

Parish of Esher

Christ Church, Esher with St George's, West End

# PARISH CHORAL SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME



TRANSFORMING **CHURCH**  
TRANSFORMING **LIVES**

## Parish Choral Scholarship Scheme

The Parish of Esher is launching a choral scholarship scheme to run alongside its two organ scholarships. We wish to appoint Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass choral scholars (ideally one per voice) to sing as part of its main parish choir of adult volunteers as well as independently. The scheme is particularly intended for young musicians of sixth form or university age, but we will consider applications from people at any stage in their musical careers.

### Background

The Parish of Esher is based in Guildford Diocese but lies on the south-western fringes of Greater London (three miles from Surbiton, three miles from Hampton Court). We are a liberally-minded Anglican parish, very middle of the road in our churchmanship and with a strong musical tradition.

Music plays an important role in the life of the parish, and in addition to our regular liturgical music, we have a successful music outreach programme called Music on the Green, which includes a monthly lunchtime recital series, occasional weekend concerts and other special events including a Holy Week series and the Esher May Fair.

The music team consists of a part-time professional Director of Music plus an Assistant Organist, an Organist Emeritus and a Senior and Junior Organ Scholar. Our recent organ scholars have won organ and choral awards to both Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

The parish possesses an excellent three-manual Walker pipe organ with fully modernised console, plus two grand pianos and an upright piano at Christ Church, and a two-manual pipeless organ at the daughter church of St George's, West End.

## The Parish Choir

There is a robed adult voluntary choir of around a dozen singers (augmented for major occasions), which leads worship at the main parish communion at Christ Church every Sunday morning. On a typical pre-pandemic Sunday, the singers present and performing might consist of roughly four sopranos, three altos, one tenor and two basses.

Three different congregational mass settings are used according to the liturgical season, and a wide variety of anthems are sung, ranging from Renaissance polyphony through the standard canon of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century repertoire to more contemporary composers including Chilcott, Philip Stopford and Ola Gjeilo. Taizé and Iona traditions are also dipped into. There is usually at least one substantial performance each year (either on Palm Sunday or at All Soulstide) of a relatively major work; repertoire in recent years has included the Fauré Requiem, Stainer's Crucifixion, Schütz's Seven Last Words from the Cross and Vaughan Williams' Five Mystical Songs. Other annual highlights are the Candlemas service, held at Old St George's (the original parish church behind the Bear Inn in Esher) and the Christmas Carol Service.

Over the past decade the choir has performed at Coventry, Guildford and Southwark Cathedrals, as well as singing a joint Choral Evensong at Wadham College Oxford. A weekend in Cambridge, originally due to have happened in June 2020, is being rescheduled for later this year, and we also have plans for tours to France and Ireland.

The parish choir joined forces with another local choir on Palm Sunday to sing Beethoven's rarely performed oratorio 'Christ on the Mount of Olives', and we have just premiered a new anthem in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, specially commissioned from Matthew Owens (ex-organist of Wells Cathedral).

Our choir's normal weekly routine revolves around Sundays and Mondays:

Sunday - 10.00 warm-up/run through for 10.30 service, normally finishing by 11.40.

Monday - evening choir practice from 19.15 to 20.45.

There are periodic social engagements, such as a pub lunch or a high street curry to celebrate a member's anniversary, and an annual highlight is the choir buffet supper following the Christmas Carol Service.

### The Choral Scholarships

The four choral scholarships form part of a new scheme to refresh and enhance our parish music set-up and is designed to give our parish choir greater strength in depth across all voices, allowing more flexibility with divisi repertoire and more secure cover when volunteer singers are absent. Each scholarship is worth up to £1k per year, payable in three £300 termly instalments in arrears, with a £100 bonus for undertaking premium commitments over the Christmas and Easter periods.

The Parish Director of Music will offer full mentoring in church music skills and general musicianship, and he or his Assistant will be available to provide the scholars with piano or organ accompaniment for both liturgical performances and concert engagements, whether at Esher or elsewhere.

The choral scholars will be offered every opportunity to broaden their vocal experience, though regular singing with the full choir; solo parts in anthems; singing freestanding solo repertoire at appropriate points in worship services, including pre or post-service music; and the opportunity, if desired, to give a solo Music on the Green recital at Esher and a lunchtime recital in central London. The parish hosts a fair number of weddings and funerals each year and some of these require vocal soloists or choral input, on which you will be given first refusal. For any scholar who is also instrumentally proficient, parallel opportunities will be available for musical

participation and performance on their chosen instrument.

Our daughter church of St George's, West End has its own weekly Sung Eucharist (Sundays at 9am) and there will be opportunities to do cantoring and vocal solos at this service as part of the regular music roster.

### Duties and Expectations

The choral scholars will be expected to:

- Attend and sing at Sunday morning services on a regular basis, plus other major church festivals, the frequency and exact dates to be agreed with the Director of Music but expected to be at least three times a month;
- Attend the majority of Monday evening choir practices in termtime (absences to be agreed in advance with the Director of Music), plus on-the-day run-throughs for major calendar fixtures such as Candlemas, Palm Sunday, All Souls and Christmas Carols;
- Be available, subject to any overriding school/college/family commitments, to sing with the choir for special events or excursions notified in advance by the Director of Music;
- Generally become involved in the musical life of the parish.

### Eligibility

The scholarships are primarily available to any full-time sixth form or university student (or student in a pre- or post-university gap year) who is living or studying within reasonable geographical reach of Esher and is able to play an active part in the musical life of the parish. Potential applicants who fall outside this definition will also be considered on their merits and are invited to discuss their interest informally with the Director of Music in the first instance.

Applicants will normally be expected to demonstrate two or more of the following:

- extensive existing experience in school or university choirs;
- a good pass in an approved singing exam (Grade 6+);
- Grade 5 music theory or higher;
- some proficiency on a keyboard, wind or string instrument and an interest in developing and using this, alongside their choral work, to enhance worship services.

Each scholarship is initially awarded for a period of up to 12 months, normally in parallel with the academic year (though the timing may be adjusted in the event of a

start part way through the academic year), and at the end of the initial period the scholarship may be renewed for appropriate further periods up to a normal maximum of three years dependent on satisfactory performance and commitment.

#### Applications and enquiries

Expressions of interest, or requests for further information, should be made directly to the Parish Director of Music (Stuart Whatton, FRCO) who may be contacted via [office@esherparish.org.uk](mailto:office@esherparish.org.uk)/01372 462282.

Formal applications may be made to the email address above and should include a CV detailing musical experience to date, together with a covering letter.