Abstract

“MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION”

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This project is about music and, specifically, how singing music in the Episcopal Church can be a tool for spiritual formation. I set out to see if others had been formed by music in the church in the same way I had been formed. I looked at both psychological and pedagogical aspects of music on childhood development to show how music helps us learn any subject, but particularly learn scripture and theology. I interviewed seven people connected to music and the church to see what impact music has had on them and how they use it as a tool for spiritual formation. I surveyed clergy to see if music was important to them in their own parishes and how they view it as a tool for formation. I found that those I interviewed agreed with music being a tool for spiritual formation. It was fascinating to hear examples in their own ministries of how they had experienced this and, also, how they taught it to their choirs or parishes. The results of the surveys were mostly positive about the importance of music both to those in the choir and to the congregation. Some negative results showed that not everyone views music in the same way. I came to the overall conclusion that I was not alone in my experience, and that many of us who have been formed by music in the church see it as a tool for spiritual formation. I also concluded that I now have the tools and resources to start a music program in a parish should one not exist, so that others may continue to be formed.

Approved

Advisor
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

by

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A hymn by F. Pratt Green in *Hymnal 1982* reads, in part, “When in our music God is glorified, and adoration leaves no room for pride, it is as though the whole creation cried Alleluia! How often, making music, we have found a new dimension in the world of sound, as worship moved us to a new profound Alleluia!”¹ The text of this hymn speaks to how music plays a large role in incorporating us in the liturgy of the Church. This project is about music and, specifically, how singing music in the Episcopal Church can be a tool for spiritual formation. Using my own experience as a starting point, I want to see if music has formed and shaped other clergy and musicians in the same way it has formed and shaped me. Music enhances the liturgy and allows us to go deeper into the texts and deeper into the mystery of what is taking place. It was music that introduced me to the church.

In this project I will look at the stories of other clergy and musicians and compare them to my own in order to see if we have shared experiences or common threads. I will also discuss childhood development, particularly looking at the psychology of how we learn, to tie in how music allows us to internalize certain aspects of learning and, in this case, helps spiritual formation. To broaden my scope and perspective on music as a formational tool, I sent survey questions to clergy in the Diocese of Alabama for a sampling of how music has formed them. The survey was administered via e-mail and the results have been compiled and are shared in this project. I believe music, and, in particular, choral music in the Anglican tradition, is a powerful tool for spiritual formation, giving a foundation for theological understanding. I know how it formed me

and I would like to offer a way for others, both children and adults, to have the opportunity to be formed in this way as well. Being able to offer a choral program allows for real experiences working with music that celebrates and teaches about the life of Christ and other areas of the church, and I wish to continue to emphasize this in my own ministry.

In this project I will explore the role music plays in the formation of Christians and, in this case, those in the Episcopal Church. I have identified, in addition to myself, other Episcopal musicians and clergy who have similar stories to my own. I conducted interviews with seven people and, later in this project, will share their stories to see how much they align with or contrast my own experiences. I am looking for commonalities and differences in these stories, always focusing on the role of music in their formation, as well as what I can learn from these stories. The people interviewed are: Robert McCormick, Organist and Choirmaster at St. Mark’s, Philadelphia; Jared Johnson, Canon Organist and Choirmaster at Trinity Cathedral, Columbia, South Carolina; Dr. Marty Wheeler Burnett, Canon Precentor at Trinity Cathedral, Omaha, Nebraska; Cindy DeDakis, Canon Musician for the Diocese of Maryland; the Rev. Sean Mullen, Rector of St. Mark’s, Philadelphia; Richard Webster, Director of Music and Organist at Trinity Church, Boston; and the Rt. Rev. Andrew Waldo, Bishop of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina. I found these interviews to be both engaging and enlightening. Full transcripts of the interviews are included at the end of the project in Appendix A.

Through this project I want to see if there are patterns to the way we are formed by music. Is what I experienced unique, or am I part of a similar personality type that reacts to music, or other stimuli, in similar ways? What do I think my church life would
have been had I not joined the choir at such an early age? Would I still be engaged? With this information, along with the answers I received in my survey, I will be able to form a way to introduce music as a tool for spiritual formation wherever I am in my ministry. I know how music has formed and shaped me. What I hope to prove in this project is just how much music has formed and shaped others and how it can be used to enhance our ministries in the church. I believe it is important to introduce music at an early age so that spiritual formation can begin. This certainly worked for me.

When I was six years old I joined the Junior Choir at our church, St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Berea, Ohio. My father was the rector of the parish. I wanted to do something other than just sit in church, but I was too young to be an acolyte or lector. One had to be six years old to be in the Junior Choir, so that is what I did. Our director was Nancy Braford who also happened to be my Sunday School Teacher. Singing in the choir was something I could do to contribute to worship and help me feel a part of church. Born the third child of a priest, I have always had the church in my life, but being a part of the choir allowed me to begin to understand my place within it. We did some fairly simple anthems involving a lot of unison singing. That makes sense considering some of us were just learning what our voices could do. It was certainly a formational time as we learned to read music, but it was also a time of spiritual formation as the material we were using to learn was based on scripture and the life of Jesus. I would not have been able to tell you at the time this was happening, but looking back I realize this was the point where my spiritual formation began, leading me to where I am today as both a person of faith and a priest of the church. I was being formed, without necessarily knowing it, and music was the tool. If I had to point to one experience that I
would say began this journey, it would be singing the following anthem for the Sunday after the Ascension in 1976:

As he said this He was lifted up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.
Two men in white then appeared before them and said, “Why stand you looking there?
This Jesus who’s been taken away from you to heav’n
Will come again in the same way as you have seen him go.”

Based on Acts 1:6-14, it tells the story of Jesus meeting with his disciples before he ascends to the Father, and the angels’ comments after he ascends. The refrain of the anthem still plays in my head as if I had just sung it: “But ye shall have power/when the Spirit comes on you/ye shall be my witnesses/to the ends of the earth./To all Jerusalem, through all Judea, and in Samaria, to the ends of the earth.”

As I hear those words, along with the verses, I have the image of Jesus ascending into heaven burned into my brain forever. I am not sure how many six-year-olds have an understanding of the Ascension, but I did, at least as far as my six-year-old brain could understand it. As I sang this anthem, and other music, I had found my place, and the liturgy of the church became an important part of my life. I continued singing in the choir of whatever church I was in through high school, then with the University Choir at Sewanee, and then with the choir of the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta. Each part of my choral journey added to and solidified my spiritual formation. There are too many anthems to count that have touched

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2 “And Ye Shall Have Power,” by Clive Corrin, arr. Betty Pulkingham, Copyright St. Paul’s Outreach Trust. This is verse 2, written by Nancy Braford.

3 I had great difficulty finding this anthem anywhere so I could document it in this paper. I finally turned to Facebook to look up my former director, Nancy Braford. Amazingly, Nancy had the piece of music at arm’s length and sent me pictures of the music. Nancy reminded me that at one verse and a refrain she felt the anthem was too short, so she wrote the second verse. I had forgotten that part but remembered it as soon as she said it!
me deeply and brought me closer to God. Author and Episcopal priest Victoria Sirota describes this feeling quite well in her book *Preaching to the Choir*. She writes:

> Let’s talk about those amazing moments when an extraordinary musical experience happens in liturgical space. Every once in a while the performer of an inspired composition, whether old or new, connects text with musicians, choir, clergy, building, and congregation in a phenomenal way, as if all that is good and true in the universe is in cosmic alignment. For whatever reason, each person involved is united in the mission of this particular musical offering. Somehow egos have been put aside, the composer’s whisperings are in the air, and the Spirit has brought the music to a more profound place than was ever thought possible. At the end of the experience, everyone knows that they have been transported to a different place and time. Those listening may be in tears; those performing shaken to the core of their being. What exactly has happened? Maybe the best way to describe that experience is that we have been where heaven and earth meet, a liminal place. This is a ‘thin place’ at the edge of the reality the world would claim as the only truth, where we suddenly glimpse Reality or, perhaps, Infinitude. It is here that we are able, however briefly, to see into the very heart of God.4

The idea of being in that “thin place” is a feeling we want to recreate over and over again. Peter Gomes describes this phenomenon in his book, *The Good Book*. Gomes writes that this notion of “thin places” comes from Celtic mythology and describes a place where the visible and invisible world come into their closest proximity. He continues, “To seek such places is the vocation of the wise and the good, and those who find them find the clearest communication between the temporal and the eternal.”5 As a musician and a priest, there are many times I have experienced this in our liturgy and music, and it is a place I am always happy to find. To find these places is, in my opinion, part of that spiritual formation that music in the Anglican choral tradition gives us. As we are

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formed by the music, we are touched in a way that allows us to experience the presence of God in our very midst. Certainly, I was not alone in this experience.

Music is one of the most powerful components of worship because it has the capacity to capture our emotions and draw us into the liturgy like nothing else, while at the same time pulling us away if it does not fit in well with the liturgy. Putting it another way, music works when it serves the ritual action of the rite, but can fail when it does not support what is happening in the rite. Music adds a dimension to the liturgy that anticipates what is about to happen, moving us backwards and forwards in ritual time, and giving us a foretaste of what is to come as well as reception of what has already been.\(^6\) As much as music is a powerful tool for spiritual formation in the church, it is also considered a powerful tool within various fields of science. The psychological aspects of music are being studied in areas such as childhood development, looking at the way we learn, speak, and grow. This seems to make perfect sense considering we begin making sounds almost as soon as we come into this world. Writing in the *Cambridge Companion to Choral Music*, authors Mary Goetze, Cornelia Fales, and Wolodymyr Smishkewych speak to this, saying, “Few things come more naturally to us humans than producing vocal sounds. Beginning at birth with our first breath and cry, we use our voices to express ourselves and convey our needs. Babies instinctively explore a wide array of vocal sounds, sometimes for the sheer joy of hearing their own voice. As they are enculturated, children are encouraged to imitate the spoken and sung sounds they hear.”\(^7\)

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\(^6\) From class notes on June 18, 2015, “Liturgy and Moral Imagination,” taught by Don E. Saliers, SOT Advanced Degree Program, Summer 2015.

This process, they go on to say, yields such things as different languages as well as vocal timbres used in speaking and singing. Researchers agree that music can play an important role in childhood development. I probably would not have been able to say this at the time, but looking back at my experience in the choir I can now say with certainty that it was music that helped me learn about scripture and the church. I do not believe I would have remembered or internalized all that I did without music. Music definitely affects the brain and the way we learn. Within the last twenty years, research in music neuroscience has grown greatly allowing for specific study in aspects of music such as rhythm or imagery, and in population groups such as infants or children. While these specific areas of music study may be relatively new, the connection between music and psychology is not. In an article published in the Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, author Sven Hroar Klempe writes how music and psychology began being closely observed thanks, in part, to the German Gestalt psychologists of the early twentieth century. Gestalt had to do with how one perceives what is around him or her, and music certainly can be a factor of perception. Klempe writes:

In discussions concerning the early days of experimental psychology, tones and music are seldom mentioned. Nevertheless, by taking a closer look at the body of Wilhelm Wundt’s work, elements of music appear as an important factor in a considerable number of his experiments. A close affinity between music and psychology has also been documented by the pioneers of German Gestalt psychology (Ash, 1998). Max Wertheimer refers to Christian von Ehrenfels’ argument of musical transposition being most important in saying that Gestalt is a factor in perception (Wertheimer, 1967).  


The link between music and psychology has only grown over time, and research has produced many conferences on the various topics now in favor. One such gathering took place in June of 2011 at the University of Edinburgh and covered such topics as working with children, rhythm perception, language processing, cultural learning, memory, and musical imagery among others. I would think the topic of memory alone, could fill an entire conference. This is the area that I find was the strongest in my own experience – specifically that music can trigger so many once-forgotten memories and how it allowed me to memorize and even internalize words, scripture, and stories without even realizing what was happening. In a journal article about the Edinburgh conference, the introduction reads, “There is increasing scientific and public interest in how music neuroscience research can potentially inform, and be informed by, the disciplines of music therapy, music education, and music performance.”

Both music education and performance fit right in with my thoughts on choral singing in the Anglican tradition and how it forms us spiritually. If psychological research shows that music is a strong tool for learning, so too is singing various choral anthems as way of learning scripture. The journal article continues on this topic, talking about music being integrated into a kindergarten class in Berlin, the Musikkindergarten, using a very focused whole-child, educational, and social approach. The article tells that this project was, “initiated by Daniel Barenboim and intended to use music not just as an ‘add on,’ but rather as the central medium for day-to-day learning. The kindergarten provides an education in music, including a refreshing range of group creative and developmental activities, and with music, including, for example, familiar partners in drama and movement. But most radical is the work through

\[10 \text{Neurosciences and Music, 1.}\]
music, where music leads interdisciplinary initiatives in areas such as topic-based learning, language development, and numeracy.”11 Obviously, music here is considered an important part of learning and development. I agree with the tying together of music and classroom because, I believe, no matter the subject, music helps one learn. In another journal article, author John L. Hall also speaks of teaching with music in a classroom setting. Hall writes:

Imagine a classroom with every student engaged in the leadership lesson of the day: a class encouraging and challenging every student to individualize and take ownership of their education. This may sound like a fairy tale or a dream too good to be true, but before you dismiss this idealistic concept take a moment to think back to your childhood. As you reflect on a few of the lesson or concepts you learned then, can you remember your teachers or parents using a song to reinforce the lesson they were teaching?12

As an example of this, Hall uses the Alphabet song. He writes that many of us may recall having learned this song as a young child to learn the alphabet. It provided a catchy melody that was easy for a child to remember. His point is that as adults, we still remember these songs. Hall writes, “Music is a powerful teaching tool educators can use to create a fresh and innovative approach to learning that promises to invigorate the traditional leadership classroom.”13 I can certainly attest to this - can’t we all still sing the alphabet song? In much the same way, it was through music that I learned about the Ascension, and can still sing the anthem to this day. Beyond the psychological aspects of how music is a tool in childhood development or the pedagogy of how one learns through music, there is also the pedagogical aspect of how one learns on brain development.

11 Ibid., 4.


13 Ibid., 108.
In a presentation entitled “Music and the Young Brain,” Beatriz Ilari, Assistant Professor of Music Education at the University of Southern California, discusses her thoughts on two styles of musical learning. She says one can learn music naturally, or by enculturation, and one can learn through formal music training. Formal training, she says, changes both the function and structure of the brain and enhances one’s ability to listen to sounds and noise.14 Formal training would be more in line with choirs and choral schools. I am not sure my training in the Junior Choir at age six could be called “formal,” necessarily, but it did have structure and taught me to read music. It still had an effect on the formation of my brain. I would imagine a choral school to be much more formal. I will say that my training became more formal in college and beyond. In a journal article on early childhood music education research, author Susan Young points out that research is leading us more and more toward the pedagogical aspect of how children are learning. She writes:

Interest in increasing our understanding of music among very young children has expanded considerably in the last 20 years. Contributions span multiple academic disciplines – psychology, sociology, musicology, ethnomusicology, folklore and cultural studies, neuroscience – as well as the areas of applied research, primarily education, but increasingly therapy, community arts, parenting studies and childcare practices...To compound this complexity, the places where young children engage with music are also varied. Mainstream music education is primarily concerned with music learning and teaching in schools, but music for preschool children takes place in a wide range of places and situations. The studies reported in this special issue have been carried out in contexts that range from the home, a piano lesson, a preschool children’s centre and the New York subway.15

14 This was part of a TEDx Youth talk at Cal Tech, March 14, 2013. Accessed on YouTube on January 26, 2018.

My music education began in the church. I learned to read music by singing. In the years that followed I also began piano lessons and playing the saxophone in the band, all musical endeavors that I am sure aided in my ability to learn other subjects. Young goes on to say that in connecting research and practice, many advancements – “the recognition of children’s musical competences from birth, the diversity of early childhood musical experience, the impact of new technologies – have deepened and developed our understanding of children as musical and are influencing the design of pedagogical interventions.”

This research has dealt with music in general, not necessarily music related specifically to God. For music to be used as a tool for spiritual formation, one would have to assume God and/or Christ would be a part of the music used, taught, and learned.

Sirota, in her book previously mentioned, speaks about the role music plays in one’s relationship with God. From a performance standpoint, she writes that one can truly be called as a sacred musician. She writes that no matter how you find yourself employed, there comes a time when you need to discover whether this actually is a “calling.” She continues, “The first inkling may be the moment you realize you no longer are doing it just for the money. You find yourself playing the organ, conducting the choir, or singing the Lord’s praises because you have felt God’s delight in you as you share these musical gifts with others. You have discovered that making music on sacred ground makes you happier than anything else on earth in the deepest place of your soul.”

Once you have made that connection with God, you find yourself swept up into

16 Ibid., 13.

17 Sirota, *Preaching to the Choir*, 17.
the heavens over and over again. But, she reminds us, we have to first find that connection. She goes on to talk about Howard Gardner and his theory of multiple intelligences, one of them being musical intelligence. Sirota shares that Gardner did a lot of work and research with children and brain-damaged adults and concluded that people possess a wide range of capabilities. She writes that Gardner’s work changed the way society thought about creativity and intelligence. Gardner himself wrote that he was “challenging the widespread belief – one held by many psychologists and entrenched in our many languages – that intelligence is a single faculty and that one is either ‘smart’ or ‘stupid’ across the board.” Thus he came up with his theory of multiple intelligences.

