



Chorister Experience Programme



Welcome and Information Pack

September 2025

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Welcome to St. Paul's Cathedral. I am delighted you've chosen to come to this beautiful building and join us in this sacred and awesome space. Worship has been offered on this site for over 160 years, and for many of those years, the music, which is an integral part of our tradition, was offered by a choir of children and adults.

The rich tradition of Western music is deeply rooted in the Christian church. For centuries, composers made their living by writing music for religious services, creating a powerful legacy that has influenced everything from classical masterpieces to modern-day pop music. This interwoven history has produced a body of work that is not only beautiful and meaningful, but also incredibly impactful.

Bringing children back to singing in this space is a wonderful response to the beautiful refurbishment that we undertook last year. Through your help, we believe we can deliver an educational and life-enhancing programme that will touch the hearts of both parents and children alike.

Welcome to this unique and special journey.

Laurence Williams

Director of Music at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, ON

Vision

To become a leading and unique singing programme in the city of London, defying the odds and unleashing a life long love of music for as many children as we can serve **for free**.

Our Mission

To provide a **life-enhancing musical opportunity** for **any child**, making the transformative power of music **accessible to all** through a programme which is free at the point of access.

We achieve this by **renewing** a beautiful, **age-old tradition** of choral singing, fostering **excellence**, community, and joy through the rehearsal and performance of **great sacred music** from the Anglican tradition. Our ultimate aim is to give children a lifelong appreciation of music.



From the opening of Sing Joyfully by William Byrd (1540 - 1623).

Byrd was a secret Catholic, operating in a Protestant society. He wrote music with English text to please the authorities, and music in Latin for him and his secret Catholic friends to worship with.

What to Expect

Our program offers a fun and engaging experience for children of all ages. No previous musical experience is required, or audition.

Weekly Schedule

Rehearsals and classes run through academic term time. Schedule for 2025:

Term	Tuesday (5-8yr olds)	Wednesday (9 - 15yr olds)
Autumn	30th September - 9th December	October 1st - 10th December
Spring	13th January - 24th March	14th January - 25th March
Summer	14th April - 2nd June	15th April - 3rd June

- **Ages 5-8:** Our youngest choristers will meet on **Tuesdays** for a 30-minute session. As our numbers expand, this develop this into two classes (5-6 yr old at 4.15, and 7-8 yr olds at 4.50)

We use games, stories, and songs to help children develop foundational musical skills while having fun. Parents are asked to join in so they also can learn and practice with their child.

- **Ages 9-15:** Choristers in this age group meet on **Wednesdays** from 4:10 PM.

After a short snack and opportunity to gather (4.10-4.20), choristers will come upstairs to our Songroom, where they will take their positions around the piano. They will be given sheet music, and taught how to learn to read the dots and dashes! This rehearsal will last an hour. In the rehearsal, music for the service of Evensong (a service dating back nearly 500 years) will be learned and prepared by the choristers.

After this, choristers will get into red robes which are assigned to them at the start of term. Those who have been in the choir longer will be given a white surplice to put on top of their robe.

Choristers will then process into the Cathedral to begin the service of Evensong. This short service at 5:30 PM is open to parents and the public.

Children will learn music from many different ages and learn the skill of reading music notation, giving them a life-long ability to pick new music up and simply sing it!



Our 4-Manual organ, built by Canadian builder, Casavant

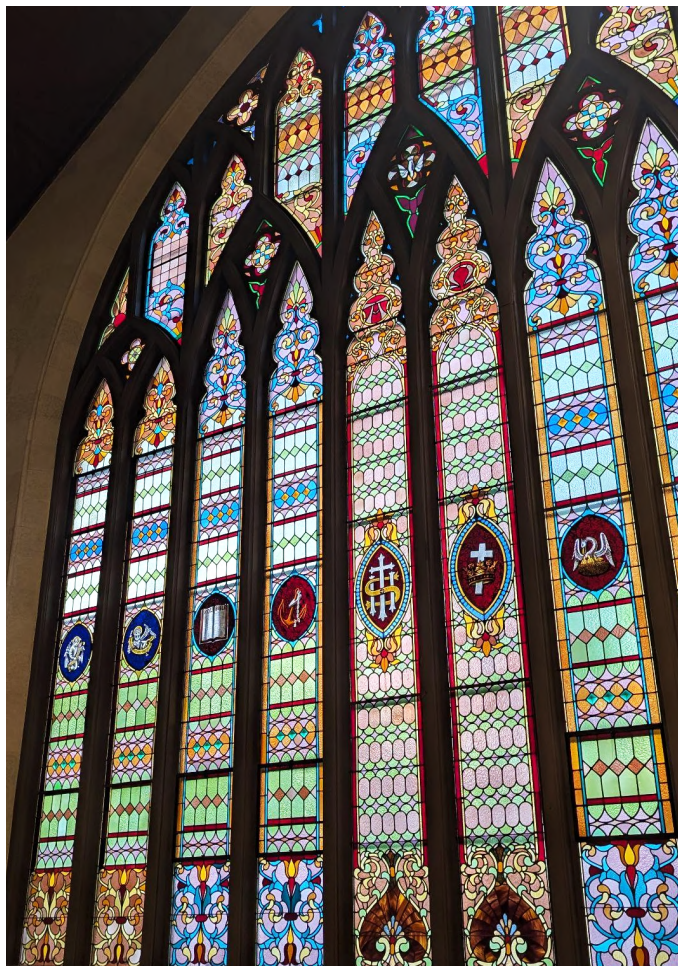
What are Services: Services comprise a series of items (readings, prayers and music) which create an act of Christian worship. We will begin with very simple services, building up towards the traditional service of Evensong, an act created nearly 500 years ago in the Anglican church. Evensong follows a standard selection of musical items, prayers and readings and takes around 25/30 minutes.

