WETHERBY CHORAL SOCIETY MEMBERS HANDBOOK January 2025

Rules and Regulations

**1 INTRODUCTION**

These rules and regulations complement the constitution of the Society which can be found on the Society’s website at wetherbychoral.org.uk and is attached to this document.

**2 THE SOCIETY**

The Society is a Charity and is run by a committee elected at the Annual General Meeting. This is held during a rehearsal in the autumn term. Reports on the year are presented by the chairman, musical director and treasurer, and committee members are elected. Opportunities to nominate or be nominated to the committee will be announced at the rehearsals in the weeks beforehand.

**3 MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is open to all and the Society is keen to encourage new members to join and share in the joy of singing. We hope you enjoy rehearsing and performing with us. We always aim for the highest standard we are capable of, but we also aim to have fun too.

Prospective members are encouraged to attend a few rehearsals before deciding whether to join.

Members are expected to perform in our concerts and attend a reasonable number of rehearsals prior to each concert.

Members who have not attended a reasonable number of rehearsals may be allowed to sing in the concert, at the discretion of the Music Director.

Membership shall be at the discretion of the committee subject to the provision of evidence of musical ability to the Musical Director.

**4 SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The subscription is set each year and is payable by 31 October. This is normally regarded as a minimum and members are encouraged to give more if they can. If you are a tax payer, you are also encouraged to use Gift Aid, which enables the Society to claim back 25% on your subscription, at no extra cost to you. If you are a higher rate tax payer you may be able to claim tax relief yourself. If you want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

There may be a reduction for members joining after Christmas, at the discretion of the Treasurer.

Full-time students are welcome without having to pay any subscription.

The committee wants to ensure that no one should feel that they cannot continue to sing if they cannot afford the subscription. In these circumstances, please speak in confidence to the Treasurer.

Contact details will be requested when you join and are updated each September. We hold this information in a membership list and use it to record attendance and fee payments, to circulate general information by email and to cascade urgent messages, such as last-minute cancellation of rehearsals. Please return this form by the beginning of October. A copy of our Privacy Policy is available on the website and attached to this document.

If you decide to leave the choir, or take a term off during the year, please let the Membership Secretary know so that our records can be updated.

If a member has not paid their subscription by the time of the first concert in the subscription period, they are not allowed to sing in the concert.

**5 REHEARSALS**

Rehearsals are normally on Monday evenings and run from 7:30—9:30pm, with an interval for refreshments and the raffle.

Rehearsals take place in St James' Church, Church Street, Wetherby LS22 6LP.

Seating is in the main section of the church, but the side aisles available for those who are vulnerable to infections. Members should not attend if they have any viral symptoms.

Please tick the attendance register sheet as you come into the church.

**Car parking**

There is limited car parking at the church. Please remember to key in your registration number immediately on the panel at the rear of the church, or the one in the Parish Centre, every time you use the car park. If you do not, you will receive a £100 fine and neither the Choral Society nor the Church will be able to help you deal with the parking company the Church has employed to enforce the parking restrictions.

There is ample parking elsewhere in the town:

Cluster of Nuts car park on Hallfield Lane, LS22 6JB

Crossley Street LS22 6NL

Riverside (aka Wilderness) car park LS22 6RF

Morrisons car park is nearer, but there is a strict two-hour limit on parking which is rigorously enforced, even in the evenings, so beware.

**Tea rota**

During the interval at rehearsals, tea and coffee are served by choir members for a small charge, and all members are welcome to volunteer to take a turn on the rota.

Rehearsal dates for the current season (September – June) can be found on the Society’s website.

**6 SCORES**

The subscription includes the hire of all music scores, apart from Handel's Messiah, as most members already have their own Messiah score. If you don't have one, we recommend you buy or borrow the New Novello Choral Edition, edited by Watkins Shaw. This can be obtained from most music shops (both physical and online) and Amazon, or you may find a second-hand copy on eBay.

Scores are usually on loan from local music libraries. We have an obligation to take care of these scores and to return them promptly after each concert.