When talking about Gardner’s thoughts on peoples’ range of capacities, Sirota writes, “linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences, traditionally tested on exams such as Scholastic Aptitude Tests, do not represent the full capacity of intelligences of which the human brain is capable. Not only did Gardner come to the conclusion that musical intelligence had been left out, but he came up with a number of other intelligences…He even discusses the possibility of existential and spiritual intelligences.” In defining musical intelligence, Gardner writes that it “entails skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. In my view, musical intelligence is almost parallel


19 Ibid., 34.

20 Sirota, Preaching to the Choir, 44-45. She is referencing Gardner’s book Intelligence Reframed.
structurally to linguistic intelligence, and it makes neither scientific nor logical sense to call one (usually linguistic) an intelligence and the other (usually musical) a talent.”

Sirota brings up Gardner’s work to make the point that while she was in Divinity School she utilized the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences a lot in her studies and the inter/intrapersonal intelligences in her Field Education and Clinical/Pastoral Education work, but it wasn’t until she tapped into the artistic, musical intelligence that she truly felt a connection to God. I would argue that one would still feel a connection to God in both Field Education and Clinical/Pastoral Education work because it is still linked to the church. Field Education is done in a parish setting and Clinical/Pastoral work is done, usually, as a hospital chaplain, but music is not necessarily involved. She writes that it is the sacred musician that connects us to another part of our brain, “to a part of ourselves that we might otherwise neglect and ignore. We need to sing, and we need to engage our entire body in the act of worship. We long to be part of something bigger than ourselves.”

I completely agree with this. It is this musical side and, indeed, the act of singing and being fully engaged in worship, that forms us and brings us closer to God. I have shared some material talking about the psychology of music, how it can be used for learning, how it works with memory, and how it is thought of as its own intelligence. How, then, is it taught or, better put, how can one be put in a position to learn music and the spiritual side that comes with it? How might one go about the pedagogical aspect of using music as a tool for spiritual formation?

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21 Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed*, 42.
22 Sirota, *Preaching to the Choir*, 45-46.
Forming a choir, and in particular a children’s choir, is one of the best ways to go about teaching music and using it as a tool for spiritual formation. This is certainly how it began for me. In his book, *Children’s Choir Basics*, author and musical director David T. Nastal gives a step by step guide on how to plan for, form, and maintain a children’s choir. He asks the question why one might want to form a children’s choir, and asks the one doing it to consider including thoughts on spiritual life, liturgical understanding, support and development of a religious education program, and the future of the church.\(^{23}\) In an answer to this question, he writes:

> Musicians are well aware of the power of music to express the inner self. Working with the language of music can foster in children the beginnings of transcendent experiences; putting those experiences in a spiritual context can strengthen a child’s belief in the constant presence of God. To a child just beginning his or her relationship with God, music is a valuable doorway into the richness of spiritual life. A children’s choir can give participants a deeper understanding of the community’s liturgies; this understanding enhances the values children learn in the religious education program. A choir that sings not only for Mass but also for sacramental celebrations, such as baptisms, first reconciliation and first communion, integrates children into the community’s liturgical life. It is no exaggeration to say that a children’s choir can affect the future of both the local parish community and the broader church. The seeds of musicianship, discipline and spiritual life bear much fruit as children grow up, attend high school and college and, often, settle in another worship community. Children who have had positive musical experiences are more likely to become actively involved in music ministry and other ministries as adults.\(^{24}\)

This will become very evident in many of my interviews. To see former choristers continue in ministry in the church speaks volumes on how music played a role in their spiritual formation. To me, it is like something is missing if music isn’t a part of my ministry, both in service to the wider church and to the parish family. In another part of


his book, Nastal discusses the spiritual development of the choristers, noting that a children’s liturgical choir is not complete without prayer. By making prayer a balanced part of their rehearsal time, they begin to connect what they do to the liturgies of the church. Nastal continues on this topic writing that every rehearsal should end in prayer, and that “every liturgy or concert should begin with prayer; it is as necessary as a vocal warm-up.” He suggests having the choristers themselves write the prayers they use in rehearsal or before a service. He writes, “Allow your prayer to become your song, and your song to become prayer. It is a powerful expression that affects both those who sing and those who listen.” Singing in a children’s choir is a great way to begin one’s spiritual formation, especially as one learns to connect the music they sing to the life, or seasons, of the church.

In another resource book for children’s choirs, author and director Tamara Makdad Albrecht, gives a guide for making this connection by teaching her choir about the liturgical year. She writes that making this connection can be difficult enough for children, but can even be difficult for adults. She shares a story in which she was teaching adults at a retreat on the liturgical year. She writes:

During this retreat, the children were having their own session on the same subject matter. They were using a booklet I had compiled that included artwork, hymns, musical Bible stories, and my original songs. Well into my session, I realized that the adults were struggling to understand the concept of how the liturgical year worked. As a last resort, and in fear of insulting the adults by using children’s material, I took the children’s packet and began using it with the adults. I showed them the pictures for each season, and we sang appropriate hymns or

25 Ibid., 54.

26 Ibid., 91.

27 Ibid., 92.
pieces that fit the picture. As we did this, they immediately understood the cycle…²⁸

It was this experience that led her to put together her book, *Singing Through the Church Year: A Children’s Choir Resource Book*. Albrecht explains that the purpose of this book is to “help children understand how each season personally relates to their spiritual life, the life of the church, and the community. The use of music is a wonderful way to embrace the church seasons and emphasize the underlying message of each season.”²⁹ Throughout the book she uses song to teach Bible verses, and adds other reasons why the use of music is helpful. Through songs and hymns children will better memorize scripture passages, be able to recognize readings done in worship, and be able to participate fully in worship.³⁰ They find their place, like I did, in the liturgy and, by singing the songs and hymns of the church year, begin to become spiritually formed. While I agree with Albrecht’s method, I do not agree with her choice of music. She seems to only use easy, “kid friendly” music. I believe the music does not have to be dumbed down to a children’s level; they can easily learn the same things with music adults sing. This will become a recurring theme in the interviews. Albrecht believes that it is the church’s responsibility to provide not only liturgical and spiritual education to children, but music education as well. It certainly would be nice if all churches could do that but, unfortunately, not all are able to provide what is needed for a children’s choir. Like Nastal, Albrecht closes her suggested rehearsal time with prayer, either spoken or


sung, but, unlike Nastal, includes time within the rehearsal for a Bible study activity. This activity is only five minutes of their time, but it allows them to focus on seasons of the church year and helps them to understand the year more fully. These are just two resource examples of how children’s choir directors help in the spiritual formation of their choristers. Moving now to the interviews I conducted with organist/music directors and clergy, we’ll see many more examples of what works with choirs, both children and adults, and how others view music as a tool for spiritual formation.

In his book *The Music of the English Church*, author Kenneth R. Long describes two music traditions as pertains to music in worship: the Parish Church tradition and the Cathedral tradition. Long writes of these traditions within the Church of England, specifically, but the traditions have definitely carried over to the Episcopal Church as well, at least in my opinion, having sung with both parish and cathedral choirs. Talking about music’s place within the worship of the church, and the creation of these two traditions, Long writes, “Within its walls can be heard all types of music from Byrd to Barnby and from plainsong to ‘pop’ song. This wide range is made possible because from its very inception…two different traditions were established…and both having their roots in the pre-Reformation Roman Church.”[^31] The parish tradition is, as one might imagine, simpler in form than the cathedral tradition. It includes more congregational participation and much less music. In the cathedral tradition there is more use of trained singers of a professional quality and therefore the ability to do much larger and more difficult works. Oftentimes, Long points out, choir schools are associated with this tradition, offering lengthy training for choristers who have been carefully selected. Even

though the names of these traditions would indicate that the two traditions would simply be the cathedral alone, and everyone else would fall under the parish tradition, this is not always the case. Long writes, “These, then, are the two traditions but the dividing line between them is extremely fluid. Many of the larger parish churches with sufficient resources model their worship on the cathedral pattern and sing quite elaborate music…”

Most of my experience in singing music in the church has been split between these two traditions. I grew up experiencing the parish tradition, sang in the cathedral tradition in college and the years following college and in seminary, then returned to the parish tradition in the places I have served as a priest. Both traditions hold special places for me, and both can effectively use music as a tool for spiritual formation. Most of the people I interviewed for this project are firmly rooted in the cathedral tradition, but many began in the parish tradition. Of the seven people interviewed, five are currently serving as musicians and two are clergy. Five of the people serve in actual cathedrals or in large parishes which are modeled on the cathedral tradition, one is a Canon musician for a diocese, and the other is a diocesan Bishop who was trained as a musician before entering the priesthood. All the interviews proved to me that music is definitely formational, and opens up ways for all who experience it to be drawn closer to God.

I did my best to follow a basic format during each interview by asking the same questions to everyone. Sometimes the questions did not come out the same way, depending on the direction each person went with their answer. What follows is my sharing of what I learned in these interviews. All interviews were conducted via phone call or FaceTime between August 2017 and January 2018 and were recorded in order to

32 Ibid., 40.
write a transcript of the conversation to be used in this project. All those interviewed were informed it was being recorded and all gave their permission for this information to be used for the purpose of this project.33 The basic questions asked were as follows:

- What has been your experience with music in the church?
- What programs have you implemented?
- How do you view music as a tool for spiritual formation?
- How important is the relationship between musicians and clergy?
- Who is your go-to composer?

The final question was one I added just for fun and it was interesting to hear them name similar composers in their responses.

My first interview was with Robert McCormick, Organist and Choirmaster at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. Mr. McCormick did not grow up in the Episcopal Church, but it was music that led him there. His first introduction to church music was in the parish where he grew up in Macon, Georgia, a downtown United Methodist Church that he described as being, “in terms of Southern Methodist, a high church.”34 Here he experienced hearing a decent pipe organ and beautiful organ music from an organist who just retired last May after 35 years, and who also was his first teacher. Mr. McCormick said he was attracted to the music and to the choirs and without that experience would not be doing what he is today. From Macon Mr. McCormick went to college at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, where a classmate invited him to St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 5th Avenue, New York City. Mr.

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33 Full transcripts of all interviews appear at the end of this project in Appendix A. Transcripts were cleaned up to remove filler words and to make coherent sentences. Some information that was not pertinent to the project was removed.

34 McCormick, Robert, 2017. Interview by author via FaceTime. August 16. All quotations and information are from this interview unless otherwise stated.
McCormick shared, “I had been to Episcopal churches before and I certainly knew something about the Anglican choral tradition.” It was there at St. Thomas that Mr. McCormick was hooked, saying what he experienced there was definitely for him. Before finishing school at Westminster he applied to be the Director of Music at St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church near Times Square in New York. He recalled that someone had suggested he put his name in, to which he replied that he hadn’t even graduated from college yet. The person simply said, “it can’t do any harm.” Mr. McCormick said, “And so, in the end, I got to play for that job when I was very green and inexperienced and very young…but, what do I have to lose?” He got the job and stayed on for seven years. From there he went to St. Paul’s, K Street, in Washington, DC for the next eight years, and then on to St. Mark’s. All throughout his journey from Georgia to these parishes in New York, Washington, and Philadelphia, it was the music that drew him in and connected him as a person of faith. Mr. McCormick said he often thinks of music as his tether to the church and to God. I asked him how he made the crossover from the United Methodist church to Anglicanism and what drew him there. He replied it was the liturgy and the choral tradition. He said that after his first visit to St. Thomas and, thereafter, visits to other Anglo-Catholic parishes, he felt a deep connection to the sacraments and, in particular, the worship being centered on the Eucharist. He commented, “That really drew me in and I realized that is what I had been looking for in my childhood youth and didn’t know it. I wouldn’t change a thing about where I grew up or how I was introduced to the faith. I grew to love God and to know God loves me, and grew to love Jesus Christ as a child in the church where I grew up and it was a wonderful foundation, but I was
attracted to another tradition.” Mr. McCormick, in a sense, felt like he had always been an Anglican Christian and found where he was supposed to be, he came home.

From here my questions began to focus more on music and its formational aspect. I wanted to know how he himself was spiritually formed by the music before seeing how he used music as a tool for the spiritual formation of others. I asked him if he found his time at Westminster to be spiritually formational. He replied that it was not so much at Westminster, but through other activities while he was still a student. In his first year he had the freedom to visit many Episcopal churches in the area and was confirmed during that time. For the next three years he would work as an organ scholar and assistant organist at Trinity Church in Princeton. It was during this time that he was immersed in the Anglican choral tradition. It was there he had the chance to “learn so much of the core repertoire of the Anglican tradition and to have the chance to work with choirs and learn to accompany.” I asked where he would say he was spiritually formed by the Anglican choral tradition and he replied it was in more than one place. He began by saying that he taught himself so much of the repertoire by listening to Anglican choral compact discs. He was formed in the English Cathedral tradition while at Trinity and by Latin chant and polyphony while at St. Mary the Virgin. He said this may not be so much Anglican as Western Catholic. He continued that every church has its unique charism and, wherever you are, you try to find that and expand it and build on it. In doing all that, he infers, formation “just sort of happens very gradually.”

Continuing with the topic of formation, I asked in what ways he was currently using music as a tool for spiritual formation. He began by talking about his adult choir, which is a mix of volunteers who have auditioned and paid singers. He said he knows
that not all of the paid singers identify as practicing Christians, but do possess a spiritual element. He tries, through his preparing them for Sundays and Feast Days, to convey to the choir the deeper components within the music they are singing. He shared an example of one chorister whom he knew to be pretty agnostic and a fairly anti-religious person. She joined the choir and, over time, through experiencing the music and liturgy, and listening to the preaching, she came to be confirmed in the church. Mr. McCormick then told me they were starting their fifth year of a rigorous children’s choral program. It was only his second year to be a part of it, but he felt that part of the reason he had been brought in was to keep building on the program. He said that while his first job is to help the children become good musicians, he realizes that for many it is their first introduction to the Christian faith through the liturgy and music. Mr. McCormick said, “While it’s not Sunday school…I do try to spend a good deal of time talking about theology behind the texts we’re singing and its meaning in the liturgy.” He does believe that as the choir director he bears a spiritual burden to help form the children and teach them about God. Music is certainly a way to do that and, I believe, even as a professional singer, if you sing enough settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, something is going to seep in. It’s going to grab you. He agreed and added, “we have some of our professional singers who would absolutely articulate they are practicing Christians, that they joined a Parish, and some who are on the fence but you know it’s working on their hearts and minds because I believe in the transformative power of music.” I asked the same of the children’s choir: is anything sinking in? Mr. McCormick felt that it was, especially as the children get older, it starts to click more for them. He told me about a Sunday school program that serves as a sort of feeder program for the choir. One of the assistant priests,
with a degree in choral conducting, leads the class. It is structured like Godly Play and introduces them to singing. He feels these two programs work well together and that the music core helps to shape and form the children. Building off the fact that one of the priests of the parish was leading the Sunday school program, I asked how important it was for clergy to understand music. Mr. McCormick felt there needs to be some level of understanding and that he is working with clergy now who are more knowledgeable than any he’s worked with before. He said, “Music is the handmaid of the liturgy.” It’s nice when the clergy understand the place of music and allow and empower the musicians to do their job,” and added, “I really appreciate working with clergy who understand and value the importance of good music and who are confident enough not to be threatened by it.” I completely agree.

Just for fun, I decided to end the interview with a final question about the people who bring them joy. I asked Mr. McCormick who his go-to composer would be for a lift and a dose of happiness. As you might imagine, it might be hard to name just one. Robert replied, “I would have to go by period. I would say Thomas Tallis from the Renaissance, then J.S. Bach, then Beethoven, maybe, or Beethoven/Brahms.” I said for me it would have to be Charles Stanford, to which he added, “I love Stanford, and Elgar. Elgar definitely makes me happy.”

My next interview was with Dr. Jared Johnson, the Organist/Choirmaster at Trinity Cathedral in Columbia, South Carolina, in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina. When asked about his background in music in the church he was quick to note that he

35 McCormick is referencing a quotation from Martin Luther, “Music is the handmaiden of theology.”
was a late bloomer, at least by industry standards. He said, “I started playing piano when I was about nine years old which, I found out as I went through music schools, was pretty late for someone who ended up doing music professionally.” This was only piano lessons, he noted, nothing religious, but he grew up going to church every Sunday at a Presbyterian church in small town Ohio. It was here he heard the organ every week and eventually, at the urging of his piano teacher, began taking lessons. Dr. Johnson said, “once I started dabbling in organ lessons I really enjoyed doing that…It’s not something I chose to do as a kid, really, it just came into my lap and I love it, I love doing it.” This led to playing regularly at a couple churches in his hometown which, as he said, was a back door entrance into being a church musician. As a freshman in high school he got his first paid position as a church organist and so solidified his presence in church every week playing and participating in the service. Just being in the church and in the building, in the hallways around parishioners, all of that helped form him from childhood. He commented on this, saying, “That certainly doesn’t answer your question on how music formed me, except maybe in a practical way in that it put me in contact with the church, and it put me, physically, in the building a lot of the time. For me, part of the other formation that I think about just happens by the grace of being present, by being in the service, by being committed to being in the service, having a role to do that made me go every Sunday.” Dr. Johnson didn’t experience the Episcopal Church until he was a freshman at Oberlin College where, he said, he fell for it pretty hard and never looked back. He was confirmed in the Episcopal Church his first year out of college. He said, “I’ve been a devotee of the Book of Common Prayer and the hymnal, I think those are

36 Johnson, Jared. 2017. Interview by author via phone. September 6. All quotations and information are from this interview unless otherwise stated.
two really wonderful tools for formation. I think the hymnal is appreciated but may be undervalued as a book that’s not just about music, but is full of prayers and ways about talking to God and listening to God.” At this point he was firmly rooted in the Episcopal Church. I commented that it sounded like it was music that drew him to the church week after week, albeit because he was the organist and playing for the service. He commented that he had been going to church with his family every week anyway, playing just committed him even more and gave him another reason to be there. He said unlike other adolescents or college students who may have drifted away from the church, he didn’t, it never came up for him. He had found a place where he was at home.