All services are open to the public, and parents are encouraged to attend, especially early on when services will last no longer than 10 minutes! You do not have to be religious to come, nor do you have to participate. You can simply sit there and let it wash over you.

Attire: For rehearsals, children should wear comfortable clothes they can move in/school attire. When singing in a service, they will wear the distinctive **robes** provided by the Cathedral. As our program develops, we will ask for children to bring black shoes.

Parental Involvement: We encourage parents to be a part of their child's musical journey. For our youngest group, you'll be actively involved in learning songs and games. For our older groups, your presence at the short Wednesday service is a wonderful way to support your child and the choir.

If you wish to be more involved (supervising snack time/helping write grant applications/support around the programme (for example creating t-shirts for the choir)), we would welcome that too!



Parking: Parking is available at our car park on 190 Queens Ave, London, ON N6A 1J3. For the older children, we are happy for them to come by transit or ride share

Commitment: We believe that if your child commits this programme fully, you will see the benefits year after year. As we offer this programme for free, we ask that you prioritise it. Of course, we understand from time to time, other commitments (dentist appointments etc) can be unavoidable. Being a choir is part of a team, so we need every player there - pitcher, outfielder and catcher!

Left: One of our beautiful windows in the north transept of the Cathedral, glistening in the evening light

Meet the Team

Director of Music: Laurence Williams - lwilliams@stpaulscathedral.on.ca



Laurence runs the music at St. Paul's Cathedral, having previously spent 14 years working in London, UK. He is a singer, director, organist, pianist and music educator, training at Cambridge University and the prestigious Guildhall School of Music and Drama, graduating with distinction..

His musical journey began at age 7 in the world-renowned Choir of Westminster Abbey, where he sang for many state occasions, including the funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother in 2002.

He has directed and toured with numerous children's choirs and is passionate about introducing the next generation to the best choral music possible.

Dean of the Cathedral: Kevin George
st.pauls@stpaulscathedral.on.ca



Priest Associate and Director of Pastoral Care:
Sam Thomas



Program Expectations

To ensure a positive experience for every child, we ask that all choristers and families follow our **Code of Conduct**.

- **Punctuality:** Please ensure your child arrives on time for rehearsals and services.
- **Respect:** We expect all choristers to be respectful of staff, volunteers, and fellow singers.
- **Effort:** We ask that your child comes prepared and ready to learn, and that they practice their music at home through listening, where recordings are available.

Child Safety & Well-being

Your child's safety is our highest priority. All of our staff and volunteers have been background-checked and trained in our child protection policies. We have a sign-in and sign-out system for all rehearsals. We will ensure we have up-to-date emergency contact information for your family, and resources will be provided for who to speak to in case of an emergency/disclosure.

Communication & Resources

We will communicate with you primarily through email and if desired, a private WhatsApp group. All rehearsal schedules, important updates, and music resources will be sent to you via email.

How to sign up

Head to our website, and follow the link on the page to fill in our simple form:

<https://www.stpaulscathedral.on.ca/music/free-chorister-experience-program>

Enquiries to: williams@stpaulscathedral.on.ca

FAQs

1) Do I/does my child have to be religious to join the choir?

Absolutely not. We accept children from all walks of life, Christian or not. Our purpose is to renew a beautiful, age-old tradition as a framework for life-enhancing education and the transformative experience of music. We are not here to try and convert anyone

2) Is there an audition?

No audition is required for our Chorister Experience Programme. We believe in giving musical access to every child. Everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of singing and the scientifically proven benefits that brings

3) What does it cost to join?

Our choir programme is completely free to join. Our aim is to make the transformative experience of music accessible to everyone in our community

4) Will my child be singing religious music?

Yes. A core part of the Chorister-Experience is joining thousands of other children around the world in singing some of the most amazing church music ever written

5) My child has no previous musical experience. Can they still join?

Yes, absolutely. We will take them through the basics and give them everything they need to succeed and grow.

6) What does a typical Wednesday look like for 9-15 yr olds?

They are asked to arrive at St. Paul's Cathedral from 4:10 PM for a 4:20 PM start. Snacks and drinks will be provided on arrival. The rehearsal lasts for just over an hour, followed by a short service at 5:40 PM, which is open to parents and the public.

7) What does a typical Tuesday look like for 5-8 yr olds?

Our goal is to create two classes (5-6yr & 7-8yr), each lasting 30 minutes. Parents are asked to be part of the group so they can learn the songs and grow alongside their children. Classes are structured through games, stories, and songs which subconsciously help your child to develop musical skills while having plenty of fun.

8) My child has no previous musical experience. Can they still join?

Yes - we will take them through the basics and give them everything they need to succeed

9) Do you have a policy for keeping children safe (child welfare)

Yes, we have a safe church policy and all staff who work directly with the children are subject to a police check

10) What will my child gain from joining the choir?

In addition to the joy of making music, your child will develop your singing skills, gain confidence, and build lasting friendships within our supportive community, whilst singing in the beautiful acoustics of St. Paul's Cathedral.



The Cathedral Choir of 1936 was notable for its composition. Comprising thirty-two boy choristers, it was uniquely flanked by a number of women choristers during an era when such groups were generally, exclusively male.

While we are grateful for the beautiful music produced throughout our history, we are committed to correcting its past wrongs and the exclusivity that prevailed.

*Today, our choir is a place where **all are welcome**, because access to music and education must exist for everyone.*



Let us build a house
Where love can dwell
And all can safely live:
A place where saints and children tell
How hearts learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
Rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ
Shall end divisions.

All are welcome in this place.

From the hymn "Let Us Build a House" by Marty Haugen

This hymn very much surmises the ethos we, at St. Paul's, embrace

