We welcome all to the ministry of music of Nassau Church and in particular, to the choir program year. We are glad your family is a part of this important work of the church and welcome your commitment of time and talent. Please rely on this Handbook for important general details about our music ministry with children and youth, as well as the theological context in which it is placed.

Posted online is the list of dates of worship responsibilities for the various choirs and other special events to note. It is updated as may be necessary, with an email alert.

Faithfully,

Sue Ellen Page, Director,
Music for Children and Youth
CHOIR PARENT GUILD

Coordinators and Choir Parents
Names and contact information are not published on the web version of this handbook. Please contact the office (numbers below) if you need this information.

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USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

General number: 609-924-0103  Monday-Friday  8:30am - 4:30pm

To register a chorister or to report an anticipated absence:
  Lauren Yeh, Administrative Assistant (Mon-Thur 9-3 pm)  x106

If you are running late to pick up a chorister, leave a message at  x110

Sue Ellen Page  x105
Noel Werner  x104
ENSEMBLES

JOYFUL NOISE (pre-K & Kindergarten)       Wednesdays, 4:15-5:00

This group is for our youngest choristers, and is primarily a preparatory group rather than a performing ensemble. While actual Sunday morning responsibilities as a choir are minimal, these children begin to learn about worship. The musical focus is on finding the singing voice, increasing the singing range, and learning to match pitch. Music literacy readiness activities create an enthusiasm for future musical growth. Movement and use of simple percussion instruments round out the rehearsal time.  

Ingrid Ladendorf, teacher

CAROL CHOIR (grades 1 & 2)       Wednesdays, 4:15-5:00

At this age, the children are ready to begin a regular pattern of participating as a choir in worship. In addition, The Carol Choir marks the beginning of the Service Award Program, a means by which the church acknowledges the choristers’ gift of time and talent. A special Chorister Cross is worn on a leather string. Beads may be added indicating years of service and/or other activities choristers may choose to accomplish. Musical skills are expanded upon, with emphasis on transferring rudimentary notation to the written page. Improvisation at the Orff-Schulwerk instruments, movement exploration and the use of hand signals as a means of learning to sight sing are regular activities.  

Sue Ellen Page, conductor

Choir 3-4-5 (grades 3-5)       Wednesdays, 5:15-6:00

More challenging work for growing musicians during the time their voices are at a high level of treble development, but before the voice change begins. In addition, choristers enjoy hymn study, music theory and Orff-Schulwerk training.  

Sue Ellen Page, conductor, Mark Loria, accompanist

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR (grades 6-8)       Sundays, 6:40-7:30

Boys and girls rehearse both together and by gender during the hour, in order to focus on the development of the changing voice and more efficiently learn parts. In addition to vocal training, and anthem preparation, rehearsals include hymn study, tuned percussion instruments, improvisation and drumming.  

Noel Werner, Sue Ellen Page, conductors; Mark Loria, accompanist

CANTOREI (grades 9-12)       Sundays, 5:00 - 6:00

Cantorei is our choir for high school youth. The Latin word Cantorei means “people who provide music for their church.” As with all our choirs, the level of commitment for this ensemble is high, with challenging and diverse repertoire, though there is no audition. Section leaders (juniors and seniors) provide leadership in musical and non-musical ways. In addition to Sunday morning worship, Cantorei prepares music for the Christmas Eve service with choir alumni, and on Good Friday. The choir has responsibility for the annual Youth Sunday each spring.  

Sue Ellen Page, conductor; Mark Loria, accompanist.
THE WHYS AND HOWS

The Music Ministry of Nassau Presbyterian Church is structured to provide both regular and special opportunities for church members, and those in the community without a church home, to express their faith through song. The very best time to begin to make a joyful noise is as a child. Thus, in weekly worship services, children and youth take their turn presenting carefully selected and rehearsed anthems and service music. Each rehearsal has the overall goal of Christian education - music is our tool.

All are welcome to find a place in the music program. You pass the audition when you walk through the door. But once in the door, we encourage choristers to be faithful members of the choir so that what we prepare may truly be our finest effort. Our work is different from school or community music groups. Our "performance" is not for the congregation, rather it is an offering to God. We sing and play and dance on behalf of God's people, and we strive to support the congregation's song.