At this point I shifted my focus a little and began to dig deeper into the formational aspect of music. I asked him if he felt that the service had a different impact on him as the one playing and not just as one in the pew. He answered that it did, in part by being more attentive to what was going on because he had to be. He also suggested it might be similar for me, as one leading the service, saying of course it is a different experience once we are not sitting in the pew anymore. Different is an appropriate word. Dr. Johnson said, “For me, now, it’s a challenge…to get past all the practical responsibilities and to feel like I am fully present in body, mind, and spirit in the liturgy and not preoccupied with ‘am I getting all the other people that I’m responsible to prepare ready?’” I agreed with that sentiment. I then lamented a bit that how I experience the liturgy now is different from how I experienced it as a chorister. I still can hear the music and let the words wash over me, I just have a different job to do while still feeling it’s where I belong. Dr. Johnson asked me if I grew up singing and where. I gave some more background and said that my experience is what led me to want to write this paper.
It was the singing and the music that first began to form me in the church and give me a place to feel like I was contributing and belonged. It was in singing those songs that I felt I learned about sacraments and stories of Jesus. Dr. Johnson explained that he didn’t have the option to sing in a choir as a kid because they didn’t have one, but now, as one who leads a children’s choir, he sees the formational value it has for children. He commented on the choristers’ contact with the words, that is, the texts of the music they sing, saying, “We’re not just singing, we’re singing these sacred texts which are going deep into our consciousness.” In other words, we are being spiritually formed. He asked if I could remember words I sang as a boy, or if I heard the start of a text could I finish it? I replied that I could because these words, these sacred texts, were now a part of me. Dr. Johnson agreed, saying, “They go deep into your memory, into your spirit, don’t they?” He then made a sports analogy, talking about the choir like a team. Dr. Johnson said it’s extraordinary to have this group doing something that’s bigger than themselves. It’s palpable and an experience unlike any other. He then likened it to a sports team working together, though felt like the church had a much higher purpose than sport. “And the thing we’re dealing with,” he said, “is such good nutrition. It’s the sacred texts, and in our tradition those texts are set to music by great artists. It’s just so doggone formative if you’re just setting out to fulfill that role for the church, it just all falls into place for the kids.” I thought the team analogy was good, but offered that with the choir it’s the whole team participating at once, whereas in team sports they all can’t be on the field at the same time. “That’s a really good point,” Dr. Johnson said, adding that he’s such a

37 Interestingly, a similar sports analogy will be used in interviews with Cindy DeDakis and Richard Webster.
believer in the choir singing those sacred texts as a team. “I’ve seen it change lives over and over and over,” he said.

This felt like a good point to transition into how he was using music as a tool for spiritual formation. What kinds of things was he doing with his choirs? Dr. Johnson said he cares enormously for his singers and their formation, but that’s not their goal. Their goal is to sing for the church, offer this to God, devote themselves to this task and the formation will come. In other words, if they set formation as their goal it won’t necessarily happen. It’s when they work toward that higher purpose that things start to happen. Dr. Johnson said he does do some things with his choir that have some formational aspects. He said he almost always starts his treble rehearsals with something they call “talk time.” He explained this, saying, this is “where we’ll sit around and talk for a time. It’s usually not something like, ‘Did you watch the Superbowl,’ it’s more about something we’re doing…today’s topic is…what’s a Sacrament, and we’ll have a little discussion about it.” Eventually, he said, the children get comfortable talking about important things in that context. The group also prays together, starting and ending in prayer. So in the space of a choral rehearsal they have prayer and a discussion about a topic relevant to the church, and also music. “Music is a way to get at it,” he said, “but it’s not ‘how do you tune the third in A major?’ We do that in choir rehearsal, but in ‘talk time’ we’ll talk about more spiritual, life issues, and I think very quickly those things start to go together.”

Dr. Johnson offered an example of his girls’ choir having a discussion one time. He asked the question, “Does it matter what the choir sounds like?” He said one could argue God wouldn’t necessarily care, God could unravel whatever you were trying to say.
The girls concluded that if they were together in their mission and working hard, their sound would be better than if they each did their own individual thing. The sound does matter because it represents a healthy, good spiritual process. They offer their best.

Other things his choirs do include touring together and attending choir camp together every summer. Each provides strong bonding experiences. At camp they lead Compline every night with one child doing a prepared homily. All of these experiences add to their spiritual formation that is caught up in the music they sing. It is the making of music, the offering they give to the Lord, that brings them together and allows them to be formed through all these things. To this point, Dr. Johnson said, “Our choristers, when they graduate, they’re going to know the prayer book, they’re going to know a lot of the psalms by heart, a lot of the hymns and liturgical actions by heart and, hopefully, just fall in love with the church. So wherever they go there’s going to be an Episcopal Church and they’re going to be able to find their way in.” He explained that he is in his fifteenth year of leading choirs, so he has been around long enough to see kids go through the program and continue serving the church through music. I tried to recap by saying that he doesn’t always set out a plan for formation, but through his mission and purpose to sing to the glory of God, things come along. He agreed, but said that once we realize it’s not about us and get out of the way, formation can take place. Again, I shifted focus a little to talk about mechanics and how he might ask the group if they think about the words they sing.

I believe that when we break down what we’re singing and really focus on the words, whether scripture or poetry or whatever the author wrote, we have a better understanding of how to interpret the piece and how to present it. Mechanically
speaking, we sing it in a better way. Dr. Johnson agreed and shared a wonderful example of this while rehearsing with his girls’ choir. He said they were practicing a piece by Benjamin Britten called *The Birds*, a piece written as a teenager and dedicated to his mother. He said the last phrase is quiet and continues to get quieter at the end and the girls were having a hard time with it. He said they worked on it, broke up in groups with a voice teacher, and got a little better at it. Then, he said, “towards the end of the rehearsal I asked them to read the words again, asked them to notice who the piece was dedicated to, and I told them that Britten had written that piece when he was about their age and to think about what that might mean…the girls thought about that for a few minutes and we had a little discussion. They sang it again and it was perfect.” I said they’ll always remember that. He said he thought so, too, and they would carry that with them. He said, “That’s one of the greatest aspects of music as a tool for formation because it’s just a simple thing like that.” I completely agree.

I followed this up with the question about the importance of the relationship between the organist/choirmaster and the clergy, noting that I am always aware of it having come from the choral side and now being a priest. Dr. Johnson said the relationship is vital. He added, “I don’t want to overstate it, but it’s like life or death for the success of the musician, for sure.” He also said we don’t have to look very far to see examples of bad relationships that exist in the church. When the relationship works, however, it feeds the common life of the church. He said that he has had nothing but good experiences with the clergy he has worked with, but hears about other musicians who are unhappy because they are micromanaged by clergy who do not know music that

well. Dr. Johnson said one of the issues is also one of power. The rector, specifically, has the canonical control of the music in worship and sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn’t. “Music,” he said, “is a complicated issue, and it’s emotional for everyone…there needs to be a really good symbiotic relationship between the clergy and musicians because if they don’t get along it shows.” We talked about education and how it would be helpful for all clergy to get some music training along the way and for musicians to get some training in liturgy. Certainly, some do in both cases, but that’s not always the case. Speaking about this relationship, Dr. Johnson made a good point. He said he thinks musicians should have an obligation to understand, or empathize, with what a priest is doing. He said, “We see the tip of the iceberg and we don’t see all the time you spend in the hospital or in the home of bereaved families. We know that happens, but we don’t necessarily notice it.” Then he added this about musicians, “I think musicians get a chip on their shoulder sometimes because they feel misunderstood. No one knows that I’m here on Saturday night practicing really hard, or that I have to do all this administrative work during the week in order for the choir to be prepared.” He then offered that the two sides should just sit down and talk and learn about each other in order to build good, fruitful relationships. This was a good discussion, but then we brought it back to music and its formational use.

Dr. Johnson told me something that he often says to his choirs, that “music is not about music, it’s a language the does something else.” What he means by this is that music connects people, it goes deeper and higher than words, he said. He said one of the reasons his chorister program is so successful is because it fills a niche that schools can’t
anymore. He said schools can’t afford to hire a full time musician, or don’t have enough class time to teach, or for whatever reason can’t teach choral music in a way that keeps up with the pace of the church. Kids who are in the chorister program are taught music. They are given the time to really be incorporated and learn. Dr. Johnson said the kids get “a great education that they’re not able to find in a lot of places. It’s still not just about the music, it’s music as a means to get to some other higher purpose.” It’s music connecting you to God.

We talked a little more and I concluded with my composer question. Who is your go-to composer, I asked, who takes you to your happy place? He answered, much like Mr. McCormick, that it’s hard to pick just one. He settled on Herbert Howells. “I’m a nut for Herbert Howells,” he said. “I think there’s something about that language that just transports me to my kind of imaginary ideal spiritual vocation.” Music is a language, a language that has the ability to transport us up to our Creator. It also forms us and shapes us and allows us to understand our faith in a way that lets us communicate it with others.

Dr. Marty Wheeler Burnett, Canon Precentor at Trinity Cathedral in Omaha, Nebraska, was the next interview I conducted. I have known Marty for years, but did not know her full story about how she got her start in music and the church. I began, again, by repeating my background experience in the Junior Choir at age six and how the Ascension Day anthem had such an effect on me. I told her how the choir had formed me and how it gave me my place in the church. I then asked her what her experience had been. She shared that she grew up in the United Methodist Church. Her first years were

39 This is a common sentiment that will be voiced by others in these interviews.
spent in Houston, Texas, but she doesn’t remember much about that church except for “getting dressed up in scratchy clothes, which I hated, and wearing a hat and gloves which people still did in Texas in the sixties.”\textsuperscript{40} She remembered the next church, though, in Midland, Michigan, where they lived for five years. Music was a big part of this church and she said she remembered being in awe of the choir and organ. Her family moved back to Houston and, in the third grade, she joined the children’s choir at her church. She was also taking piano lessons at the time. She also remembered that her time in the children’s choir was during the seventies when the church had several hymnal supplements, lots of folk and contemporary music in addition to the traditional music. She described the choir as being part of the musical leadership of the church. They sang almost every week at the eight thirty service and so had a great deal of responsibility. Dr. Burnett recalled these were very formative years for her. Not only did she sing with the children’s choir, but they would sometimes join the adult choir to do larger works such as Handel’s \textit{Messiah},\textsuperscript{41} and various oratorios and cantatas. She was exposed to a wide range of choral literature which, I believe, only added to her formation. In addition to her being in the choir, she shared that she also played piano for one of the men’s Bible classes. They would always start by singing hymns out of the \textit{Cokesbury Hymnal}\textsuperscript{42} and she would play for them. Dr. Burnett said it allowed her to really practice sight reading, learn hymns, and skip Sunday school! Reflecting back on her experience, Dr. Burnett said she was glad that people actually got to do things in the church, including children. She said,

\textsuperscript{40} Burnett, Marty Wheeler. 2017. Interview by author via phone. September 21. All quotations and information are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

\textsuperscript{41} Georg Frideric Handel, \textit{Messiah}, 1742.

“It wasn’t just sitting back and waiting your turn. If you wanted to be involved and have a leadership role there were opportunities to do that.” I commented that she might have learned more Bible based material in the music field than in Sunday school. She agreed and added that, through music in the church, we learn a lot about the church, about scripture, and we internalize a lot of it by living it and doing it. I agreed and said that is exactly my point. I agreed with her word choice of “internalize” because that’s what we do, particularly in the choir. We sing pieces over and over and it just sinks in. I shared that if someone were to ask us to sing something from Messiah, we would be able to do it at the drop of a hat because we knew it, it was a part of us and helped form us. Dr. Burnett added that when we hear scripture we associate it so many times with a musical setting, you hear it in your mind. I said I do that all the time, just ask my congregation. Any piece that I’ve sung with a scriptural text, or psalm tunes, I will always hear them in my head as the words are read. It certainly sounded like Dr. Burnett and I had very similar experiences growing up.

From here I asked her how she viewed music as a tool for spiritual formation. “That’s a big question,” she said, “and an important one.” She said it is one of the best tools at our disposal because of the way it appeals to people of all ages, but also integrates the senses and is able to reach people at a deeper spiritual level. Dr. Burnett said, for young people, singing is so natural because it’s as natural an expression as talking, and “it simply makes sense to use that as a tool for spiritual formation.” She went on to talk about how music fills a spiritual need, especially since children are not getting music in school or any other place. She said we used to get it in school, but that doesn’t happen much anymore. She continued that music “reaches a place for many of us
that nothing else reaches. It allows us a sense of communion that’s very deep and profound. It goes beyond words, and words are important, but the music, for me, is a path to the Divine. It’s a path to a deeper level and allows me to encounter God in a way that I don’t in any other method.” I agreed, and added that music stirs us in a way mere words cannot. Dr. Burnett talked about music memory, and that there are many studies on music and brain development. She shared a story about a Christmas concert she once did and how she had received a note from a woman who had attended that concert with her husband, who was a stroke victim. The woman said the man had not spoken a word since his stroke, but as soon as he heard the music begin for “Hark! the herald angels sing” he stood up and proceeded to sing every word from memory. He didn’t speak again after that. The music triggered something in the brain and gave him his voice again.

I asked Dr. Burnett if she implemented anything with her choirs specific to spiritual formation or if was something that just happened out of being there and singing. She said she does do some specific things, like starting with prayer. With the adults she has a choir prayer but also dedicated prayer time at the end of rehearsal. She added that the choir is such an important community within a larger church, so it’s important that there is spiritual support for the group, and that they are given a time to share life’s joys and sorrows. Her children’s program, the Cantate Choral Academy, is run following the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) model of choral training, which allows you to incorporate other learning tools into and around your rehearsal. Dr. Burnett said every

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43 This is a point Richard Webster will also make in my interview with him.

44 This coincides with points I made earlier in the project about music memory and brain development.
Wednesday the kids pray Evening Prayer together, assisting in the leadership, and they also take classes, rehearse, and share a meal together along with their families. She said they are intentional about offering opportunities for prayer and worship, which along with the singing and learning music, add to their formation.

I told her how one of the other people I had interviewed shared her view on the schools not really teaching music in the same way anymore, and how the church choir was filling that void. She replied that it is true in her part of the country, but suspects it may be true elsewhere, that even schools with a strong music program are not doing classic repertoire the way they once did. She shared that when she was in public high school she was singing both major sacred and secular works. She sang the Duruflé *Requiem,* the Britten *Ceremony of Carols,* and Victoria’s *O Magnum Mysterium.* Now, she said, “even in the schools that have classical repertoire, the sacred is largely ignored.” She lamented that schools once provided that spiritual connection for kids who did not grow up in the church. Church, now, is the only place to encounter the great music of the church throughout history. She added, “Not just tradition, but that history of all these great composers who created art glorifying God. There’s that sense of being part of this long procession of Christians, of people who have encountered God through music.” Dr. Burnett told me she makes a point with her choirs to use music from all eras.

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45 Interview with Dr. Jared Johnson.


48 Tomás Luis de Victoria, *O Magnum Mysterium,* 1572.
so they gain an understanding that God’s spirit is still working in composers and artists, men and women, even today.

As she had mentioned before, she follows the RSCM model with her children’s choir, which she began in the fall of 2016. I asked if RSCM provided any guidelines as to how things should be structured. She said the RSCM in America provides a curriculum called “Voice for Life,” but that it’s adaptable to your own situation. It is a structured program that allows choristers to move through the different levels and earn colored ribbons and medallions. They also have classes along with rehearsals which cover topics such as musicianship and liturgy, which includes learning about the hymnal, prayer book, and church music. This is in addition to Evening Prayer and a meal. I commented that there are elements of formation in the program aside from the music, but it is the music that brings them together in the first place. Dr. Burnett shared that the cathedral used to have a children’s choir program years before but it died. She said it was too performance oriented. They would bring the children in to sing an anthem and then take them out. Dr. Burnett said that is not her approach at all, adding, “If the kids are going to be there they are going to sing the liturgy and be up there.” She said their behavior might not be perfect, but they will learn. She also added that the current program works because it teaches the children that they have an important role to play in the worship. It shows them that they are being taken seriously and have something to contribute. Their music is not just kid music, but significant music and they appreciate it and have fun doing it. I realized in the two years she has had the program she would not have much data on the impact it will have on the children when they are older, but I shared what Dr. Jared Johnson had said about many of his choristers remaining in music
or at least in the church. Dr. Burnett felt this would be true with her group, saying participation in the choir gives kids the chance to “not only experience God in a deep and meaningful way, but to see how they can use their own gifts and talents in service of God in the church.”

I then shifted to ask her what she thought about the relationship between clergy and musicians. She replied it is critically important, adding, “The rector has the authority over worship and that person can choose to work with a musician in an approach of shared ministry and teamwork, or they can make the situation impossible and everything in between.” She continued to say that the most successful music ministries have a rector who understands the importance of music. She said the size of a parish matters as well because in smaller, rural communities, parishes might not be able to afford musicians or even full time clergy, and the relationship between the two will function much differently. I brought up that Dr. Johnson had mentioned how important it was that seminaries teach their students about music so they will be prepared when they enter a parish. I said Sewanee did a good job with this. Dr. Burnett agreed, but said not all seminarians are getting the musical education they should, especially in the local diocesan schools of ministry. I commented that I thought residential seminaries were still going to be the best at forming and training priests for the church, and that Sewanee will continue to incorporate music into its programming. I then asked Dr. Burnett if she had anything else to share and she talked about how we need to have a healthy approach to music education. She said all too often she hears about how people have had horrible experiences in children’s choir. We need to do a better job with a healthy, positive, and
affirming approach to teaching our kids, as well as making sure all teachers and volunteers go through safeguarding training.

