which you will be singing. The 7:45am warm-up will typically be in the Sanctuary. Warm-ups for the 9:30am service begin promptly at 9:00am and are usually in the Recital Hall. While there is no formal warm-up for the 11:00am service, Mary will be available in the Recital Hall at 10:30 if you have questions or would like to go over your part. For the 11:00am service, the choir will meet in the staging room at 10:45am and enter the sanctuary as a group. singing with the Orchestra, the warm-up is often in the Sanctuary. Please check the dry-erase board opposite the music folders for important notes from your Director for that day. Pick up a service script and a copy of the opening hymn, which can be found on the counter by the folders. Hymnals are kept under the choir chairs in the Sanctuary. Being early or on time is a sign of support to Music Ministry; tardiness is distracting and does not provide support to your fellow choir members.

Entering Worship

If you don't arrive in time to join the choir as we enter the Sanctuary, please plan to sit in the pews and enjoy the service. Occasionally, some choir and staff members have other Sunday morning responsibilities and will join the Choir as discussed with the director.

Returning Music After Worship

After a piece has been sung, please take it out of your folder and place it in one of the collection tubs on the counter by the folders. This is a huge timesaver for the music librarian. In addition, all other notes, bulletins, etc. should be removed on a weekly basis. Music is very expensive; please take good care of it. ****Use pencil for any markings.**** If you know in advance that you will miss a particular Sunday, be sure to leave that music in your box.

Missing Robe

Contact Phylis Monical, your section leader, Kieley Morales, or another staff member who will get you a temporary robe from our *unassigned* robe section. Please immediately return this temporary robe to the proper area. If your robe is missing, leave a note for Phylis Monical (Box 50) and every effort will be made to locate your robe by the next Sunday.

Other Sunday Commitments

Go and enjoy it! Many choir members sing at one or two services and attend Sunday School at another hour.

Missing Music

Some choir members take their music home to rehearse during the week and, occasionally, forget to bring it the following Sunday. Sometimes, a piece may inadvertently not be placed in your slot. If either of these situations occurs, **DO NOT pull music from someone else's slot.** Please see Ed Herbold (our librarian) or Jane Wilson who will get you a "loaner".

Dress Code for Sunday Worship and Other Performances

When wearing robes, remember that your neck, arms, legs and feet are visible, so please have a professional appearance (e.g., dress, dark footwear; no "flashy" jewelry).

During the summer, we do not wear robes but your attire must still be appropriate. Shorts, flip-flops, spaghetti straps, and athletic wear/shoes are not appropriate.

Worship Service Attitude and Etiquette

We are never just about music. Our goal is to bring the word of Christ to others by giving our best musically. You never know who you might touch with your voice, your smile, or your heart while you are sitting in the chancel choir area. Our goal is to bring the musical message each week in a non-distracting, worshipful, and enthusiastic manner. We all need to keep the following things in mind EVERY Sunday:

1. First and foremost, **SMILE AND SHOW YOUR ENTHUSIASM!** Let Jesus shine all over you—show your joy in being a Christian and singing for the Lord.
2. Be aware that someone in the congregation is watching you at all times. It is important to not be distracting and to make sure that you are *attentive* to what is happening in the worship service, not *talking* about it. Additionally, at present we are "live streaming" our 8:15am and 9:30am Traditional Services for those who are unable to be with us in worship...be aware the camera may be watching YOU.
If you must relay a message, do so in writing only and be discreet.
3. The service begins with the first note of the Prelude and ends with the last note of the Postlude. We are to be in an attitude of worship during the playing of these elements of worship and we must model this attitude for our congregation.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

What do I do about vacations?

Enjoy them! There is a sign-out sheet on the bulletin board next to the entrance to the Recital Hall. Please sign out for those Sundays when you know you will not be singing.

Do we ever have extra rehearsals?

