



St Mary and St John Church
Cowley Road, Oxford

Choral Scholarships 2025-26

Overview

St Mary and St John Church, Cowley Road, Oxford, seeks to appoint four Choral Scholars, one each of Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass, to support the worship of the church by singing at Sunday morning services. As of September 2025 there are vacancies for a Soprano and a Tenor.

About St Mary and St John Church

St Mary and St John Church is a friendly, open-minded and inclusive community in the high Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England. The church is one of three in the parish; the others are St Alban's Church on Charles Street and the medieval St Bartholomew's Chapel (Bartlemas) off Cowley Road. The Scholars will sing most services at St Mary and St John, but occasionally at one of the other churches in the parish. St Mary and St John Church was built in 1875 during the Oxford Movement.

Last year's Choral Scholar programme was a great success, with the four scholars making a valued contribution to the parish's worship and music. We are excited to continue this initiative and will be appointing four choral scholars for the 2025-26 academic year, affirming our commitment to nurturing musicians and enriching the musical life of the church. The Directors of Music are Lawrence Tao and Alex Tester, who both also teach at St Edward's School in North Oxford.

St Mary and St John has a fine three-manual organ built by Norman and Beard and enlarged by Walker. Much of the Sunday Eucharist is sung, usually the Thorne Mass of St Thomas, but alternatively the MacMillan St Anne Mass or Merbecke are used (in Advent and Lent, respectively). The choir also sings the psalm and an anthem during the service.

Commitment

The scholars would be expected to sing at all Sunday services during Oxford University Term, including the Sunday of 9th Week, plus Midnight Mass, Christmas Morning, Ash Wednesday, and services in Holy Week from Palm Sunday through to Easter Day, but with the exception of the morning of Advent Sunday (in lieu of the evening service at Bartlemas). The fee is £40 per service.

The full list of services is, therefore:

Sun 12 Oct	Trinity 17
Sun 17 Oct	Trinity 18
Sun 26 Oct	Trinity 19
Sun 2 Nov	All Saints
Sun 9 Nov	Remembrance
Sun 16 Nov	Trinity 22
Sun 23 Nov	Christ the King
Sun 30 Nov	Advent (Bartlemas)
Sun 7 Dec	Advent 2
Wed 24 Dec	Midnight Mass
Thu 25 Dec	Christmas Day
Sun 18 Jan	Epiphany 2
Sun 25 Jan	Epiphany 3
Sun 1 Feb	Candlemas
Sun 8 Feb	Epiphany 5
Sun 15 Feb	Epiphany 6
Wed 18 Feb	Ash Wednesday
Sun 22 Feb	Lent 1

Sun 1 Mar	Lent 2
Sun 8 Mar	Lent 3
Sun 15 Mar	Lent 4
Sun 29 Mar	Palm Sunday
Thu 2 Apr	Maundy Thursday
Fri 3 Apr	Good Friday
Sat 4 Apr	Easter Vigil
Sun 5 Apr	Easter
Sun 26 Apr	Easter 4
Sun 3 May	Easter 5
Sun 10 May	Easter 6
Thu 14 May	Ascension Day
Sun 17 May	Easter 7
Sun 24 May	Pentecost
Sun 31 May	Trinity Sunday
Sun 7 Jun	Trinity 1
Sun 14 Jun	Trinity 2
Sun 21 Jun	Trinity 3/St Alban's Patronal

Duties and responsibilities

- To sing as part of the church choir for regular rehearsals (usually at 9.45am) and services as set out above
- To prepare music in advance
- To be committed to the role, requesting absence only when unavoidable and communicating this well in advance to the Directors of Music
- To book a suitable deputy in the case of absence and communicate the details of the appointed deputy to the Directors of Music
- To be punctual to rehearsals and services and respectfully dressed for divine worship
- To undertake safeguarding training and/or a DBS check, as appropriate
- To comply with the church's safeguarding policy and code of conduct at all times

There may also be additional services such as weddings and funerals at which Scholars will be offered the opportunity to sing; an additional fee will be payable for such opportunities.

Person specification

Scholars should meet the following requirements in order to fulfil the role. Essential criteria are those that the Scholar absolutely must have in order to do the role. Desirable criteria are those that would either be useful, an advantage, or preferable to have in order to do the role, or those which can be obtained during the course of the scholarship.

Criteria	Essential/Desirable
Singing qualification (ABRSM or equivalent)	Desirable
Well-developed singing voice with a good range and tone	Essential
Previous experience of singing in a choir	Essential
Experience of singing for services in an Anglican church	Desirable
Knowledge of Anglican church repertoire	Desirable
Knowledge of safeguarding practices	Desirable
Ability to read music	Essential
Strong sight-reading ability, or very quick and able to learn by ear	Essential
Ability to sing in time and in tune	Essential
Ability to work as part of a team	Essential
Confident performer, both as a soloist and in a choir	Essential
Reliable, punctual and organised	Essential
Professional manner, suitable for working with children and adults	Essential
In sympathy with the mission and ministry of the church*	Essential

* While it is not a requirement of the role to be a communicant member of the Church of England, Choral Scholars sing for services so it is essential that the role holder is in sympathy with Christian worship.

Application process

For an informal conversation either with the Vicar or one of the Directors of Music, please contact the Vicar at vicarcsj@gmail.com.

To apply, please send a CV (maximum two pages) and covering letter (maximum one page) outlining your previous choral experience, your interest in and suitability for the role to the Vicar at vicarcsj@gmail.com. Please provide the name and contact details of a referee. We will acknowledge receipt of all applications.

The closing date for applications is Saturday 4 October 2025. Those shortlisted will be invited to interview at the church in the week beginning 5 October 2025, and the interview will consist of:

- Singing a prepared solo song of the candidate's choice, with or without piano accompaniment
- A short passage of sight-reading
- An interview with the Vicar, including safeguarding questions