Please bear the following in mind:

* Use only a soft pencil to make markings in your copy.
* Rub out all personal notes and information in the score, especially on the front page, before returning your scores at the end of the concert in the boxes provided.

If you are unable to sing in a concert, return your score(s) to the Librarian before the concert.

Late returns or damaged books incur a cost from the library, which will be passed on to the choir member concerned.

**7 FUNDRAISING**

Members' subscriptions cover the cost of rehearsals. We lose money on most concerts, as we pay for the orchestra and soloists. We bridge the gap by running fundraising events, such as the regular raffles and a 100 Club, plus occasional events such as a quiz, auction of promises etc. We are always interested in fundraising ideas!

All members are encouraged to support the Society by taking part in these fundraising activities.

**8 CONCERTS**

The Society normally gives four concerts a year—in November, December, March/April and June. The venue is usually St James's Church, Wetherby. There is generally a rehearsal with soloists and orchestra in the afternoon before the evening's concert performance.

Details of the season’s concert dates and programmes are listed on the Society’s website

**Concert tickets**

All choir members are responsible for selling tickets for each concert. Sales are organised by a choir member, commencing around one month prior to a concert. Each choir member receives two tickets to sell, but we hope everyone will try to sell as many as possible! Tickets are also available for purchase on-line on the Society's website.

**Soloists' hospitality**

Many of our soloists live outside the area, so they usually need a light meal between the rehearsal and concert, and occasionally a bed for the night. If you are able to provide either occasionally, please see the Committee member who organises hospitality.

**Concert dress**

Men: dinner suit, white shirt with collar, black bow tie, black shoes. Summer concert only - men will wear black long sleeved open-necked shirts (any braces under) and no jackets.

Women: long black skirt or smart black trousers, black blouse with full-length or three-quarter-length sleeves, black shoes. An optional jacket or cardigan can be worn, as long as it is entirely black.

**Singing at the concert**

If you will not be singing in a concert, please do not attend the final Monday rehearsal before that concert, and return your score(s) before then.

If you are singing in the concert, please make sure you tick the list that circulates a few weeks beforehand; seating is set out for the exact number of names on the list, so failure to sign up will mean there is no seat allocated for you!

If you are unable to attend the afternoon rehearsal, please ensure someone knows and can keep a seat for you for the performance.

If you planned to sing in the concert but then are unable to do so, please ensure that you contact the Chairman or Secretary before 1.45pm on the day of the concert so that the seating can be adjusted.

If you are not singing in the concert but decide to attend, please purchase a ticket. We need to minimise our losses on concerts and suggest you view this as a contribution to support your fellow members who are singing.

**Final rehearsal and concert set-up**

We need a team of people to set up the church for the concert. This involves bringing staging up from the crypt, setting it up, and arranging chairs for orchestra, choir and audience. We usually start at 11:00 am on the morning of the concert and it takes around 45 minutes to do, depending on the amount of help available.

If you are able to help with this - or have non-singing family members who could help - please join us. Some members find a pair of gloves helps with lifting items. The set-up includes jobs which don’t involve heavy lifting, so do come and help even if you can’t do any lifting. A guide to setting up the staging can be found on the Society’s website and is attached to this document.

The afternoon rehearsal usually starts at 1.30 pm. Please be in your seat by 1.20pm. Because the performance area is a different shape and orientation from the rehearsal space, it can take time for everyone to be seated in positions where they can see the conductor. You may find that you have to sit beside different people; please be flexible.

The approximate finishing time of the rehearsal will be announced by the Music Director.

If you feel the need for refreshment, you'll need to bring your own; the facilities in the Church and Church Centre are reserved for the needs of the soloists and orchestra.

**The concert**

The concert normally starts at 7.30pm.

For the evening performance, please assemble in the Parish Centre by 7. 10pm.

At 7.20pm, we order ourselves into lines so that the staging fills up from the back, tenors and sopranos on the left, basses and altos on the right.

At 7.25pm, we make our way to the church and file neatly in to our seats. Remain standing until a front-row soprano indicates for us all to sit down, hopefully together!