About 3-4 times a year, there are services with lots of music, and little, if any, sermon. These services are scheduled far in advance. Because of the amount of music sung on these special Sundays, additional rehearsals may be required either with or without the orchestra. You will be strongly encouraged to sing multiple services on those Sundays. Consult your music calendar, e-mails, and Choir Notes for dates. Typically, these rehearsals are on Monday evenings and/or Saturday mornings. **We strive to provide childcare for all extra rehearsals, but you MUST have a reservation in advance.**

Your “blanket” reservation for Wednesday nights does NOT cover any extra rehearsals. Please contact the Childcare Manager, Elizabeth Giles, at egiles@universitysatx.org SEVEN DAYS before the event to make a reservation.

What do I do if my robe and/or stole get dirty?

Robes are washable in cold water. They may be line-dried or put in the dryer on LOW heat. They may be dry-cleaned, if you wish, but it's not necessary. The red/green stoles are also washable; **the white/purple stoles are handled by Phylis Monical – PLEASE DO NOT clean these on your own!**

May I sing in other adult groups in Music Ministry?

There may be opportunities to sing in other choral groups. However, attendance and performing with the Chancel Choir is your first priority. There will be announcements to try out for auditioned groups and special performances. If you sing with these groups, your first obligation is to be at Chancel Choir rehearsals and Sunday services; the other groups have additional obligations.

Am I too young to sing with the Chancel Choir?

We welcome and encourage young members to join the adult choir! Young adults are not only welcomed but cherished. High school students who participate elsewhere in the Music Ministry are also welcome to sing with the adult chancel choir.

What are Section Leaders?

Section Leaders serve as a conduit to/from Mary, the music staff, and the other choir officers. It is also their job to check attendance, keep up with “MIA” choir members, assist in rehearsals, and perform other special tasks as requested. If you have a question or concern and cannot get to Mary or the staff/officer you need, please feel free to talk to your section leader or leave a message in their box.

What are expected hygiene considerations?

We rehearse and worship in close quarters, so we encourage observance of strict rules of cleanliness and oral hygiene. Frequent hand washing and the use of sanitizers are proven methods of good hygiene and

reduce the spread of infection. In addition, some of our colleagues have compromised health conditions, and we need to do our part to protect their health. If you have a cold or are recovering from any illness that may be contagious, please stay home until you are well. Finally, be sensitive to those with allergies and sensitivities to perfumes, colognes, deodorants, residual smoke, smoker's breath, etc.

MUSICIANSHIP AND ATTITUDE

What should I be listening for when I sing?

Be aware of your voice in relation to others in the choir. We should be able to hear voices around us and aim to blend as part of an ensemble; do not try to be a soloist or carry your section. At all times, we should hear other vocal parts and make a sound with the group. Usually, singing "loud" does not blend and causes the singer to lose intonation (become flat).

How else can I support the Music Ministry?

We strive to positively support and favorably interact with each other. To focus on serving God, we must first open our hearts and minds to receiving the positive voice of God. These means that all negative distractions MUST be avoided.

We abide by "*The Three Simple Rules – A Wesleyan Way of Living*" (Reuben P. Job, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN., 2007).

1. **Do No Harm:** Think before you speak and consider doing no harm in a response, dialogue, or action.
2. **Do Good:** Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you to do good to everyone, even those you may consider "unworthy." Live doing no harm. It is a proactive way to live a good life.
3. **Stay in Love with God:** Faithfully live in the presence and in the harmony of the living God. Slow down, attend worship, take time for prayer, study His word, listen to Him all the time and in every situation. Show God how you love Him as He has shown how He loves you!

CHARACTERISTICS OF FINE SINGERS

- ❖ **POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** Strive to always convey a positive attitude to the music, to your fellow singers, and to the congregation. Act as though the music you're currently singing is your all-time favorite.
- ❖ **FOCUS ON THE BEAUTY OF THE SOUND:** Every note is important. Constantly work to improve the quality of your singing.
- ❖ **ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY:** Learn and remember everything you can about the piece.
- ❖ **ASSERTIVE LEADERSHIP:** We are all leaders, not followers, in the choir.
- ❖ **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:** Your greatest role as a worship leader is to communicate to the congregation the great message and musicianship of the music.