Finally, I asked her what I had asked my first two people I interviewed, who was her go-to composer. She answered Johann Sebastian Bach. She added it was hard to choose just one, but if she had to pick one it would be Bach. Dr. Burnett said that Bach’s music “continues to speak on many levels. It’s a music language that transports me to another place and helps me see the divine.” I shared that of the two I had asked already, one said Bach and one said Howells. She agreed Howells was wonderful, as well.

From Omaha, Nebraska, to Baltimore, Maryland, my next interview was with Cindy DeDakis, Canon Musician for the Diocese of Maryland. Like everyone I had interviewed up to this point, Ms. DeDakis did not grow up in the Episcopal Church. Her background was in the Lutheran Church where she started singing in the choir at age 3 or 4. She said that back then, growing up in the Lutheran Church was different from growing up in the Episcopal Church. She said it was the same, “in many ways, because it’s liturgical, but in the Lutheran Church everybody sang. Everybody sang, not just the choir, but everybody.”49 Ms. DeDakis’ background was similar to mine in that because she had sung in a choir from an early age, she felt very connected to the liturgy. She said, “I was singing in a choir from an early age and, frankly, I cannot separate music and worship. They are so intertwined with me that my faith, my spirituality, is just very tied to music and always has been. I felt that was my place.” That’s exactly how I felt. By singing in the choir I knew I had found my place. Ms. DeDakis also shared with me the

49 DeDakis, Cindy. 2017. Interview by author via phone. September 25. All quotations and information are from this interview unless otherwise stated.
same thoughts I had about my experience with the Ascension anthem when I was six, that the music had formed me. She said that she knew from an early age that once you sing something it can stick with you. She said, “when you sing something, when music is tied to it, and you’ve sung the texts, they get implanted, stuck in there deep, and it doesn’t come out, it’s always there.” Ms. DeDakis went to college to study music and become a music educator, a teacher, which she did for a while. She then went on to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin where she earned a degree in choral conducting. It was there, in Madison, that she found the Episcopal Church. While working in a small Lutheran church, she was asked by St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church to come and audition to be the choir director. She did, got the job, and never looked back. She described the time she came to St. Andrew’s as an eye opening experience because of the music she encountered. It was in the music that she really began to see a connection to spiritual formation.

Growing up in the Lutheran Church she was very accustomed to singing chorales. She said that when she hears a Bach chorale it continues to speak to her very deeply because so many of the Lutheran hymns she grew up with were chorales. When she came to the Episcopal Church she discovered all these anthems and hymns, Anglican hymns, that she had never heard or known and they, too, began to speak to her in a very deep way. She said that a whole new world, musically and spiritually, had opened up to her. “In the Episcopal Church,” she said, “one of the many treasures is that we have texts that are amazing texts, great poetry, and it’s wedded to really incredible music, and the combination of those things is very powerful.”50 She added that reading the texts alone

50 This is a point Richard Webster will stress as well in my interview with him.
or listening to a tune can affect you emotionally, but when you “put the best combination of the text and the tune together, it can really have an amazing effect on people.” Ms. DeDakis talked about how the music of Evensong was a valuable tool, especially in working with kids, for spiritual formation. Evensong is good because you sing the same texts every time. You sing the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis every time, the same words, but set by different composers. She said you learn something new every time because you hear the same words in different ways, but the words eventually sink in and become a part of you. My thoughts exactly. She recalled a conversation she once had with choristers who were new to singing Evensong. They would look at the music and say, “wait, we’ve already sung this,” to which she replied, “and guess what, you’re going to sing it a lot more!” She told me how they would have a conversation about how these texts would be used on a regular basis and how people all over the world would be singing them. She told the choir that at almost every hour of the day a choir somewhere would be singing Evensong, and they began to understand and make the connection that they were part of something bigger. This connected with them spiritually.

Ms. DeDakis’ current position with the Diocese of Maryland is to consult with parishes and help them with their music programs. I asked her about what programs she had implemented and how she has used music as a tool for spiritual formation. She shared that when she was working with the Girls’ Choir at St. Philip’s Cathedral in Atlanta, Georgia, she discovered the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). She had not encountered it until then, but began using it because it was a part of their chorister training and program. She said she observed in Atlanta that there was a wide age range in the choristers, fourth grade through twelfth. In many churches, she said, music would
be given on an age appropriate basis, or graded, for children’s choir. What she learned through the RSCM method, and still firmly believes, is that all those ages can work together if you give them good music. Children are fully capable of working on and singing good music. The idea is by putting older, more experienced choristers, with the younger ones helps them learn and mature. Ms. DeDakis said in doing this you are teaching them skills and giving them building blocks to become good musicians, and it starts with giving them the right music. They are learning the same music as the adults, and they are able to participate at an equal level. Through this the children find their place in the service of the church. Ms. DeDakis used a team analogy to describe the children’s participation, similar to what Dr. Jared Johnson talked about in my interview with him. Ms. DeDakis said that when she starts choral programs in churches, one of her selling points to parents of would be choristers is that their child is never going to be sitting on the bench waiting to be put in the game. She said, “they’re going to be participating all the time, and it’s through that continued participation that they absorb and learn and become better and better musicians, but they’re also absorbing everything else.” It’s that “everything else” that helps shape and form them, but it’s the music that brings them there. Ms. DeDakis talked about other formational aspects of teaching the choristers, such as having discussions about the texts they are singing, about the liturgy and what things mean, and about the seasons of the church year. She said it is important to know why we do things and how it is tied to the liturgical seasons. She also said that just through the commitment the kids make to being a chorister helps to form them.

Things like regular attendance at rehearsals, taking care of their music and vestments, and

51 This is another shared point Mr. Webster will stress in his interview.
helping younger choristers all play a part in formation of the whole person. She said that it’s just as important to show up and be on time as it is to sit quietly in the service, and also as it is to sing the right notes of that Bach aria. “And,” she adds, “I think a lot of the really important spiritual things can seep in without necessarily hitting them head-on.” I agreed, saying that part of the formation is in the repetitiveness, hearing things over and over, and that, in time, it will sink in. She said kids learn so much by participating in the choir. She brought up a point I have already mentioned about music being linked to memory, how learning something through song helps you remember it. She said this is particularly true with psalms. Singing the psalms, especially with Anglican chant, solidifies them in your mind to the point you will always remember them. I agreed with this and said I could still sing most of the chants I had learned and can remember words to the psalms. They stick with you.

I moved the conversation in a little different direction by sharing with her the comments I had already heard from the other people I had interviewed about how having a chorister program fills a need in the community. It gives the kids a safe space to come and learn and, while it doesn’t necessarily set itself up to be a tool for spiritual formation, it becomes one. She agreed and shared a story of a chorister program she helped start at St. John’s, Lafayette Square, in Washington, DC. Her story is similar to ones shared by others I have interviewed. The chorister program really, in a way, became a ministry of outreach. Ms. DeDakis said she had children from lots of different countries in the program. She also said how she never did auditions, only interviews, for children to join because she never wanted to turn a child away based on musical ability. She said she had children in the program whose families were atheist, but that didn’t change the way she
did the program, they still participated in church. They were still a part of the liturgy and even if they didn’t join in saying the Creed, or other parts of the service, they were still hearing it. She said, “They’re hearing everything that’s being spoken and sung and prayed in these services, and we can never say what kinds of things are sinking in.” Her point, and the point of others sharing similar stories, is that they were still being formed through this experience. I followed this by asking about her thoughts on the relationship between the musicians and clergy.

I shared with her my background of coming into the priesthood as a former chorister. I think my situation is unique in that I have an understanding of both music and liturgy, but I know it is not the same everywhere. I shared how frustrating it can be when one side doesn’t understand the other. Ms. DeDakis agreed and said it is equally dangerous when the clergy think they know more about music than the musician. She said she believes the relationship between musicians and clergy is crucial, especially when looking to start a new chorister program. She said the music director and rector need to sit down and be on the same page about how the program will work. It’s a vital relationship and clergy support of the program only makes it stronger. She said when a rector understands that the role these choristers play in liturgy, in worship, and in the life of the community is an important one, the whole community is strengthened. I believe this is true and, when those kids are strong in the community, they will become stronger adults in the community. Understanding how music and liturgy work together is key.

We wound down the conversation and I asked her my final question about her go-to composer. Again, like some of the others, she said it was hard. She settled on Howells
and, in particular his *Te Deum*⁵² because it moved her. I shared how the answers to this had been interesting so far, that those on the organist side went with Bach and those on the conducting side have gone with Howells. I guess it just goes to show how good music continues to bring us all together in similar ways.

Finally, it was time to speak with someone on the clergy side. My next interview was with the Rev. Sean Mullen, rector of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. This was particularly interesting to me because I had already interviewed his organist, so hearing from both musician and clergy in the same parish was fun. Unlike the others I had interviewed up to this point, Fr. Mullen, like me, grew up in the Episcopal Church. He said, “I am, uncharacteristically, like yourself, or I’m assuming like yourself, a cradle Episcopalian, which puts us in the minority as Episcopal clergy.”⁵³ He went to church because his parents went to church. He, along with his siblings, went to the Episcopal school connected to their parish. It was there he began to sing canticles at Morning Prayer and sing in the church choir. When he was eight they lived on the south shore of Nassau County on Long Island. He said his parents liked to take him into New York City to visit big churches. One day they went to St. Thomas, 5th Avenue, on Palm Sunday and his parents learned about the Choir School. He was too young at the time to join, but his parents contacted the Headmaster who said that if he was still interested in a year they could call back and he would start the process. He was still interested and went to St. Thomas to join the Choir School in 1977. Fr. Mullen said it was a deeply formative experience for him in many ways. He said it formed his Christian identity and his

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⁵³ Mullen, Sean. 2017. Interview by author via phone. October 2. All quotations and information are from this interview unless otherwise stated.
understanding of the liturgy. It was also formative in that when he started there in 1977 it was the before the church’s regular adoption of *The Book of Common Prayer 1979*, so from 1977 to 1981 he experienced the change in the prayer book and the moving of a primarily Morning Prayer parish to one that was eucharistically centered. He found all that deeply engaging and important and loved being a part of it. While at the Choir School he had four hugely important influences in his life at the time. “There was the headmaster, Gordon Clem, who was a low churchman, to be sure, but was a committed church person and his idea that the school was a prestigious school was never wavering. John Andrew, the rector at the time, whose presence and preaching, and general persona, had a big influence on me. Gerre Hancock was my choirmaster, his musicianship and excellence had a very profound effect on me.” The fourth one he mentioned was Gary Fertig who, for most of that time, was the chaplain of the Choir school and who would become a mentor and friend and have a profound influence on Fr. Mullen and his ministry. He said that in those days, Gerre taught the theology class which, he added, “seems really comical.” They were still using the *Hymnal 1940* because it was still the official one at the time, and Fr. Mullen recalled that Gerre probably told them that was their [theological] text and used it as such. He said he actually remembers “very little of any theology Gerre might have taught us, except that his personal influence on us was immense. Our devotion to him, our affection to him, and our conviction that Gerre was one of the best teachers and friends we could have was unshakable.” He mentioned that he could line people up from those days in the choir school who would tell you the same thing about Gerre. Then he mentioned how many, many people from those days ended up going into church music, and how a lot of other people from that era were deeply
affected by Gerre. When he left the Choir School he went to prep school in Connecticut and sang in the choir but was deeply unhappy about it because the quality of the singing was so inferior. Fr. Mullen noted that it was always a cause of frustration. During his freshman year he told me he would walk into the town every Sunday morning to sing with the parish church choir. Fr. Mullen said this was nice, but he missed singing with a men and boys choir and felt pulled back to that since it was such a part of him, so he started singing with the Cathedral Choir in Hartford where the organist/choirmaster at the time was Phil Isaacson. He shared an experience from his time in Hartford that was very formative for him. He told me that up to this point in his life he had only sung one Bach motet, *Lobet den Herrn.*

While singing with the Cathedral Choir he sang his second Bach motet, *Jesu, meine Freude,* and then he commented, “I think if I could only have six pieces of music in my life, they might be the six Bach motets…It’s a pretty valuable thing to learn as a kid.” Obviously, singing these motets meant a lot to him, formed him. After prep school he went to college in Virginia and, like most college students, distanced himself a little bit from the church, but was a part of the Canterbury Club at the local parish church and sang in a choir for their weekly evening service. “It was still music that kept me connected to the life of the church,” he said.

Fr. Mullen moved to Washington, DC following college. He lived there for four years and this proved to be a very pivotal time in his life as it was here that he fully discerned his calling to the priesthood. Shortly after moving to Washington, Fr. Mullen, again felt the desire to sing with a men and boys choir. In his first month there he found

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himself auditioning at the National Cathedral. He was hired to be one of the men in the choir but his start was delayed. The week he was to begin, the Rt. Rev. John T. Walker, Bishop of Washington, died. Fr. Mullen recalled that he received a phone call saying that this was a bad week and could he start next week? One of the reasons this was more difficult is that Bishop Walker also served as the Dean of the Cathedral. He said he did not know Bishop Walker, but the start of his singing with the Cathedral Choir would forever be linked to him. Fr. Mullen said that, at the time, the National Cathedral was “committedly non-parochial,” which would prove to be important to him down the road.

He said he was in his early twenties and trying to figure out what to do with his life. Most of his friends on The Hill were going to business school or law school, but he didn’t want to do that. He thought about becoming an educator but that was not right, either. He said the choir, the church, and the church community he was a part of at the cathedral were all very important to him. Thinking about all this, he told me, brought to mind and revived a conversation he remembered having about ministry when he was 13 years old with a priest who was the father of one of his friends at the St. Thomas Choir School. Remembering this “ignited his own internal discernment,” and he began to talk to and rely on the clergy at the cathedral for their insight and guidance. He said the cathedral would have been a great place to do all this and that the worshipping community there would have been great to sponsor him in seminary, but it was not possible. Because the cathedral was non-parochial he could not go through them. He turned to the Interim Provost, The Rev. Sanford Garner, who proved to be such a helpful mentor. Garner suggested that if he still had connections at St. Thomas in New York, he might want to go through them. Fr. Mullen said that he still was close to the rector at St. Thomas, John
Andrew, and his former chaplain, Gary Fertig, and so he was sponsored by St. Thomas. Fr. Mullen moved to New York where he began seminary at General. Fr. Mullen shared a wonderful story, really telling on himself, and his relationship with one of his professors, David Hurd. He said that he, Fr. Mullen, was a total snob about his church musicianship, especially since he was “running up the street all the time to St. Thomas.” He said he complained bitterly about the decisions David Hurd made about the music in the chapel but, added, David was always understanding and kind and never once pushed back against his complaints. Fr. Mullen said he realized less than a year out of seminary what a fine teacher David had been and, “how important some of his insistences were, and how lucky I was to have been a student, albeit reluctant student, of his and learn from him. I count David as an important influence.”

Fr. Mullen shifted gears here to talk about music and, particularly, music at St. Mark’s. He shared that he had never been in a church where music wasn’t important. It might have been more successful in some places than others, but music had always been an important part of any church he had been in, including St. Mark’s. He has been there for fifteen years and said that it is a place that has taken music seriously for a long time. He gave a little history of the parish and said that there had been a men and boys choir for about one hundred thirteen years. In 1979, however, partly due, he believed, to declining numbers in the parish and in the city of Philadelphia, the choir was shut down. By the time he had come to St. Mark’s in 2002, inroads had been made in the parish by a previous rector to increase participation of families and children. In 2008 they decided to start a children’s choir and changed their worship schedule to include a nine o’clock service that would be a sung service utilizing this choir. Due to the financial crisis of that
year they were not able to add the choir, but kept the service change. So they had a sung mass with no choir to help lead the music. In 2011 he hired an assistant, the Rev. Erika Takacs, to help in the area of music with children. Together, they wanted to see if they could use music as a way to build ministry with families. Fr. Mullen said they needed to play to their strengths, which were worship and music. One of the things they did was to make sure the children stayed in the service and didn’t leave for Sunday school, which was a common theme in almost all of my interviews. In 2013 the vestry committed money to hire a part-time director of children’s music and they brought on Darryl Roland who had had great success with the Cathedral Choir School in the Diocese of Delaware. Fr. Mullen said Roland was committed and talented and was there for two years. He founded the Choir of Boys and Girls, which was a separate entity from the Parish Choir which was led by the organist/choirmaster. In 2015 both Roland and the current organist/choirmaster left, an interim was hired for a year, and they had to make a decision about whether to keep the choirs separate or under the direction of one person. In 2016 they hired Robert McCormick as the organist/choirmaster and he now leads both choirs, often combining them for certain services during the year. Going back to the time he hired the Rev. Erika Takacs, Fr. Mullen added an important revelation. He said that he had told Mother Takacs that they had to come up with a way to get the kids involved. He said, “I have this suspicion that music is not just something that’s nice and good for us, I think, because of my own personal experience, and I think you’re going to tell me you have the same experience…that music is an important tool in Christian formation.” Mother Takacs replied, “Of course it is, it’s an invaluable tool,” (which speaks exactly to
my point) and they decided they needed to build a Christian education/Sunday school program around music, and Schola was formed.

The program borrows from Godly Play and other models, but includes music, liturgy, and singing. As we already heard Robert McCormick say, the program has been a great feeder to the Choir of Boys and Girls. Now they needed an education program for older children and have just started one which has been mostly filled by boys and girls who have aged out of the choir. I shared with him that it was obvious how important music was to his parish, and that they are committed to it. I said that since I, too, had a background in music, I could never understand clergy who just dismiss music as if it’s not important. Nor could I understand parish vestries and wardens who think that if we need to make budget cuts we can just do it from the music budget or get rid of paid singers. They don’t understand why those things are needed and necessary to the life of the parish, don’t understand how music helps a parish. Fr. Mullen added that it is true they do spend a lot of money on music and music programs. But, he said, “One of the reasons we are able to do this with integrity at St. Mark’s is that we also spend a lot of money taking care of the poor. We always articulate our mission as a double mission, to worship God and take care of God’s people.”

