



St Mary and St John Church
Cowley Road, Oxford

Assistant Director of Music

Overview

St Mary and St John Church, Cowley Road, Oxford, seeks to appoint a part-time Assistant Director of Music to support the music of the parish. The postholder will be an organist, able to accompany standard Anglican choral repertoire, hymns, psalms, and to play voluntaries, with a good understanding of Anglican liturgy. They will also support the administration of the music including managing an organ recital series and liaising with external agencies booking the church for concerts. Depending on the candidate's experience there are also opportunities for the postholder to conduct the choir and/or to sing with them.

This post is financially supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and is for a fixed-term contract of one year in the first instance.

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.

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. Further details are available on the National Pipe Organ Register: <https://npor.org.uk/survey/N11100>. 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.

There is a regular choir of around twelve singers, including four Choral Scholars who 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).

Commitment

The postholder would be expected to be at all of the choir rehearsals and services when the Choral Scholars are in attendance, plus an additional six services to be negotiated with the Directors of Music, plus the annual Carol Service in December and Parish Concert in June (dates tbc), a total of 44 services per year plus the Carol Service and the Parish Concert. They would also be at the church to run the Organ Recital series and, as necessary, to help with external lets for concerts.

Sunday services are usually at 10:30am with a rehearsal at 9:45am. Services that are during the week are usually at 7pm with a rehearsal at 6:15pm.

The list of services the Choral Scholars are expected to attend is:

Sun 11/10/26	Trinity 19
Sun 18/10/26	Trinity 20
Sun 25/10/26	Trinity 21
Sun 01/11/26	All Saints
Sun 08/11/26	Remembrance Sunday
Sun 15/11/26	Trinity 24
Sun 22/11/26	Christ the King
Sun 29/11/26	Advent Sunday (Bartlemas)
Sun 06/12/26	Advent 2
Thu 24/12/26	Midnight Mass
Fri 25/12/26	Christmas Day

Sun 17/01/27	Epiphany 2
Sun 24/01/27	Epiphany 3
Sun 31/01/27	Candlemas
Sun 07/02/27	Sunday next before Lent
Wed 10/02/27	Ash Wednesday
Sun 14/02/27	Lent 1
Sun 21/02/27	Lent 2
Sun 28/02/27	Lent 3

Sun 07/03/27	Mothering Sunday
Sun 14/03/27	Lent 5
Sun 21/03/27	Palm Sunday
Thu 25/03/27	Maundy Thursday
Fri 26/03/27	Good Friday
Sat 27/03/27	Easter Vigil
Sun 28/03/27	Easter Day

Sun 25/04/27	Easter 5
Sun 02/05/27	Easter 6
Thu 06/05/27	Ascension Day
Sun 09/05/27	Easter 7
Sun 16/05/27	Pentecost
Sun 23/05/27	Trinity Sunday
Thu 27/05/27	Corpus Christi
Sun 30/05/27	Trinity 1
Sun 06/06/27	Trinity 2
Sun 13/06/27	Trinity 3
Sun 20/06/27	Trinity 4

Duties and responsibilities

Music

- To accompany the church choir for regular rehearsals and services as set out above, and, depending on the experience of the candidate, to conduct the choir from time to time while one of the Directors of Music accompanies
- To work closely and collaboratively with the Directors of Music to maintain a high standard of music-making at the church
- To share the playing of liturgical music as appropriate with the Directors of Music, including seasonally appropriate voluntaries
- To prepare music in advance

- To assist the Directors of Music with the planning of music for services, including selection of hymns and anthems appropriate to the season and the lectionary
- Carefully to record any faults with the organ and to take care of the instrument to ensure it remains in good order
- 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

There will also be additional services such as civic services, weddings and funerals at which the Assistant Director of Music will be offered the opportunity to play and/or conduct; an additional fee will be payable for such opportunities.

Administration

- To sit on the auditioning panel for Choral Scholars
- To set up, organise and run a weekly organ recital series during the Michaelmas Term 2026, including booking players, agreeing programmes and assisting with publicity
- To be the principal point of contact for external agencies wishing to book the church for concerts (such as choral, orchestral or solo concerts) and to liaise with them, the Parish Administration Team and the Vicar, assisting with coordination as required

General responsibilities

- To undertake safeguarding training and a DBS check
- To comply with the church's safeguarding policy and code of conduct at all times

Person specification

Applicants should meet the following requirements in order to fulfil the role. Essential criteria are those that the candidate 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 holding the role.

Criteria	Essential/Desirable
Excellent organist, able to accompany all standard Anglican choral repertoire	Essential
Ability to accompany hymns, psalms and Propers of the liturgy sensitively and to extemporise as necessary	Essential
Ability to play seasonally appropriate organ voluntaries before and after services	Essential
Organ playing qualification at ARCO level or above	Desirable
Good understanding of liturgy and the role of music in worship	Essential
Knowledge of safeguarding practices	Desirable
Ability to work as part of a team	Essential
Reliable, punctual and organised	Essential
Strong communication skills	Essential
Good computer skills for administrative duties	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, it is essential that the role holder is in sympathy with Christian worship in the high Anglo-Catholic tradition.

Remuneration

The Assistant Director of Music will be paid an annual honorarium of £3600, to be invoiced monthly at £300 per calendar month and paid in arrears by bank transfer. There will be opportunities to earn further income from fees by playing and/or conducting for occasional additional services.

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 experience, your interest in and suitability for the role to the Vicar at vicarcsj@gmail.com. Please provide the name and contact details of two referees. We will acknowledge receipt of all applications.

The closing date for applications is Friday 21 August 2026. Those shortlisted will be invited to interview at the church in the week beginning 23 August, and the interview will consist of:

- Accompanying a choir rehearsal on the organ
- Playing a hymn at sight
- Playing a solo piece on the organ (maximum 5 minutes)
- An interview with the Directors of Music and the Vicar, including safeguarding questions

There will be an opportunity to spend some time at the organ preparing for the interview beforehand.