



St Mary and St John Church
Cowley Road, Oxford

Choral Scholarships 2026-27

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 2026 there are vacancies for Soprano, Alto and Bass.

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.

This is now the third year of the highly successful Choral Scholar programme, 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 2026-27 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, and will be supported in 2026-27 by an Assistant Director of Music to be appointed.

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 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

- 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 Sunday 4 October 2026. 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