I came to my final question where I asked Fr. Mullen who his go-to composer would be. He mentioned how he is not good at favorites, and how he had already said that if he could only have six pieces of music in his life it would be the Bach motets. So he said Bach, but quickly changed that to say the *Hymnal* (1940, 1982, any one you give him), because if he could have more than six pieces and they could be bound together in one place it would be the hymnal. He added, “it provides comfort, encouragement,
enjoyment in a way that almost no single composer could.” I agreed and added that the hymnal also contains some Bach, so he would get that anyway.

My sixth interview was with Richard Webster, Director of Music and Organist at Trinity Church, Boston. I met Mr. Webster when I was in the choir at Sewanee and we sang on tour in his parish when he was in Chicago. I have had the privilege to sing with him a time or two and thought he would be a great source for this project. I explained to him the scope of my project and said how music was most definitely a tool for spiritual formation in my own life and, I believe, is for many others. I asked him, as I have the others, what was his experience with music being formational for him, both personally and in what he does professionally. Music was a part of his upbringing from the very start. He told me he grew up Southern Baptist and loved singing all the wonderful evangelical hymns of that tradition. He said that hymnody was such a part of worship every time he was there: Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening, and he loved those hymns. He then told me the story of how he was called to do what he is doing today, serving the church through music. When he was 14 years old he went to Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly in North Carolina. They had church every night they were there in a 3,000 seat auditorium. He recalled that they had an Invitational hymn every night and, on Wednesday night, the hymn was “Wherever He leads I’ll go.” Mr. Webster said, “we were singing that hymn and I felt, just as real as anything, I felt God’s hand pick me up out of my pew and lead me by the hand down that aisle to the front of the church where they had people waiting to receive your decision for Christ. My

56 “Wherever He leads I’ll go,” Words and music by Baylus Benjamin McKinney. Tune name, Falls Creek, 1936.
decision for Christ that night was I wanted to serve the church.” What’s interesting about that story is that, according to Mr. Webster, it might not have happened had the music not been a part of it. He said that moment was “that visceral and that compelling, and it was because of the music.” That was his first step on his journey to becoming a church musician and doing what he loves most, making music with other people and, in particular, with children. He said he loves working with kids and introducing them to the great music of the church which, he said, “forms them into little Christians.” Of course, he said, it doesn’t happen right away, it’s a process, but one they know is real. Mr. Webster commented that he is amazed that he still hears from choristers he taught many years ago who say that singing as a child was the most important thing they did and it has made them into the adults they are today. He said, “That is gold to me to hear them say that. It’s because of the music, and it’s not just the music, it’s the music in service of the Word.” He went on to talk about pairing great texts with great music and creating something that truly speaks to you, truly changes you. He said, “When you sing a hymn text by Charles Wesley or Isaac Watts with a really good tune like Hereford, ‘O thou who camest from above,’ or when you match a Charles Wesley text with a Samuel Sebastian Wesley hymn tune…now that’s a taste of heaven. It speaks to your heart and to your brain and it changes you. It changes you in a way that just mere words can’t do.” This is right in line with what both Dr. Jared Johnson and Cindy DeDakis said earlier, that combining sacred texts with the music of the great church artists is just so formative. I

57 Webster, Richard. 2017. Interview by author via phone. October 17. All quotations and information are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

would add it would be hard not to be formed through singing particular words with music. Mr. Webster said, “Words without music have a different effect, a different power, and I think when you put the two together it’s an unbeatable combination.” That, he says, is how people see Jesus and how he encounters Jesus as well. I liked what he said about music in service of the Word which, to me, brings in the liturgical aspect of it, putting it into something that’s worshipful. Mr. Webster explained another experience he had having to do with the pairing of text and music. While at a conference in 1984, he heard a hymn, a combination of text and music, he had never heard in that way before. It was the George Herbert text “King of glory, King of peace,” set to the David Walker tune General Seminary and it really moved him. He said, “The beauty of that text and the suitability of that tune for the text. It’s amazing I still remember that to this day.” He likened it to my still remembering the Ascension anthem I sang at age six. It was a powerful experience that changed us. I would add, for me, a powerful experience that helped form me and make me who I am today.

Part of that formation is working hard with the music, learning it so well that it sticks with you. Mr. Webster told me of an anthem he had written, a setting of the George Herbert poem, “The Church Floor.” He said his music is hard and challenging, but in a good way, so that by the time you’ve really learned it you love it. It’s the work that stretches you, makes you better for it, and the reward, Mr. Webster said, is a new level of spiritual growth. I agreed, saying that every new piece you sing is going to open up a new way of looking at things and open up new channels to communicate with God.

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In my experience there were pieces I sang that I didn’t like at first, but by the time I figured out how it all fit together I loved it. I became attached to it and it never went away, I still love those pieces. Speaking about pieces that require hard work, Mr. Webster added that he didn’t care for certain popular church composers who write music that is “acceptable.” He said he believes that style of music lets people, “wallow in cheap emotionalism. They think they’re feeling the Spirit but, in my opinion, they’re really not. They are just feeling a nice, quick, cheap emotional moment, and I don’t think it is synonymous with experiencing the face of Jesus.” I agree completely. I would add that it doesn’t grab you in the same way a piece you’ve had to wrestle with does, you’re not invested in it in the same way. I didn’t ask Mr. Webster specifically about the importance of musician/clergy relationships but, in a way, he answered it. He told me that he and a previous rector did not agree on this “accessible” music. The rector felt that if people are given these sweet, come-to-Jesus hymns they will be formed. Mr. Webster disagreed (as would I), saying people need to work for it. “If you coddle them it’s not going to make them mature Christians.” They never resolved that disagreement, but at least they talked about it, had communication, that was the important thing. It is all right to disagree as long as communication is open. Mr. Webster feels very strongly, as do I, that people need to leave church being a different person from when they came in. The Gospel is uncomfortable and should make us somewhat uncomfortable. It calls us to do something we’re not always comfortable doing, but in doing it we grow. Mr. Webster said that music, too, should move us out of our comfort zone because that’s what discipleship is all about.
At this point I shifted gears and asked what programs he had implemented with children that might lead to spiritual formation. He told me about his children’s choir, the Trinity Choristers. One may audition for the choir at age eight. Mr. Webster said that, “these kids come in at age eight not knowing anything about music and not really knowing a lot about the faith or church, and we start right away.” They sing every Sunday for the nine o’clock service, with rehearsal at eight, and meet twice during the week. It is a rigorous schedule, but one typical of a Cathedral choral tradition parish. You have to make a commitment to be a chorister. Mr. Webster said that’s lesson number one: make a commitment and honor it. The discipline of getting up and getting yourself to church, getting to rehearsal on time and being vested and ready to sing, Mr. Webster said, lays the groundwork for learning Christian virtues. He said it gives the child, the choristers, structure, and that structure is called our routine. He also added that you fill that structure with excellent music. He then said, echoing what Cindy DeDakis said earlier, that you give them real music, not children’s music. He said, “it is wrong to give kids children’s music. It’s wrong, wrong, wrong.” He added that children’s minds are like sponges, they’ll absorb anything you give them, so give them something good. “Give them the music of Herbert Howells, give them Bach, give them Mozart, give them William Byrd, give them Benjamin Britten. They don’t know that this music gets hard, they don’t care. The harder it is the more they love it.” He added that, at eight years old, they may not be ready to tackle all that, but stand them next to an older child, ten or twelve or fourteen, who can mentor them and show them the ropes. Ms. DeDakis talked about this as well, having the older children help the younger ones along. Mr. Webster said it is so gratifying to see these young children open their minds and hearts to this
music and learn to love it. He added, “These composers that I mentioned, they are the
greats of our corpus of sacred music, and they have so much to offer for sinking your
teeth into it and for getting the music right but, in doing so, it’s a spiritual discipline.
And these kids don’t understand all that sort of language, but it’s real. It’s real in their
little hearts and minds.” Mr. Webster said we need to raise the bar for a kid’s program to
remain successful. “The kids are at the heart of our worship and they’re leading it,” he
commented, “and they lead it as well as any clergy person I’ve ever seen.”

I told Mr. Webster I had heard from other people I had interviewed that having a
choral program provides something that the community does not, namely a safe space to
go and be a part of a group that supports them and upholds them and teaches them
something of value, that is, teaching them music and about their spiritual life with Christ.
He agreed wholeheartedly. I added that these programs offer an other worldly experience
that you don’t get anywhere else and, as the others I interviewed told me, they had kids
from outside their parish who wanted to be there and be a part of it because it gave them
a sense of community that they didn’t find elsewhere. Mr. Webster responded by saying,
“It’s very real, and it’s an important and vital part of the mission of the church.” It
certainly is, and once these kids have become a part of that community, singing and
making music together, they want to continue. I asked Mr. Webster if he knew if the kids
who had gone through his program were still involved with the church or in music in the
church. “Definitely,” he said, and went on to say that he currently had nine senior
choristers who had all started when they were eight years old. He said they will all be
involved in music in some fashion when they go off to college. He then added that, like
some college students, they may drift away from the church for a while, “but I know they’ll come back. They just do because it’s a part of who they are.”

I then asked Mr. Webster the same final question as all the others, about his go-to composer. I said at the end of the day when you try to leave behind all the stress and trials, and just want to escape, who is your go-to composer? He didn’t miss a beat. “Bach, without question,” he said. I shared with him how most organists answered the same way while those more on the conducting side said Howells. I shared that one organist even said he didn’t trust an organist who didn’t play Bach. Mr. Webster, of course, loved this and said, “I have to remember that, that’s a good line!”

My final interview was with the other clergy member I had lined up for a conversation, the Rt. Rev. Andrew Waldo, Bishop of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina. I find it interesting after sharing Fr. Sean Mullen’s comment that it was rather rare to have Episcopal clergy that were cradle Episcopalians but, in this case, both of the clergy folks I interviewed turned out to be just that. In fact, not only is Bishop Waldo a cradle Episcopalian, but both his father and one brother are Episcopal priests (his father is retired). So it was with a wealth of understanding of the church, I believed, that I spoke with Bishop Waldo. I had sent an email to him explaining what my project was about and that his name had been given to me as one I might want to speak with about my topic of music as a tool for spiritual formation, but I touched on it again as I opened the interview. I explained, as you have read numerous times, my story of the Ascension anthem that started this whole project. I told him I credit that particular anthem with forming me in a way, and since that time music has always been a big part of my involvement in the church. I shared that I was in a church choir all through high school,
in college, out of college, and in seminary. In fact, I said, when my (now) wife and I were living in Atlanta after we had been graduated from Sewanee, we chose which church we would attend based on the choir. We visited and auditioned the choirs! We ended up singing with the Cathedral Choir at St. Philip’s. All that being said, I asked him to share what his experience had been with music in his life and the church, and how he saw music as a tool for spiritual formation. But, before I share his comments, I have to say that everyone I had interviewed had a story that very much involved the church, so I was not expecting what I was about to hear.

Bishop Waldo grew up in a very musical, very Episcopal family. The Episcopal roots are on his mother’s side for generations. He said that his great grandmother started the Tatnall School outside of Wilmington, Delaware, and always made sure that music was a big part of their curriculum, which it still is to this day. Then he shared that one of his favorite pictures, a family photograph, is of his mother at the piano. He is seated on her lap and his older brother is standing next to him along with his grandmother, the daughter of the one who started the school, and they are all singing out of the Fireside Book of Folk Songs. Bishop Waldo is one of six children, and he said that his mother would gather all of them around the piano and they would sing. Growing up he had piano lessons, flute lessons, and sang with the church choir until he was fourteen. All of this sounds very much in line with the other people I had interviewed, who also grew up in the church, but then he told me that he went to a private boarding school in Birmingham for high school and fell away from the church for about ten years. He said, “When I went there I kind of fell out of going to church for about ten years, from about age fifteen, and I mean seriously out…so far out that not only did I not believe in God, I
could not even imagine God. I was way, way out.”

He did, though, sing in his high school glee club for four years, so he never left music like he did the church. A big change happened when he went to college at Whittier College in Southern California. The recorder, as an instrument, had come into his orbit. While in college he said he heard a recording of Frans Brüggen, a Dutch recorder player, along with hearing the instrument itself and decided, “I want to play that instrument. That is the instrument I want to play.” He then said he went home to Montgomery, Alabama, and bought the best recorder he could find: a five dollar, half wood, half plastic Hohner. This was his entry into the world of early music, a period he had certainly come to love. Bishop Waldo next shared a story of what brought him back to the church.

He told me he had been married twice, and his first wife brought him to Boston so she could finish her undergraduate degree and he could prepare for graduate school at the Conservatory. The marriage fell apart unexpectedly, he said, for him, and it was in the spiritual crisis that followed that he found himself at the mission church of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE), the Cowley Fathers. Here he discovered the other form of music that he said was very formational for him, chant. He described the first liturgy he experienced there, the Easter Vigil, where he heard chanting and saw incense for the first time. He also shared a funny anecdote about the 1979 prayer book. He said they were saying the Baptismal Covenant and he looked at it and said, “Is this The Book of Common Prayer?” To which I replied that he was also hearing the 1979 book for the first time as well. He said the chanting was magnificent, “and not just the solo chanting, but psalm

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Waldo, Andrew. 2018. Interview by author via phone. January 9. All quotations and information are from this interview unless otherwise stated.
chanting, and, of course, there was a lot of music…a lot of Stanford, too. The musician there was very much one to play a lot of classic nineteenth century English Choral repertory.” He said chanting became for him a vehicle of formation, “and it hit me at a time of great spiritual need and openness to God’s coming into my life through music.” From there he joined the faculty of the Longy School of Music in Cambridge as a recorder instructor and ensemble coach. He also started a choir there with the Longy Course for Early Music. He said the group still exists and is about to celebrate their thirtieth anniversary. It’s obvious that music really spoke to him, and that he was definitely formed by it. He shared that for one semester, 1983, he was completely immersed in music from 1550-1600. He said he was so immersed that he began “to hear details, figures of speech, to use a language metaphor, true figures of speech in music that were, on a daily basis, revelatory for me.” He added that most of the music they sang was sacred. It was then that he had a true calling. His choir performed a concert of Spanish and Mexican Colonial music. One of the pieces was a Mexican Magnificat by Hernando Franco, composed around 1560. 61 Bishop Waldo said that when they performed it, “it was as if God had said, ‘I’m not going to be able to get through to you about what I really am calling you to do unless I speak this language that you are obviously called to love and understand.’” I asked him if, then, he heard his call through music, and he said, “I heard the Magnificat.” He said he did not hear a call to seminary, yet, but that the music spoke something very clear to him. The Magnificat is about reversals: the hungry shall be filled, the lowly shall be exalted, the rich shall be sent away empty. He said, having grown up in Montgomery in the 1960s, he heard a call to be

61 Hernando Franco (1532-1585) composed 16 settings of the Magnificat.
somewhere where reversals were happening, where peoples’ lives were in upheaval. He felt like with all the formation he had received through music growing up, the sharing of early music was the spiritual formation he needed to share with everyone, so that they could also experience the life he felt doing it. Eventually he did hear the call to ordination and began the process in the Diocese of New Hampshire, only to be told to wait a year because they felt he was not ready to leave his music. He waited a year and entered seminary at Sewanee in 1985 with a renewed sense of purpose and energy.

Before I was able to ask him to talk about programs he had implemented in his ministry using music as a tool for formation, he shared with me how the recorder had become for him his deepest form of prayer. Up to this point, and in my own experience, the music that has been so spiritually formational has been sung. It is the melding of text and music that so many have already talked about, it is about experiencing periods of being in the presence of the Divine, and it is about singing those sacred words over and over until they become a part of you. Bishop Waldo had experienced that for sure, but I had not thought of instrumental music being a vehicle for this as well. In hearing Bishop Waldo speak of the recorder, I commented that it is an extension of the voice. He replied that it is, “and yet…you get to where you know your instruments as individuals and I can, in my mind’s eye, look at every single one of my instruments and know what its quirks are, what its strengths are, what it feels like to play, and how I sometimes have to bend my will to the instrument in order to make it sound the way it’s called to sound. I have to submit.” This led me to ask him if the particular instrument he played would dictate the type of prayer he might pray? He said, at first, not the instrument, but the particular type of music, then he gave examples of moods and which instrument he would pick to play.
He also shared how he would take recorders with him when he did his annual silent retreat at the monastery in Cambridge, and play them, as long as it didn’t disturb others. It was prayer and it was spiritually formational, just like the retreat.

