

Tips for Renewing the Spiritual Life of Choirs

1. **What fosters an environment for healthy music-making in a church choir?**
The same principles as for a healthy church but add musical skills. Good leadership, common purpose, welcome, prayer, and a heady mix of ambition and humility! Keep learning and being creative.
2. **What principles lie behind the choices of repertoire for a church choir?**
Don't be too ambitious. But challenge the choir. Always keep learning new music. Add instruments. A Capella singing is the gold standard.
Listen to what the choir wants to sing.
Don't overestimate the sophisticated tastes of the congregation.
Texts are important. Can it fit in with the lectionary?
3. **How do you nurture and care for the spiritual life of a church choir?**
Pray; care; laugh.
Provide good music. Singing is a form of spiritual care.
Choristers do listen to sermons! They do take the liturgy and life of the church seriously.
4. **What role does multi-cultural worship have in the Anglican Church?**
It's non-negotiable. Different singing styles can teach us new musical skills.
Different languages also teach us about vocal colours and a world of cultural lessons. It provides a wealth of new repertoire.
But please give it the attention it is due, not as a 'checkmark'.
5. **How do you encourage a choir to be fully integrated into the life of the Church?**
Lead by example; and know that they already are, by attending twice a week!
6. **How do you deal with the inherent dangers of success; and what are the inherent dangers of success?**
That the music becomes a gospel in itself, that the choir points to itself rather than something bigger. Choirs *need* a bit of 'healthy pride' – that they are doing a good job, that progress is being made – but this becomes damaging if it obscures rather than supports the mission of the church. It's a bit like a marriage: ask yourselves from time to time 'are we okay?'

Two prayers to use with your church choir:

"Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts, we may practice in our lives."

"May our singing give us great pleasure, may it give great pleasure to all who listen to us, but above all may it give great pleasure to You, O Lord. Amen"

Submitted by Tom Bell, Choir Director at St James Cathedral

