



# Saint Columb's Cathedral Choir

## Information for New Choristers



**'A unique experience providing a unique musical education  
in a unique historical setting'**

## **Who we are?**

**St Columb's Cathedral** is the mother-church of the Church of Ireland **Diocese of Derry and Raphoe**, part of the world-wide Anglican Communion. It is dedicated to St Columba, a 6th century monk who founded a monastic community in Derry. The **Dean**, The Very Reverend Raymond Stewart, oversees the worship of this ancient place, which often includes many high-profile Diocesan and civic occasions.

Its Cathedral Choir is made up of approximately 24 members: 12 boys aged 6-15 (called Choristers) sing alongside 12 gentlemen of the Choir (who complete the countertenor, tenor and bass sections). The Choir is open to **all** denominations – not just Church of Ireland.

Being a Cathedral Chorister carries many benefits:

- A free, first-class musical education

- Experience being a valued member of a team

- The chance to sing at special opportunities (e.g. TV and Radio broadcasts)

- Improved confidence/performance skills

- Improved reading and presentation skills

- Opportunities to learn to play the piano/organ.

## **What do we do?**

The Cathedral Choir sing each Sunday at 11am with a rehearsal at 10am, and on alternate Sunday afternoons at 4pm with a rehearsal at 3pm. Boys' practices are also held on a Thursday and Friday from 4:30pm to 5:30pm. In addition to this, there are special services to celebrate Christmas and Easter etc...

Experience shows that boys quickly adapt to the schedule and adjust their weekly routine. The Choir get half-term and summer holidays similar to the school calendar.

## **What happens at a practice?**

Boys receive group vocal lessons to establish and develop their best singing voice. Good vocal technique and aspects of music theory are taught by the Master of the Choristers supported by the Assistant Organist, through exercises and preparation of the music for services.

Initially boys will attend rehearsals only until they are fully confident at singing in services.

The Choir value the commitment of all Choristers. We appreciate punctuality and clear communication regarding absence. We will outline rehearsal and service commitments well in advance so that the Choir runs as efficiently as possible.

### How much does it cost?

Membership is free. Yes, choristers are paid a small amount each month (up to £10 for senior choristers). Additional services (e.g. weddings) also carry a fee of around £15 for each chorister. There are also bonuses at Easter and Christmas.

### What happens when I join?

A new recruit joins the Cathedral Choir as a **Probationer**. A probationer wears a cassock (crimson robe) while singing at services in the Cathedral. After around 6 months, a probationer is fully admitted to the Choir and is presented with his surplice (white over-garment) as a sign of his position. We ask the boys to wear our choir uniform when travelling to and from the Cathedral on a Sunday for the services. This is not required for the Thursday and Friday rehearsals.

### Can parents help?

We are always keen to hear from parents who would be prepared to be trained to help with supervision etc. on trips and excursions. The Cathedral Choir Association is a great way to get involved and support what we do.

### Is it all hard work?

No, not at all. We plan many outings each year (bowling, cinema, mystery tours, trips to the Odyssey Arena etc.) which are paid for by the Choir Association. In the past, we have had Summer tours to Bristol, France, Scotland and Ireland.

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