Now it was time to ask about programs, but first I asked if would be fair to say that in going into music and graduate school and starting the choir, the impetus was not spiritual formation but it became formational later? He said it was probably true about playing the recorder, but with the choral music he had already come back to the church. The choir was more a way for him to express his new found faith. Then I asked about programs he had implemented that deal with music and formation. The answers kept coming. He shared that during his fifteen year tenure as the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Excelsior, Minnesota, he started many programs. They had a parish orchestra, a Celtic band, a liturgical dance group, Sunday school songs, and children cantors…all ways to get kids involved in the liturgy. They had a lot. The Bishop told me that they also had a member of the parish who was a composer and she wrote the Excelsior Communion Setting that they sang every Sunday for many years. The setting had a descant for the kids to sing, which they learned in Sunday school. He said the kids would just sing it from wherever they were seated in church and, Bishop Waldo remembers, the kids would sing louder than the adults! I commented that the tool, in a sense, in all of these musical programs was inclusion. Because these kids were included they experienced the service in a way they hadn’t before and it was beginning to shape them. He agreed and said that when he first got there they only had about seventy-five people in church every Sunday. By the time he had been there seven years, they had one hundred twenty kids in the congregation. He also shared that about four years after he got there,
parents of children were asking for more contemporary music, fearful their kids would leave. Bishop Waldo told a funny anecdote about his response. He said, “Jim [my organist] and I…Jim, who is an expert in nineteenth century French organ music, and me, an expert in sixteenth century instrumental and choral music…looked at each other and said, ‘Oh crap!’ We didn’t even know what it sounds like.” He told me about a Palm Sunday procession in which the kids from Sunday school processed in spreading palms and garments all over the aisle while the liturgical dance troop danced around the pews. He told me about Jim writing an aleatoric setting to “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” using Orff instruments and percussion to accompany the kids singing the song. He mentioned he overheard one little girl tell her mother, “I hear angels.” Then, he said, he didn’t hear a word about contemporary music for ten years. The kids were engaged, they were being formed, and they stayed. Other programs he has implemented include a chanting workshop he offers at clergy conferences, helping people get over their fear of chanting and learn to do it correctly. He said, “Part of my ongoing thing is to get us away from thinking of chant as something we do because the church does that and, instead, to do it because we are praying it, and that is a natural way for us to pray.”

I came around to the final question and asked him who would be his go-to composer? He replied, “It’s kind of a toss-up between Claudio Monteverdi and J.S. Bach. I’d say if push really came to shove it would be Monteverdi.” Finally, and interestingly, there was a bit of departure, although Bach almost made it.

I found the interviews to be very useful and entertaining, I really enjoyed conducting them. It was fascinating to hear all the similarities between the clergy and musicians, but there were some obvious differences as well. When I set up how I would
go about the interviews, I was not sure what to expect. While I believed I would get answers that supported my theory of music definitely being a tool for spiritual formation, I was surprised by how similar many of the answers and comments were. Some common threads that jumped out at me right away included music being the connection to the church and God, the choir filling a community void left open by schools not teaching music in the same way they once did, giving kids real music, and keeping kids in church to experience the liturgy.

Music as the connection to the church and God was interesting in that it was described a little differently by each person. Mr. McCormick said that throughout his time in the different parishes it was always music that drew him in and connected him as a person of faith. He said he “often thinks of music as his tether to the church and to God.” Dr. Johnson is personally connected by playing the organ in church, but he also spoke of the music being a connector for his choristers. He said it is the making of music, the offering they give to the Lord, that brings them together and allows them to be formed through all these things. It connects them to the church and will allow them to find their way into a parish church when they graduate and move on. Dr. Burnett shared that music was one of the best tools at our disposal for formation because it reaches people at a deeper spiritual level. Dr. Johnson would also agree with this, calling music its own language that connects people. Dr. Burnett said singing is as natural as talking and “allows us a sense of communion that’s very deep and profound… a path to the Divine.” Ms. DeDakis sees music on a similar level, connecting her to the liturgy. She said, “I cannot separate music and worship. They are so intertwined with me that my faith, my spirituality, is just very tied to music and always has been.” Fr. Mullen’s story
was particularly interesting because he was not an organist/choirmaster, but a priest, and one of the children who had been formed through the many choral programs where he had sung. Even when he was not singing in a choir school or parish choir, as when he was in college, “It was still music that kept me connected to the life of the church,” he said. Mr. Webster and Bishop Waldo were both called through music. Mr. Webster heard his calling at a Baptist retreat during the invitation hymn at a service, saying, “it might not have happened had music not been a part of it…it was because of the music.” Bishop Waldo heard it through the words of Mary in the Franco Magnificat. He recalled it was not a call to the ordained ministry, but to be in the midst of people’s lives, which eventually became a call to the ministry. All of these are connections in their own way. Everyone plugged in a little differently, but it was the music that got them there.

The idea that schools are no longer teaching music and that the church choir is filling a void left open by the schools seemed to resonate the most with Drs. Johnson and Burnett, but was touched on by a couple of the other people interviewed as well. Ms. DeDakis and Mr. Webster felt it was really a ministry of outreach to the community and a vital mission of the church. Drs. Johnson and Burnett also talked beyond what high schools were not teaching and felt that most seminaries were not teaching it either. This was mostly in response to the clergy/musician relationship question. They both felt that the relationships would be better if the priests being ordained had a better understanding of music and, likewise, Dr. Johnson added, musicians had better training in liturgy.

Giving real music to the children to learn also became a hot topic for some. Dr. Burnett, Ms. DeDakis, and Mr. Webster spoke the most about this. It is interesting to note that all three are Royal School of Church Music parishes and follow some set
guidelines. Mr. Webster was one of the most emphatic proponents of this. He said, “it is wrong to give kids children’s music. It’s wrong, wrong, wrong.” Both Ms. DeDakis and Dr. Burnett felt strongly about this as well. I have to agree though, interestingly, it was a children’s song that, for me, was the start of this project. It pulled me in and held on to me so that I was able to grow and learn the real music they are talking about. Once I had that there was no turning back. I heard that comment a lot, too, a great deal in these conversations. I think if Fr. Mullen had been asked this question directly he would have agreed with it, but he grew up in a Choir School that only used the “real” kind of music anyway. One difference here is that we did hear from Mr. McCormick and Bishop Waldo the use of more children’s music associated with Christian Education/Formation programs. The Schola program and Sunday School Songs were ways to introduce young children to the faith through simple singing, but it also led them to join choirs or do other ministries in the church. In another aspect of children’s music being used in children’s choirs, Ms. DeDakis shared in some of the strategies put forward by David Nastal and Tamara Albrecht. We didn’t speak about it directly, but I think she would agree with how Nastal felt about getting the clergy on board when setting up a children’s choir, but would disagree with Albrecht about the type of music to use with them.

I did not specifically bring up kids staying in church for the entire service, but many made mention of it. If we want our children to learn, to be formed, they need to be in church. Singing in the choir is one way of doing that. Bishop Waldo came up with several ways to get children involved in the service through music, and that kept them interested and connected. I believe the children should be in church as well, not marched
out for Sunday School, but that is a battle I’m not ready to fight just yet. I sure learned some good ways to do it, however.

I did find some interesting differences among the people I interviewed. Though they all are involved in church in some way as musician or clergy, the way they got there was slightly different. Dr. Burnett and Ms. DeDakis were much like me in that they started singing in a choir at a young age. Fr. Mullen did this as well, but not at a parish level. He joined one of the most prestigious, if not the most, Choir School the church has to offer at St. Thomas, so it was a bit different than my experience. I would say our music may have differed, but the opportunity for formation was just as strong. Another thing that stood out to me about Fr. Mullen’s interview was his long list of mentors and people who have helped shape his life. He was influenced by so many people throughout his journey to where he is today. I loved hearing the stories from a well-known composer teaching theology to the man who simply gave him a ride home every Sunday. It is amazing how even little things can touch our lives and help form us, and all of this connected by the music. Reflecting back on my conversations, I wish I would have asked a direct question about that, it would have been fun to hear who other people’s influences had been. Mr. Webster knew from his teenage years that he wanted to be involved in church music. Dr. Johnson shared how he more or less fell into being a church musician because he loved to play the organ and he was needed. His story was one of the most compelling to me since he did not grow up singing in the choir, but leads a very successful choral program now. Bishop Waldo’s story is quite different as well since he drifted away from the church, only to be drawn back by music – both vocal and
instrumental. It was the instrumental part of his prayer life and spirituality I found so interesting.

I do believe I found the ultimate answer I was looking for in conducting these interviews, that we all agree music is most certainly a tool for spiritual formation. Again, I really enjoyed speaking with all of these people and could have interviewed countless more. I hope to remain in touch with all of them as we can continue to learn a great deal from one another.

For the final part of my project I chose to survey clergy in the Diocese of Alabama. Since the rector has authority over the music in worship, I felt it was important to see how the clergy felt about music and the role of the choir within worship. I also felt it was important to ask if they, themselves, had sung in a choir and from what age. My thought was the ones who had sung in a choir would be more likely to give positive responses. I also felt that those who had started at a younger age would have had more time to be formed and, again, would have positive responses. My guess was that if someone had not sung in a choir, they would be less likely to feel the choir was important now. For this portion of my project I used Survey Monkey to survey the clergy in the Diocese of Alabama. Fifty-two individuals initially responded, but I decided to not include three as one had not been to seminary and the other two answered in a way that showed they did not understand the questions. I felt those answers had no effect on the data. I will admit that the first survey included was done by me as a test, so not all questions were answered.\(^\text{62}\)

\(^{62}\) All responses are included at the end of the project in Appendix B. The responses I did not use are numbers 21, 22, and 49.
The survey was administered on September 20, 2017, via e-mail and the message I wrote with the link to the survey was as follows:

Dear Clergy in the Diocese of Alabama,

I am working on my final project as a candidate for a Doctor of Ministry degree from the School of Theology (Sewanee) and I would like your help. I am writing on music as a tool for spiritual formation and have prepared a short survey I would like you to take. Your answers will help me see how our clergy view music and its place within the liturgy. Your responses will be anonymous but the data you provide will be used in my paper. You will find the link to the survey attached, it should only take you about ten minutes to answer. When you finish, your responses will automatically be emailed to me. Thank you, in advance, for helping me with this project.

Yours,

The Rev. Andrew (Andy) Keyse

Here are the questions I had on the survey:

- Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? At what age(s)?
- If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? How?
- If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
- On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?
- Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Please describe why or why not.
- Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Please describe why or why not.
- How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?
- Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day or occasion?
- How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
- How do you view music as a tool for spiritual formation in your parish?

I have compiled the following table to show the responses I received (beginning on the next page for ease of reading). I will then share some of the individual comments that accompanied the responses. Of the 30 who had sung in choir(s) prior to seminary, 18 were in choir aged 10 and under.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>SANG IN CHOIR BEGINNING AGE 10 AND UNDER (18 total)</th>
<th>SANG IN CHOIR BEGINNING AGES 11-18 (7 total)</th>
<th>SANG IN CHOIR BEGINNING AS ADULT (6 total)</th>
<th>DID NOT SING IN CHOIR (19 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel this experience (singing in choir) helped your own spiritual formation?</td>
<td>15/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>7/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>5/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>n/a/n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and 5 being highest) how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? (DETAILED ANSWERS PROVIDED BELOW)</td>
<td>15/positive 2/negative</td>
<td>7/positive 1/negative</td>
<td>5/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>15/positive 3/negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?</td>
<td>17/positive 1/negative</td>
<td>8/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>4/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>16/positive 2/negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?</td>
<td>16/positive 2/negative</td>
<td>9/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>2/positive 1/negative</td>
<td>15/positive 2/negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?</td>
<td>17/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>9/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>4/positive 0/negative</td>
<td>19/n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of beginning choral singing</th>
<th>RANKED 1</th>
<th>RANKED 2</th>
<th>RANKED 3</th>
<th>RANKED 4</th>
<th>RANKED 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 11-20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choir experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

What was very interesting to me in the results was that the highest positive responses came not only from those who began singing in a choir at an early age, but also from those who did not sing in a choir at all. My guess is that the ones who sang in a choir from a young age were spiritually formed in a way that they appreciate and understand the importance of the choir. As to those who had no choir experience, perhaps they were hooked by hearing/learning the music in seminary that they want to be able to share it with their congregations. Likewise, for those who started singing in a choir as an older
youth or an adult simply have not been formed as much by the music, and therefore find the choir to be less important. To take this a step further, the fewest survey “takers” were the ones who sang at a later age. The following are some individual positive responses to some of the questions (age they began singing in a choir added for comparison).

About whether choral music has an impact on the choristers:

- I believe this is a way to participate in worship, to experience joy in life, and a way to learn to work together with others. (Age 6)
- I believe choristers delve more deeply into the words of the music and can, and do, learn a lot from what they sing. Also, since choristers are generally more musically inclined people, the ability to worship and lead worship in song speaks to their souls in a way that worship without music could/would not. (did not sing in a choir)
- It forms them in the traditions of our Anglican worship and I believe that “those who sing pray twice.” If they are considered leaders in the worship, then that impacts their participation and enables them to know that this is a gift they have received and are sharing. (Age 3)
- We pay a small stipend to some key choir members, which draws non-church members to our choir. Nearly every year I have choir members show up in our Inquirer’s class wanting to get confirmed. Most are so moved by the kind of church music we do, they want to join us for keeps. (I’d like to think it was the brilliant preaching, but I know better!) (Age 8)
- The greatest music ever composed was written for the praise of Almighty God. To sing this regularly changes one to greater reverence and awe. (Did not sing)

And on the congregation:

- Music touches the soul in ways mere words cannot. (Age 6)
- I believe that people often learn more of their personal theology from the songs that they sing (and especially those they know by heart) than they often do from reading or preaching (sadly). (Did not sing)
- I only have to look at their faces to know the impact of choral music during worship. (Age 10)
How does music help enhance the worship experience:

- Music can reach into our souls, often I think, at a deeper level than conscious thought or reason. Music opens us spiritually to be able to receive information in ways other formats cannot. In many ways I think music may be one of the most effective communication tools between God and people. (Began as a child)
- By appealing to our wider range of senses, giving color and texture to the worship experience and reinforcing its emotional impact. (Age 15)
- Beauty, variety, emotion (Age 18, but came with mother at an early age because she was the choir director)
- We know that music takes material into a different part of our brains. If we only say our prayers, we are not using our whole brain in the worship of God. (Age 13)

How you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish:

- The choir enhances worship of those in the pew and strengthens a chorister’s own personal worship. (Age 10)
- Critical to our worship life and to spiritual formation and growth of both the choristers and the congregation. (Age 3)
- The choir’s principal role is to lead and support the congregation in singing hymns and service music. They also sing an anthem, which provides an opportunity for auricular prayer. (Age 13)
- Critical. (Did not sing)
- The choir is a source of worship, beauty, and pride. (Did not sing)

How you view music as a tool for spiritual formation:

- Music (and lyrics) can sometimes speak to people in ways that merely spoken words do not. The mood of a choral piece can contribute to the power of a day’s reading or sermon. Using music to help people worship with joy and enthusiasm can loosen them up a little bit to share in the delight of praising God. More somber pieces can aid in reflection and deep emotional response. All of that helps the scripture and the worship teach people to find God in their midst. (Did not sing).
- It can draw us into God’s divine presence of beauty and truth; it teaches through the text; it provides diversity, helps us pray. (Age 3)
- Music has the power to communicate at a higher level than the spoken word. It brings into focus the words of scripture and tradition in a way that causes them to stick in the memory. When we sing something, we involve more of ourselves in the experience, which is why it is said that “he who sings prays twice.” (Age 5)
- Music is an essential element for spiritual formation, spiritual deepening, also for understanding a variety of spiritual experiences. (Age 7)
- Music is a key part of what we do in liturgy. It allows us to proclaim the Gospel in yet another way. It sometimes stretches us to pray in new ways. At its best, it
transports us out of ourselves and grounds us in ourselves at the same time. It provides a tool for ongoing education. (Age 13)

And, of course, no survey would be complete without some negative responses. The negative responses were few, but here are some in response to some of the questions.

About choral music having an impact on the chorister:

- Choristers are not members of the parish and seem more committed to “performance” than ministry. (Did not sing)
- Everything has an impact on everyone – but as a spiritual and transformative impact, I would lean toward no. Most of our choristers are paid and not members of the church. I’m not sure they feel a deep liturgical connection to their music as much as they feel the performance value. (Did not sing)
- More often than not, a negative effect. There is a latent arrogance about the Western Choral tradition. That is, it’s the only way to go and anything else, as one chorister said to me, would grieve the ear of God. (Age 10)

How you view the role of the choir:

- The choir is a valuable part of the movement and feel of the liturgy. However, they are window dressing – they pretty things up but it is the liturgy, especially communion, this is the most powerful part of the experience. (Did not sing)

How you view music as a tool for spiritual formation:

- We have offered programs dealing with the history of music in ecclesiastical settings that were quite popular, but other than that music is ancillary. (Did not sing)

These negative comments made more sense to me when I saw that most of them came from someone who had not sung in a choir as a child. I would say they had not been given the opportunity to be formed in that way and therefore do not appreciate the choir as much. I was surprised, however, by the one negative response from someone who had sung in a choir since age ten. Certainly they would have been exposed to lots of music,
but it seems obvious the Anglican choral tradition is not a style they like. Each to their own, I suppose.

Another area I did find interesting were some comments pertaining to the theology that is learned through music. Fr. Mullen spoke to this when he talked about Gerre Hancock using the hymnal as the theological text. Here are some responses regarding hymnody:

- If we pay attention to the theology that is in the *Hymnal 1982*, all can have their faith enhanced. (Age 7)
- Even some of those parishioners that left the Baptist Church decades ago have a difficult time letting go of “questionable” theology because it is part of some long-beloved hymn from their childhood. (Did not sing)
- Hymnody is the “theology of the person in the pew.” (Age 15)

Overall, I was very pleased with the results. While there were a few negative comments, most comments were positive and in line with my thoughts that music is definitely a tool for spiritual formation. It was interesting to see some of the responses directly agreeing with what I heard in the interviews, and these were all from clergy! Several responses talked about the melding of words, text, with music. This is another area that received a strong response in my interviews. Drs. Johnson and Burnett and Ms. DeDakis all spoke to the power of combining sacred texts with the music of the great church artists. They said it is just so formative. I believe Mr. Webster put it best when he said that combining great text with great music is, “…a taste of heaven. It speaks to your heart and to your brain and it changes you. It changes you in a way that just mere words can’t do.”