GOALS - The children and youth are trained in the development of their musical skills in reading music, ear training, vocal development, pitch acuity, etc. But more than these things, they are developing a sense of Whose they are and what they can become within the context of the Christian faith. Through carefully chosen texts, scriptural and poetic, the basic tenets of the Christian faith are taught. (As every commercial jingle writer knows, we remember what we sing!) With each age group comes the attempt to teach responsibility and commitment through the discipline of group participation.

SERVICE AND OUTREACH - The choirs from grade 3 through high school participate in some outreach activity nearly every year to take the great music of the church outside our walls, through performance and/or recordings. Because the music program at Nassau Church provides numerous points of entry for potential new members, it serves as a valuable means of outreach for the entire church.

STAFF AND SUPPORT - Sue Ellen Page (609-924-0103 x105), Noel Werner (609-924-0103 x104), and Mark Loria, Organist and Accompanist. Lauren Yeh (609-924-0103 x106) has the administrative assistant duties for the music ministry.

Due to the wide age groups served and the desire to assist family schedules, the music program on Wednesdays has two simultaneous groups for our youngest choristers. Ingrid Ladendorf teaches the Joyful Noise (the pre-kindergarten) choir while Sue Ellen Page works with the next age group, the Carol Choir. High school assistants and/or music majors from Westminster Choir College of Rider University frequently volunteer with the Wednesday choirs. The Worship and Arts Committee, headed by Marshall McKnight, provides a support system for the entire program. Each year there are many individuals who maintain the work of the music ministry on a weekly basis as choir parents, helpers and accompanists.

PARTICIPATION - Since the purpose of The Choirs for Children and Youth is to provide music for worship services, it is assumed that families of the choristers will be involved in the worship life and programs of this congregation. As they begin to think independently about their faith journey and make decisions about their church affiliation, middle school and high school youth may become involved through friends, whether or not their parents are a part of the congregation,
FUNDING - Music is one of many areas supported by the pledges of church members. Staff positions are professional, a large music library is maintained, instruments, robes, and supplies are paid for by the church budget. Families that do not pledge are encouraged to support their children’s participation, using as a guide the fees charged by comparable weekly class programs (such as those offered at Westminster Conservatory and Princeton Ballet). While participation is not predicated on a dollar amount, it is hoped that families involved will welcome the opportunity to contribute to the annual budget of our congregation.

PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES - A choir is a team effort in every sense of the word, so an individual absence affects the whole group. Likewise, with our very limited rehearsal time, punctual presence at rehearsals and on Choir Sundays is vital. The vocal warm-ups and listening exercises which are done at the beginning are crucial to a successful choral rehearsal.

In the event of absence, please contact us. This may be done by calling the church office (924-0103) or sending an e-mail to Lauren.Yeh@nassauchurch.org. The youth choir, Cantorei, has a sign out book to record anticipated absences, but unexpected absences should be confirmed, especially sudden ones. You may always use email - sep@nassauchurch.org or leave a message on ext. 105.

There are no excused or unexcused absences. We assume that choristers want to be in the program and therefore grant the next year’s Service Award Bead (grades 1 through high school) on the basis of 75% attendance at rehearsals and on choir Sundays. Since leading worship is a primary feature of this musical training and because children and youth generally want to participate with their choir on these days, the calendar is provided in September to advise families of these Sundays in the program year.

ATTIRE FOR WORSHIP SERVICES - Each choir wears a vestment, the youngest children using smocks until grade 1. We are a quite traditional in this regard, suggesting a neat appearance especially below the choir robe hemline: shoes should be polished, pant lengths reasonable and neat. Avoid obvious hair ornaments or large jewelry as they call attention to the individual rather than the choir as a whole. Parents are asked to encourage the proper care of the vestment and to assist where appropriate. Please contact Sue Ellen Page with any questions or concerns.

SUNDAY WORSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES - Dates and Arrival Time: A roster of all choir dates is kept current on the website. In general, choristers need to arrive at 8:40 AM if assigned the first service or at 10:30 AM if assigned the second, unless otherwise noted. While we try to stick to the schedule as published, in the event of a change, the website will be updated and email notice sent as backup.

