

Youth Choirs Are Flourishing at Christ Church

By John La Boone

"I will sing of your love and justice; to you, LORD, I will sing praise." – Psalm 101:1

We are very fortunate at Christ Church to have a thriving music program. The boost our music gives to worship is a treasure, plus the music at funerals, weddings, concerts and fellowship gatherings always comforts, inspires and uplifts us. Our music is one of our greatest assets for evangelism and outreach, too. We have a lot of wonderful music to be thankful for, including the music provided by our youth choirs that Music Director Kathleen Turner has nurtured so carefully over the years.



"Kids singing in church is something very special," Kathleen recently said, "and it's something I especially enjoy working with. There is a specialness about children's voices that is pure and joyful. I think it's very pleasing to God to have children singing his praises, and it never fails to inspire all of us who hear them."

There are two youth choirs at Christ Church. The Choristers is a choir for children up through age 7. Then, membership in the Trebles choir normally begins at age 8, but joining the Trebles is by the invitation of the music director, according to the child's level of maturity and readiness to take on greater challenges. There is also a transitional *Senior Treble* designation for the older, more experienced Trebles who get to sometimes sing with the adult choir.



There are many benefits for children who sing in church choirs. Singing produces joy. It gives kids a sense of satisfaction in learning a skill. It promotes the development of social skills and provides training in how to communicate and work with others. Singing allows children to be recognized by adults for their accomplishments, something all children love and need. It teaches them that accomplishments are made through planning and following a process in stages, and that by sticking with the effort they can achieve their goals. All this helps groom children into more mature, responsible people with greater self-esteem.

Kathleen brings to her role at Christ Church a wealth of experience working with children and music in various churches she worked at previously. She was also artistic director of the Austin Children's Choir from 2003 – 2010, for which she received awards and commendations. Besides her enormous musical skill and knowledge, she has great insight into how to make music for kids a positive experience for both the young people and the rest of the congregation.

"It's important to place our children in loving, non-judgmental, unconditionally accepting places when teaching them music," she commented. "They need to feel safe in order to do their best and to enjoy the music. It helps to have a lot of support and approval from their families, too, because it's really a partnership that takes everyone making church music a priority."

A good bit of religion is taught through the hymns the children learn to sing. Kathleen takes time to explain the meaning of the hymns to the kids and to discuss the ideas that arise. But for all the work, there is plenty of enjoyment, reward and good fellowship. There are snacks at every practice session. Kathleen likes to hold periodic birthday celebrations for the young choir members. When children are very well-behaved she lets them bring a pet to choir practice to share with the other kids. That has included dogs, cats and a black rabbit named "Chocko." Our youth choirs are little families where everybody is important.



"Friendships are made and deepened through the shared experience of choir music," Kathleen explained. "When my kids get older and leave the Choristers and the Trebles, the relationships still continue. They will always be my choir kids."

To see a video of our Choristers and Trebles performing, click on the link below:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmUkGR8MCPA&t=32s>

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant to them even now glimpses of your beauty, and make them worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. – Book of Common Prayer, p. 819.