I began this project because of an anthem I sang as a young boy in the choir. This anthem had an impact on me that continues to this day. I wanted to know if other people
had experienced this as well, thinking surely they had. Not only did this project prove
that to me, it helped me learn ways to insure that future generations will have the
opportunity to experience it themselves. Spiritual formation through the music of the
church is something that can be repeated, that is, taught in similar ways in churches all
over the world, but we can never guarantee it will be absorbed by those exposed to it. It
is, as I have been reminded in this project, purely by the grace of God that formation
happens. We can put it in front of them but then must get out of the way and let God take
over. I am happy with the way my reading, interviews, and surveys have affirmed my
belief that I am not the only one who views music as a tool for spiritual formation. I am
not sure I could have articulated how one might be spiritually formed through music,
other than using my own experiences, but now feel I have a clear way of discussing many
ways it can happen.

I was formed through music, no doubt, but I also want to be able through my
ministry to offer others a way to be formed. What I learned through this project is there
are models out there designed specifically to help create and lead choral programs. I do
not have to recreate the wheel, I can simply tap in to what others have researched and
known to have worked. From the interviews alone I feel confident that the Royal School
of Church Music would more than help me offer music to the families and children in my
parish. I believed from the beginning that formation would happen if given the
opportunity to be exposed to the wonderful music the church has to offer. What I
discovered is that, while this is true, it is much bigger than just the music. Music, as
many have articulated in this project, is the bridge that connects us to the Divine. Music
brings us together, allows us to go deeper into our relationships with one another, with
Christ, and with our Creator. It is, as Mr. McCormick so wonderfully put it, our tether to our faith.

I wanted to see through this project if other clergy and musicians had been formed and shaped by music in the same way I had. What I discovered was that they had. The stories I heard in the interviews and, to some extent, the answers I received in the surveys showed clearly that music in the church made an impact on so many. Being exposed to this music at an early age certainly helped, I believed, but was amazed that even those who didn’t sing in a choir as a child could be equally impacted and formed by music. It is almost as if they connected to it much more quickly because they had not at a young age. In this case I believe the music finally gave them an outlet for what they had been carrying around their entire lives. They had the information, just did not know what to do with it until the music finally spoke to them and gave them a way to articulate what they had been thinking and feeling. In short, the music connected them. That point alone seems to be the biggest one I will take away from this project. Knowing how this has worked in people’s lives, I now feel I have a way to utilize music in my own ministry to connect others who may not have experienced it before. This is yet another way to use music as a tool for formation.

I have always known that building good relationships will help me in life. What I discovered through this project is the atmosphere in which one learns is just as important as what one learns. We can present information, teach, sing, and discuss, but if it is done in a chaotic and toxic atmosphere it will may not be successful. When the relationship between the clergy and musicians is good a program will thrive. When it is not good, it will die. I am keenly aware that bad relationships will hurt a church community, but it
was important for me to hear this from the clergy and musicians themselves. They used words like, “vital,” and “critical,” to describe the clergy/musician relationship. This helped me see it is more serious than even I imagined. While I feel I have always forged good relationships with the musicians I have worked with, I know I can always improve on it. I learned about building platforms for mutual ministry is important and will only help the life of the entire community. Music is the language through which we speak and share this platform. I am so grateful for the comments given in this project from musicians and clergy alike.

Is my experience unique? That is a question I set out to answer in this project. The answer is decidedly no, but my story and the way I experienced it is my own. We are all unique in the way we experience it, but I am not alone in the fact that I did experience it. I do believe I fit a type or pattern of person who is drawn to what I do, but I do not feel it is any different from those who fit a type and are drawn to whatever it is they do. I found in the material I read and the people I heard from that I, like others, share a love of music in the church, and know my life is forever changed because of it. Would my life in the church be the same had I not been formed in this way? Of course not, but I believe I would still be involved in the church. As several of the people I was engaged with in this project have said, part of formation happens by just being present. As the child of a priest I was certainly present in church, so I believe had it not been music that spoke so deeply to me, it would have been another aspect of the church.

Moving forward I know I have resources available to me to always use music as a tool for spiritual formation. I know better through this project the psychology behind how we learn and how music can help that. I know better through this project that what
speaks to some does not always speak to all and that what works in one place may not work in another. But, all that aside, I know better that music has the ability, and does, connect us a deeper spiritual level. We may approach how we utilize music in different ways, but it is still the music that is the thing. Music with text, music as prayer, music as a way to remember - its uses are many. I definitely know better through this project that I cannot, from the start, set anything up with the goal that people will be formed. I must be willing to present whatever it is I will present, in whatever way I choose to do it, and then get out of the way and allow formation to happen. I learned, most of all, if I can trust in that, I will not be disappointed.
APPENDIX A

Transcripts of Interviews
Andy: So, I gave you a little bit of background in what I sent you, sort of my story in a small little snippet. So, I want to talk to you and I want to hear your story, so I would like to ask you to tell me your background – how you came into music, how you came into music in the church, and what that meant to you and how it’s got you where you are now.

Mr. McCormick: Well, I guess I’m doing what I’m doing because I sort of feel that I don’t know what else I would do because I feel that I’ve been called to do this for my entire life. I grew up in Macon, Georgia, in sort of a downtown United Methodist church that, in terms of Southern Methodist, was sort of high church, but with an excellent musician who just retired in May, actually, after 35 years there, and, too, my first teacher. And so I grew up hearing a decent pipe organ and wonderful organ playing. And I was just really attracted to it and I just found the choir fascinating. Choirs, I should say. It wasn’t really the sort of thing I’m doing now, but it really got me going and I’m not sure, without that, I would be doing what I am. And so I went to college, Westminster Choir College in Princeton and a friend, a classmate, said, you know, and I had been to Episcopal churches before and I certainly knew something about the Anglican Choral tradition, not a whole lot, but a friend of mine said, ‘you know, I’m going to St. Thomas Church on 5th Avenue in New York, would you like to go?’ And I said, ‘Well sure, I’ve heard of that place. I’ve heard of the choir there.’ And so, I sort of was hooked and thought this is for me, this is definitely for me. It’s been a wonderful journey since then. So, I was finishing Westminster, I was very young, and there had been some upheaval at St. Mary the Virgin near Times Square (Smokey Mary’s) and I’d been going there some. I liked the liturgy. So the Rector had fired the Director of Music, this was back in the late 90s near the turn of the century, and there was a huge brew ha-ha, and there was a whole professional (the AGO got involved), there was a whole professional committee who was his advisory committee to hire a new Director of Music, and someone said ‘you should apply.’ And I said, ‘well I haven’t even graduated yet from Westminster,’ and they said, ‘well, you know, it can’t do any harm.’ And so, in the end, I got to play for that job when I was very green and inexperienced and very young, and it made sense
for them, I think, you know, because somebody with a more established career might not want to go into a potentially volatile situation. And for me, I thought, what do I have to lose. If it goes wrong, I’m only 22, I’ll take a year, do it for a year, regroup, go back to grad school. I stayed there seven years, then went to St. Paul’s, K Street in DC, for 8 years. I had mostly happy years there. The departure was a little difficult. There was a new vision coming from the new rector, and so it became clear that I was not able to do the job I was brought there to do anymore, so, I felt it was time to move on. Then I got the call from St. Mark’s (Philadelphia). That was perfect timing. I don’t know if that’s what you wanted to hear from me but, that, in a nut shell, is how I got to where I am.

Andy: Well, it tells me that music is what hooked you in the first place.

Mr. McCormick: Sure.

Andy: And it made you look for that (music, in your job search).

Mr. McCormick: Yes, and I am a person of faith, and I often think of music as my tether to the church and to God. I’d like to think if it wasn’t for that, I’d be a practicing Christian and active church goer, but who knows? It keeps me honest, so I’m doing what I’m doing, not just for the sake of making good music, but for the sake of following a call, and I feel like I’m living out a vocation. I feel deeply called to my vocation.

Andy: Let me ask you this – you began in the United Methodist Church where you had an organist who hooked you in to music, how did you make that crossover to the Anglican Church, what was it that drew you there?

Mr. McCormick: I think it was probably the liturgy and the choral tradition. I realized I found in that first visit to St. Thomas and, shortly thereafter I began to visit different Anglo-Catholic churches, St. Thomas being in a sort of funny hybrid, high church place. It’s an acquired taste, I suppose, but I quickly felt deeply attracted to that kind of emphasis, I felt deeply attracted to the sacraments, and I came to really value the deeply sacramental tradition of Anglicanism particularly with the Eucharist in the center. That really drew me in and I realized that is what I had been looking for in my childhood youth and I didn’t know it. I wouldn’t change a thing about where I grew up or how I was introduced to the faith. I grew to love God and to know God loves me, and grew to love Jesus Christ as a child in the church where I grew up and it was a
wonderful foundation, but I was attracted to another tradition and I felt like I had always been an Anglican Christian, and I found where I was supposed to be and I came home in a sense.

Andy: So, do you find yourself now, given the position you’re in (and when you were in NY and in DC), that you build on that liturgy, meaning the Eucharist, or at least that kind of liturgy, gives you a platform to use music in a way to enhance (the liturgy)?

Mr. McCormick: Absolutely. That’s my chief passion, it really is. I really enjoy playing recitals, that gives me professional satisfaction, I enjoy it, but it’s definitely a good second on the list of passions to being a liturgical musician. The position where I’m able to plan music for the liturgy, conduct and play, and execute music in the liturgy trying to make a cohesive whole working with clergy colleagues and choir, acolytes, and all the rest, trying to make it all hang together gives me great joy. Like most of the rest of us, it’s easy to become prideful and become perfectionistic and that’s something I struggle with very regularly, but the larger picture is that it’s just sort of something that I feel very much is at the core of who I am.

Andy: Tell me a little bit about your experience at Westminster. How did that spiritually form you?

Mr. McCormick: I’m not sure that Westminster formed me spiritually so much as what I was doing in an extra-curricular sort of sense. I spent my whole first year there, my freshman year, I didn’t have a regular church position, which was, for me, a terrific thing because I visited churches from there, basically all Episcopal churches and many Anglo-Catholic churches, and I ended up becoming Confirmed as an Episcopalian that year. The next year I took a job as, first, an organ scholar and then assistant organist at Trinity Church in Princeton, which has a really strong Anglican Choral tradition, so I feel like that almost became merely curricular as well. I did that for the next three years, having the chance to learn so much of the core repertoire of the Anglican tradition and to have the chance to work with choirs and learn to accompany and to learn things that, alongside what I was learning at Westminster, they just really worked hand in hand. And, actually, Trinity Church at that time was not spiritually and liturgically very satisfying. The director, who’s now retired, was a John Shelby Spong disciple, and, frankly, it was a bit disturbing some of the things I saw and heard, but I had to remember that, “hey, I was here to try to make a difference in terms of music and to learn my
“craft,” so, that definitely overshadowed any of the downside. That church is doing much better now.

Andy: Where would you find yourself spiritually formed by the Anglican Choral tradition?

Mr. McCormick: Where in my past?

Andy: Yes.

Mr. McCormick: I’m not sure it was any one place, I also did an exhaustive self-study. Back in those days there were still places where you could go in and buy endless recordings in a niche market, Anglican Choral CDs, and I probably spent way more money, and probably called my parents and said I’m out of my allowance would you send another check, and probably most of it was going towards CDs.

Andy: You’ve heard every Anglican chant that can be done for every Psalm there is.

Mr. McCormick: Yes. So I taught myself so much of the repertoire from going through all of these recordings, so I learned a lot on my own and learned a lot while working at Trinity where there was a broad repertoire, but a big core of that was the English Cathedral tradition. And when I went to St. Mary the Virgin, which had its own unique tradition, of Latin chant and polyphony, I became sort of immersed in that and through having to do that became pretty knowledgeable in chant and polyphony. So that’s not so much Anglican as it is Western Catholic. I’ve always enjoyed early music and polyphony and became saturated with it as well. Now I feel like I’m sort of combining the two because each church, even Anglo-Catholic churches have their own unique charism, you might say, what their tradition has been, the sort of repertoire that they’ve done, and you try to find the core of that and expand on it and build on it, but not try to turn it into something it isn’t. Anyway, it just sort of happened very gradually.

Andy: What do you use now, in your present position, to teach or to use music as a formational tool? How would you say you do that?

Mr. McCormick: Well, our adult choir is a mixture of paid singers and volunteers – volunteers who have auditioned, and there’s a high expectation. The professional singers are all, well, they’re not just singers who are there for a gig. I have to hire people who are up to it vocally and musically, but I know that not all of them identify as
practicing Christians but I know there is a spiritual element for all of them.

Andy: And that’s pretty standard, I’ve found, in professional singers.

Mr. McCormick: Sure. I’ve had in both DC, and already here, a number of paid singers who come because they want to sing the music and then they find something else. One of my best friends in the DC area who was a volunteer in one of my choirs there and was really pretty agnostic, and fairly anti-religion, not militantly so, but she came to sing in the choir. She was a musicologist, but not a professional singer, and the liturgy and the preaching started to speak to her and during my time there she was confirmed (she had been baptized as a child in a mainline protestant church). That’s one example and I see that happening now and, remember, my first job with them is to help them prepare music for Sundays and Feast Days. I hope there’s the fact that there’s a deeper component from me that comes through. There’s that. At St. Mark’s we’re starting our fifth year of a pretty rigorous choral program for children. It’s my second year there and I think one of the things they wanted me to do was really keep building that and making it more and more serious. I remember that my job with the children is to teach them to be good musicians, but also for many it’s their first introduction to Christian faith through the liturgy and through the texts and music we sing. So, while it’s not Sunday School, and we do have so much to accomplish – and I do try to spend good deal of time talking about theology behind the texts we’re singing and its meaning in the liturgy. Also, I try to remember that while I feel very confident in my vocation as a lay person, that I bare a spiritual burden, but not in a negative way, of forming these children, and I think to myself sometimes that I may be called to account one day for how I formed them, or did I form them, and so I very much want to be responsible and do that well and try to show them as best I can who God is and what we do.

Andy: I think that, even as a professional singer, you sing enough settings of the Mag and Nunc that something is going to seep in, it’s going to grab you.

Mr. McCormick: Right, and we have some of our professional singers who would absolutely articulate they are practicing Christians, that they joined a Parish, and some who are on the fence but you know it is working on their hearts and minds because I believe in the transformative power of music. I also believe in a transformative power of beauty and I don’t apologize, I never apologize, for
seeking to uphold the highest standards possible. And there’s a
dangerous possibility of slipping into perfectionism, and I have to
tsay that’s one of my biggest personal and spiritual struggles, but I
don’t apologize for holding everyone to the highest standard we
can because I believe excellence is virtuous. The pursuit of
excellence shapes us and forms us and we offer our best to God
liturgically and musically and to be a fitting offering. I hope that
comes through what I do. I’m as human as the next person and I
lose patience sometimes and I get stressed and frustrated when
things aren’t going smoothly. But everyone knows, or hopefully
they all know, I’m human and they’re able to forgive me and move
on.

Andy: Do you find with the children’s choirs that there’s ever a point
where they’re getting what they’re singing? That the text is
actually speaking to them? That they’re beginning to understand
some of these things, especially around Feast days?

Mr. McCormick: I think so, yes, I hope so. I think as they get older it starts to sort
of click more and more, as you would expect. St. Mark’s has a
terrific Sunday School, too, mostly right now for younger children.
My colleague, Mother Erika Takacs, leads it. She has a degree in
choral conducting from Westminster and she does a lot of singing
with them. It basically follows the structure of Godly Play. Not a
strict curriculum, per se, but I inherit a lot of the kids, it’s kind of
like a feeder program for the chorister program. So, some have
already started [to understand] before I get to them. Some of them
come and their parents find out from other parents that it’s a great
opportunity for them and they may not be churchgoers elsewhere
and it may take a little longer for them. I can think of children in
DC whose parents were pre-avowedly secular and one boy in
particular, who was 8 or 9 at the time said, “before I came here I
didn’t believe in God and now I believe in God.” So you know that
something is working.

Andy: So they’re getting spiritual formation in Sunday School as well as
from a music standpoint, and so the choir just enhances that.

Mr. McCormick: That’s right, so we try to work hand in hand. Right now, at St.
Mark’s, the weak spot is Christian Formation outside the choral
program for older children, but we’re starting a new program this
fall and hope to get that up and going to pick up where they left
off. Schola, that’s the name of the Sunday School program for
younger children that involves lots of singing, so this is supposed
to be a continuation but I don’t think it will be musical because we
have the musical outlet through the choir for older boys and girls, 7-8 and up.

Andy: Let me ask you this, and it sounds like some of your experience in other parishes might play into this, from a music standpoint and for you, personally, being a musician, how important is it to you that the clergy understand music?

Mr. McCormick: I guess there’s different levels of understanding. I don’t think it’s important at all that the clergy have an in-depth knowledge of Baroque performance practice, I don’t think that’s what you mean.

Andy: No, if you want to do liturgy well music has got to come into it, and you want to be able to work well with the choir and the organist and the musicians.

Mr. McCormick: Yes, it’s extremely important. The clergy I get to work with now are more knowledgeable than any I’ve ever worked with before and I find that to be very rewarding. The scary part is they both hear everything, if anything goes awry they hear it. I’ve never worked with priests before, I mean, I’ve worked with priests who have a musical background, but not like that. So that’s a little daunting. It’s a great thing, but it’s also a little scary at times! So that level of knowledge is not required, but just an understanding and appreciation, and I want to make beautiful music that adorns the liturgy (music is the handmaid of the liturgy). It’s nice when the clergy understand the place of music and allow and empower the musicians to do their job. What works in some parishes won’t always work in other parishes, so you have to find the strengths of the place. I’ve been blessed to work in these urban Anglo-Catholic churches with a history of strong music and the resources to pull it off. I really appreciate working with clergy who understand and value the importance of good music and who are confident enough not to be threatened by it, and for the most part I’ve had that and am grateful for that.