PROTOCOL FOR WORSHIP RESPONSIBILITY SUNDAYS: Except when participating in the early service when many children/youth leave to attend church school, choristers remain in worship for the entire service. When individual choristers leave after singing the anthem, it can give the impression that what we do is merely for show, instead of being an integral part of the experience of worship. Equally important, being present for the entire service sets in context for the singers the choir’s contribution, and worship can therefore be more meaningful to them. That said, we understand that sometimes a family must ask that a chorister leave the service early. Simply inform the director of this and the chorister will exit as the choir members return to their pews after singing.
SAFETY

Drop off/pick up: There is no parking at the church except for church staff and, as may be possible for choir parents working in the program. Even if marked parking spaces are empty, the staff is in and out and depend upon having their place available. Therefore, you may either park along Nassau Street or at a public lot, or utilize our curbside procedure (Wednesdays only, not Sunday rehearsals) in which you pull up to the curb in front of the building to drop off and pick up choristers. A choir assistant will be stationed at the curb ten minutes before and ten minutes after rehearsals end to escort children into and out of the building. In particular, Joyful Noise and Carol Choir choristers should be left only after their presence has been acknowledged by a choir assistant.

Following each of the rehearsals on Wednesdays, choristers are taken as a group either to parents in the building or to the curb for dismissal. Please pull as far forward as possible and be as timely as traffic will permit. The Choir Parents assisting each week cannot leave until the last child has been picked up, and that can become a problem for their own schedule. If you are running late, call 609-924-0103 ext. 110 and leave a message, or contact the choir parents' cell phone. Finally, if you are waiting in the building for your child, please come meet your child out front (or in the hall way near the main stairwell). We do not send children on their own to a waiting parent, no matter how comfortable they and you may with that arrangement.

Please help us convey the message of safety to our choristers: Our building is public and open. Our parking lot is small and crowded. It is much safer if parents do not pull into the parking lot and if the children use the sidewalk to meet their rides at the curb.

Youth in the Sunday evening programs are expected to use the safety procedures explained to them at choir and re-enforced by you at home, including using the sign-in sheets provided. Additionally, we ask you to let us know if your chorister (of any age) is in a car pool and with whom, and always advise us of occasions when he/she will be going home with someone else.

EXTRA SAFETY FOR OUR YOUNGEST CHORISTERS - Please do not depart the drop off area or leave Joyful Noise choristers on the playground or in the building until you are sure a Choir Parent or Choir Assistant has acknowledged the presence of your child. Also for Kindergarten and pre-K singers, we must have on file the names and contact information of anyone to whom the parent has given permission to pick up their child or children from choir - nannies, car pools, friends, relatives, i.e., anyone other than the parent or legal guardian. Forms for this will be given or mailed to the parents of these age singers. If there are any questions about the policy, please contact the office and you will be directed to someone for further information.

ENTERING THE BUILDING - Remind your children and youth that their only entrance and exit on weekdays is the door by the playground, and not the door which goes past the office through the atrium, unless escorted by a Choir Assistant in the case of bad weather. This is a security precaution as well as an important consideration for noise control. Especially during office hours, the staff appreciates your help.

EARLY ARRIVAL / LATE PICKUP – we cannot provide supervision for children of any age or youth more than ten minutes prior to the start of rehearsals. If you are delayed at pick up, please phone (see numbers on page 2 of this document). You may also text Sue Ellen. (Call the office for this number.)
Reverence in our House of Worship
Parents can help us reinforce the concept of our sanctuary as the room where Presbyterians have worshiped for over 250 years. We respect that sacred space - a place set apart - as our inheritance. Food and drink, running, yelling, climbing over the pews are not allowed. The choirs usually rehearse in the sanctuary prior to singing on a given Sunday. We enter the space as a group and in our time there, try to help the choristers develop a sense of joyful reverence.

An Invitation - Children involved with music often have parents who want to be as well! Our adult choir is a fine, non-auditioned ensemble that sings most Sunday mornings. Additionally, it periodically prepares major choral works. There are also handbell choirs, and instrumental ensembles led by church members. For more information, contact Noel Werner, Director of Music at 609-924-0103 x104 or noel@nassauchurch.org.

Summer Opportunities - Each August, we produce a musical chancel drama based on a bible story. In 2015, Chancel Drama Week runs Aug. 9-16. Children, youth and adults will stage and offer in worship as the sermon, a bible story, staged and set to music. Look for details and registration forms on the church website (coming March 2015).

Volunteer Opportunities - Additional choir parents for each group is very helpful. Even if you cannot commit for the year but could serve on a rotating basis with others to assist the regular Choir Parents, please offer your help. From time to time, the choir parents will need assistance from parents in a variety of activities, particularly at both ends of the program year. On Sundays in which the younger choirs sing, extra hands are especially helpful as well. Please offer your help whenever you are able by contacting Sue Ellen Page or, for Sunday mornings, speak directly to your chorister’s choir parent.