At 7.30pm, the conductor and soloists will enter the church. Choir members may applaud while seated but when the conductor steps onto the podium, the choir stops applauding and stands up.

After the concert, we receive applause while standing. Once the soloists have left the floor, the choir can sit down and start applauding the soloists. We do not applaud whilst standing.

Concert programmes will be available to purchase at the afternoon rehearsal.

After the concert, we have to restore the church to its normal layout, so it's all hands on deck to clear everything away. Please help if you can - the more the merrier.

**9 COMMUNICATIONS**

The *For Members* pages of the WCS website wetherbychoral.org.uk provide key information and are frequently updated.

Announcements will be made at rehearsals about any matters which are relevant to members

Regular emails will be sent to members and include a variety of information which will be of interest.

The Society also has a presence on Facebook and Instagram. See [Wetherby Choral Society Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/wetherbychoralsociety?ref=embed_page) and [WetherbyChoralSociety (@wetherbychoralsociety) • Instagram photos and videos](https://www.instagram.com/wetherbychoralsociety/)

If a rehearsal has to be cancelled, members will be informed by email.When the cancellation is with less than 24 hours’ notice (eg due to bad weather), members may request a text or phone message is sent to them in addition to the email, but only if they do not have frequent access to their emails. This should be indicated on the membership form completed at the start of each season.

A list of current members of the Committee is provided on the Society’s website. Contact details are provided and members are welcome to use these to get in touch with any committee member if they are not able to speak to them on a rehearsal evening.

**10 SAFETY & SAFEGUARDING**

**What to do if there is an emergency**

There is no fire alarm system in the main part of the church. If you spot an emergency shout out!

The Music Director will bring the rehearsal, or concert, to a halt.

We will leave the building in a calm manner. The main exit is through the doors we use to come into the church.

Fire Stewards will also open the doors on the south side of the church and you should use these if they are nearer.

Once outside, assemble in the car park opposite the Parish Centre, in your voice sections.

On rehearsal evenings, Fire Stewards will collect the registers and check that everyone is safe.

Only return to the building once the Fire Stewards have given the all clear.

Important safety documents - please read

* Fire Evacuation Procedure
* Fire Stewards for rehearsals and concerts

These can be found on the Society’s website. There are links at the end of this document.

**Safeguarding**

Please read our Safeguarding Policy, which can be found on the Society’s website. There is a link at the end of this document.

**11 ELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Committee members are elected by the members of the Choir at a general meeting. The members elect the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, but the Committee can appoint to these roles if no one is elected. Nominations should be proposed and seconded and the nominee’s consent is required. A form, which is available from the Secretary, can be used for this purpose, although its use is not compulsory. Voting is by show of hands at a general meeting.

Committee members are elected for a three year term. They are eligible to stand for re-election but may not remain on the Committee for more than 9 years in total at a time. They may stand for re-election again after a period of at least 3 years absence from the Committee.

The Committee members may appoint any member to a role which supports the running of the Society.

The Committee’s powers to co-opt Committee members are laid out in the Constitution

**12 REVISIONS & PUBLICATION**

These rules are approved by the Society’s Committee and are reviewed annually. The Committee has the power to make any changes or additions that are necessary, provided that they do not conflict with the provisions of the Society’s constitution as agreed by its members at a general meeting.

These rules will be available on the Society’s website.

**13 APPENDICES** – available on the *For Members* pages of the website

A [Constitution](https://www.wetherbychoral.org.uk/files/WCS%20Constitution%20%28October%202023%20%29.pdf)

B [Privacy Policy](https://www.wetherbychoral.org.uk/files/PrivacyPolicy(18.05.18).pdf)

C [Guide to erecting staging](https://www.wetherbychoral.org.uk/files/ConcertStagingProc.pdf)

D [Fire and Evacuation Procedures](https://www.wetherbychoral.org.uk/dbpage.php?pg=Safety)

E [Safeguarding Policy](https://www.wetherbychoral.org.uk/files/WCS%20Safeguarding%20Policy.pdf)

November 2024