Andy: I’ve known places that will do somebody’s Mass setting for the actual Eucarist. I’ve not done it in my own singing career, but it has to be a certain kind of place that can pull that off without first publishing it’s going to happen. Not every place can do that.

Mr. McCormick: Yes, I don’t think doing Choral Mass Settings in the parish should be the norm, for many reasons, but I do think there are a few places, especially in major, urban areas, where there’s a handful of churches who have more of a Cathedral tradition and I think it’s appropriate. In a city like Philadelphia, or Washington, DC, and
certainly New York, where there’s dozens of churches to choose from, so if a given worshiper is fed and drawn in by the idea of choral liturgy, that is, where liturgical texts are sung by the choir, whether Mass settings, or canticles, etc., I think that is absolutely worthy and an important part of our tradition that should be carried on in places where there’s the ability to do it and a need for it. That said, we have to find a balance.

Andy: Is Evensong part of your repertoire at St. Mark’s, is that a regular thing?

Mr. McCormick: Yes, the tradition has been for some time to do Evensong, usually paired with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the first Sunday of the month. At St. Paul’s, K Street, we did almost every Sunday, year round, even in the summer, which is great. It’s tiring, but I loved it…until about 2 pm on Sunday afternoon when I want to put my feet up, look at the paper, and take a nap.

Andy: Who is your go to composer when you just need a lift or a dose of happiness?

Mr. McCormick: I would have to go by period. I would say Thomas Tallis from the Renaissance, then J.S. Bach, then Beethoven, maybe, or Beethoven/Brahms.

Andy: I can’t speak from an organist’s, playing, point of view, but mine would have to be Stanford.

Mr. McCormick: I love Stanford, and Elgar. Elgar definitely makes me happy.

Andy: Thank you for your time. This has been helpful and, again, you will see everything before it gets published so you can see how I used your words.

Mr. McCormick: Thank you for reaching out, I’m honored to be part of it, and if you have any follow up questions, don’t hesitate to reach out.
Interview with Dr. Jared Johnson – September 6, 2017

Andy:  Hi, Dr. Johnson. As I wrote to you in my email, my project is on music as a tool for spiritual formation. So, to start off, tell me a little bit about your own background in music and how music has shaped you.

Dr. Johnson: That’s a great question. Let me see if I can give you a manageable answer. I started playing a piano when I was about nine years old which, I found out as I went through music schools, was pretty late for someone who ended up doing music professionally. It’s a little bit hard for me to explain, but once I started taking piano lessons I just loved doing it. I was just going to a piano teacher, there was nothing religious about it, it was a totally secular undertaking. My piano teacher asked me, well, basically required me after a few years to take a few organ lessons as a discipline and I really enjoyed that. I grew up going to church, a Presbyterian church in small town Ohio, so I heard the organ every Sunday, but when I started dabbling in organ lessons I really enjoyed doing that also. It’s not something I chose to do as a kid, really, it just came into my lap and I love it, I love doing it. And after a few years of organ lessons I began playing organ regularly at a couple of churches in my home town. I did that as a commitment throughout my high school years which was really kind of a back door entrance to being a church musician, but the church needed me. I was in a small town and not many people played the organ so it was a way I could help the church as a teenager.

Andy: It probably paid you money, too.

Dr. Johnson: It did. I remember being a freshman in high school and getting my dad to sign this contract for something like $500 year and I thought I had hit the jackpot with this huge sum of money! I spent a lot of my childhood in the church learning to play the organ and, I still experience this now as a church employee, just the feeling of being in the church and being in the hallway with parishioners, you know, all of those ways we just bump into each other, that’s been a part of my life since I was really young. It’s been just kind of my natural habitat. That certainly doesn’t answer your question on how music formed me, except maybe in a practical way in that it put me in contact with the church, and it put me, physically, in the building a lot of the time and, for me, part of the other formation that I think about just happens by the grace of being present, by being in the service, by being committed to being in the service, having a role to do
that made me go every Sunday. Then, I’m a big believer in the formation of things that are hard to describe, that are out of the context of the liturgy when they happen – talking to the Altar Guild, or just in the parking lot.

Andy: Sure, sure.

Dr. Johnson: And those things are…I guess the prerequisite to that is you have a reason physically to be at church. That’s not a very profound answer, but I realize that in my own life that’s been a big deal. I’ve been very at home being here. I didn’t really get into the Episcopal Church until I was in college, but I fell for that pretty fast as a Freshman in college and I’ve never looked back. I’ve been a devotee of The Book of Common Prayer and the hymnal, I think those are two really wonderful tools for formation. I think the hymnal is appreciated but may be undervalued as a book that’s not just about music, but is full of prayers and ways about talking to God and listening to God. I got confirmed as an Episcopalian, I guess, my first year out of college, but since I went to college I’ve been, sort of, non-stop in the Episcopal Church and I’ve really loved it.

Andy: Thank you for that. One of the things it sounds like to me, that I think would be fair to say, is that one of the things that brought you to church every week was music, because you were the organist. You were the one playing it.

Dr. Johnson: That’s right, I mean, I was going to church every week with my family. I think when I got to the age where a lot of adolescents or college students stopped, I didn’t really have that option since I was committed to being the organist. It never came up for me and I may have well gone through what some of them went through, which is getting lost in the church, but I didn’t.

Andy: Do you feel the service had a different impact on you once you were the one playing the music and not just a worshipper in the pew?

Dr. Johnson: I’d say yes, and I think I was certainly more attentive to what was going on, partly because I had to know my moment to play. I was just a kid, then. I think that’s still a question you probably wrestle with too, as a priest, of what your experience is like when you’re leading versus sitting in the pew…If you get to do that anymore. It is different. I don’t know how I would quantify that. For me, now, it’s a challenge, I think, to get past all the practical responsibilities and to feel like I am fully present in body, mind, and spirit in the liturgy and not preoccupied with (the thought
of) “am I getting all the other people that I’m responsible to prepare ready?”

Andy: Sure, and we experience that, too. One of the things in my own experience was I was drawn into the church by music, by singing in the choir. In singing the pieces the words are allowed to wash over you and draw you in, and every time I do that I get that same kind of feeling and have a similar experience. But now, as a leader of worship, and not singing in the choir, I don’t get to sing those things anymore. Certainly I can still listen to them and still feel it, but that’s kind of the moment I knew – this is where I belong.

Dr. Johnson: Did you grow up singing as a boy?

Andy: I did, yes.

Dr. Johnson: Where was that, Andy?

Andy: In Cleveland, Ohio. In Berea.

Dr. Johnson: How about that? I went to college at Oberlin, so not too far away.

Andy: But that’s the impetus of this paper. I started singing in a church choir at age six, and my father was a priest, so I had been going to church and sort of knew church, but it wasn’t until I began to sing and participate that it began to grab me. It was in that singing that I feel I learned a lot about sacraments and stories of Jesus because I was singing those words and singing those prayers and that’s where I feel like my early formation came in, and that’s kind of where I’m going with all this.

Dr. Johnson: Well, that’s an experience that I’m envious of. I didn’t have, or, there was no choir like that for kids in my home town. I lead a choir like that now, and I see the incredible value of that for children, and people of all ages, particularly – speaking of formation – in those formative years. I didn’t have that experience as a kid, I had a different one, but there’s nothing like growing up as a chorister and, since you’ve had that experience, I know you did it – it’s a hard one to describe to people that haven’t been on the inside of that, but you mentioned your contact with the words and, of course, that’s huge. We’re not just singing, we’re singing these sacred texts which are going deep into our consciousness. I bet you can remember a lot of the words you sang as a boy. Or, if someone started them you could finish them.
Andy: Sure, they’re a part of me.

Dr. Johnson: They go deep into your memory, into your spirit, don’t they? That’s part of it and it’s a shared experience, you’re doing that with other kids. It’s extraordinary to be on a team doing that where, suddenly, you’re doing this great big thing. You’re part of a bigger thing than you, and you’re doing it together. I find that, with the kids I work with now, that’s one thing that is just palpable, and there’s not so many opportunities for children to have that experience. The closest thing is probably a sports team, but then it’s not necessarily geared toward a higher purpose. It’s hard to gear a sports team to a higher purpose than the sport, but in the church we’re shooting incredibly high, aren’t we.

Andy: Well, yeah.

Dr. Johnson: And the thing we’re dealing with is such good nutrition, it’s the sacred texts, and in our tradition those texts are set to music by great artists. It’s just so doggone formative if you’re just setting out to fulfill that role for the church, it just all falls into place for the kids.

Andy: The team analogy is good, but with the choir the whole team participates together, they’re all doing it. Whereas in other team sports not everyone can be on the field at once.

Dr. Johnson: Yeah, that’s a really good point. I’m such a believer in it (choir participating as a team in singing these sacred texts), I’ve seen it change lives over and over and over.

Andy: Let me ask you then, based on what you’re saying, how do you incorporate that, or use that, in the programs you have at Trinity, and in the choirs you’ve begun or in what you’ve tried to build there? Particularly with the children, but to an extent with the adults as well.

Dr. Johnson: Good question. I’d say, this might sound like a bad answer, so let me see how it sounds. The main thing we do is we try to do the real thing the church wants us to do. In other words, I care enormously for the singers and their formation, but when we set our goal it’s not about that, it’s about [the fact that] we’re going to sing for the church, we’re going to offer this offering to God, and we devote ourselves to this task, and the other things are going to start to happen. If we formed a group and said we’re going to do this to form you, I’m not sure it would work as well. We have an obvious mission. Our mission is clear and we embrace that, and then we develop ways to try to bring people along to do that well. That’s not to
say that’s all we do. I almost always start a treble rehearsal with what we call “talk time,” where we’ll just sit around and talk for a minute. It’s usually not something like, “Did you watch the Superbowl,” it’s more about something we’re doing…today’s topic is…what’s a sacrament, and we’ll have a little discussion about it. Eventually, I find, children become very comfortable talking about important things in that context, a group of people that’s committed already to this mission. It’s really wonderful to give them a safe place to talk about important things, so we do that. Our choristers come twice a week for practice and one of the weekdays we do that for about 10-15 minutes, and that’s part of a formation strategy. We pray together. We start with a prayer and end with a prayer. We dismiss the choir with the Chorister’s Prayer, that you probably grew up saying, after every service. So it all begins and ends with a word of prayer and a discussion about, hopefully, some topic about the church which is relevant to what we’re doing, and that’s not about music. Music is a language to get at it, but it’s not, “how do you tune the third in A major?” We do that in choir rehearsal, but in “talk time” we’ll talk about more spiritual, life issues, and I think very quickly those things start to go together. One girls choir conversation that comes to mind is—I asked the question, “Does it matter what the choir sounds like?” It’s really an interesting question because you can make a good case that it doesn’t matter, that if we’re singing to God then God can unravel what you’re trying to say, regardless of the language you choose. The girls came around to a point which I thought was great, which was if we’re together in our mission and working hard together, the sound will be better than if we’re all doing an individual thing. Therefore the sound does matter because it represents the healthy, good spiritual process. I thought that was a great way of understanding a good choral sound.

Andy: It’s offering your best.

Dr. Johnson: Yeah, exactly. We also travel together. We do choir tours and that’s an incredible bonding experience. We take the kids to choir camp for a week in the summer and they lead Compline every night. One of them says a little prepared homily about the lesson. They lead the entire service right out of The Book of Common Prayer. Our choristers, when they graduate, they’re going to know the prayer book, they’re going to know a lot of the psalms by heart, a lot of the hymns and liturgical actions by heart and, hopefully, just fall in love with the church. So wherever they go there’s going to be an Episcopal church and they’re going to be able to find their way in. That’s one of the things we hope for, and it seems to work pretty darn well. I’m in my fifteenth year, so it’s long enough to have watched some kids go all the way through the program and go to college and
graduate and get a couple of years into their adult life. So many of them are still singing somewhere, or at least active in a church wherever they are. That’s not to say they wouldn’t be if they hadn’t been choristers, but I think we get a pretty good, lifelong connection to the church from people who have kids who have been committed as choristers. I don’t have any numbers, maybe your project will get into some of that, but I observe in our community a higher return of that than in kids who haven’t been choristers.

Andy: Who stayed with the church, you mean?

Dr. Johnson: I think so. I mean, it’s mostly a hunch, it’s an observation that’s not scientific, but I believe it. Anyway, that may or may not get to your question.

Andy: I think it does. Let me offer something. I guess what I’m hearing you say is you don’t set out in the beginning with a plan for formation, but your mission and your purpose is to sing to the glory of God, and in doing that these things come along.

Dr. Johnson: I don’t want to say that it’s not part of the picture, but I think that maybe it’s similar to the way that you’re formed in the liturgy – which is if you go in thinking “I’m here to be formed,” I don’t think you have the full experience. If you come in thinking “I’m going to worship God,” you’ll be formed. In other words, we’re not thinking it. We get formed when we stop thinking about ourselves, and something choristers, I think, get pretty quickly. It’s that my purpose here is not about me, and then the formation just starts to come and, in a way, we get out of the way of it, let the prayer book and the liturgy do its thing.

Andy: I completely agree with that. I wish there were a way – this is going to be an aside – I wish there were a way to translate that to the congregation. That is to say if you come every Sunday and listen, and then we might have an Adult Sunday School Forum to talk, then these same things would happen, but you kind of have to be there.

Dr. Johnson: Right.

Andy: Maybe they are where you are, I don’t know, but the good thing is you give a safe space in which this is allowed to happen, and it’s the choir and it’s the music, that is the reason you’re together, but it’s more than that.
Dr. Johnson: Yeah, I think that’s true. I think when we talk about that, and I want to be very careful not to be misperceived, you understand, but when I talk about this in our community, I try to be very careful not to allow people to think that we’re not caring about our people because, of course, we care about them enormously. We care about it enough to help them get out of their own way, if you know what I mean. I think in some contexts that can be either, “the musician doesn’t get it,” and “we think we’re just here about music. We’re going to make something beautiful,” and “we’re artists,” and that’s all true. But, it’s a half truth in the church. You can do all that and make it beautiful and it can be a swing and a miss. If you’re not doing it with the right attitude or the right goal, which to me is offering it at the altar. At our church we’re so fortunate that it’s expected to be our best offering. Then our week to week task is really a refining of us, trying to give our very best.

Andy: You talked earlier about mechanics and that stuff you can work out in practice and all that, but what I have found is that sometimes, even in those mechanics, the director will say, “Think about what you’re singing. Think about the words you’re saying here, and what that means in a grander scope of things.” Sometimes, just thinking that, I’m putting it in perspective, but it helps you mechanically just sing it in a better way.

Dr. Johnson: I completely agree. I had a girls rehearsal last night and we were practicing a little piece by Britten called “The Birds.” You may have sung that as a kid. It’s a piece Britten wrote when he was a teenager and he dedicated it to his mother, and the last phrase is really quiet – it’s ppp – and then it gets quieter at the end. The girls were having a hard time getting quieter at the end, which is a technical challenge. We worked on that. We had a voice teacher there who was coaching a little bit on how they manage their breath for that purpose, etc. Some of the girls went off and had a voice lesson, and they’re really working hard on mechanics, and it got a little better. Towards the end of the rehearsal I asked them to read the words again, asked them to notice who the piece was dedicated to, and I told them that Britten had written that piece when he was about their age and to think about what that might mean. By the way, the text is about Jesus as a child, when Jesus Christ was four years old. It’s a really cool poem about the child Jesus, about that notion of a child’s affinity to his mother and vice versa. The girls thought about that for a few minutes and we had a little discussion. They sang it again and it was perfect. It was quiet, got quieter, was kind of intimate and loving and all the things that are probably trying to be embodied by the musical setting of the words.

Andy: And they’ll remember that.
Dr. Johnson: I think so, and they’ll carry that with them and it’ll cross over. To me that’s one of the greatest aspects of music as that tool for formation because it’s just a simple thing like that.

Andy: Yeah, that’s right.

Dr. Johnson: I’m just kind of answering a question you haven’t asked, but one other thing I observed with our kids is that we have kids with lots of different ages, but at a certain age kids get so darn busy, especially smart kids who tend to like being choristers. In just the years I’ve been a choir master here, the pressure on them or the existence of social media has come out of nowhere in the last decade.

Andy: Right.

Dr. Johnson: I know that that just multiplies the pressure on kids to be multitasking and to be kind of absent minded from where their body is. Of course, singing is a perfect antidote to that because it’s your body and your mind doing the same thing. Choristers and their parents tell me over and over that kids come to choir practice really tired and frazzled, and they’d leave feeling refreshed and put back together. And to some degree I think that just the unity of mind and body as required for singing is healthy, is a good stress management, a good way to spend a couple of hours on a busy day. Just by undertaking to do it, you’re kind of obligated to do it, to have to put your phone aside. You have to focus for a long time and it’s just good for you. And when something is healthy like that, I think that...I don’t know how that relates to spiritual formation, but there’s got to be something to that. I think God wants us to be well formed, and it’s one way that we recreate ourselves, in a way.

Andy: Well, yeah, and it’s shutting off the outside world and focusing on that higher purpose, focusing on God. I think you’re right in that bringing the mind and the body together that you’re working as one unit towards something. You have to focus.

Dr. Johnson: Right.

Andy: Now, when you’re singing Britten you’d have to remember some of the other things, like singing all the crazy notes he puts together.

Dr. Johnson: [Laughing] Yeah, that’s right. You certainly have to have developed a lot of technical skills, the ability to read music, which is not necessarily a
spiritual tool, but it’s a good thing to know how to do. In our church we teach kids, and after a couple of years of doing that they’ve got that skill for life.

Andy: What I find interesting and, again, this is a little aside, but in some of those pieces where the notes are kind of out of left field and you have trouble with that dissonance in finding it...once you, again, thinking about the words, thinking about the passage in the piece and what goes into it, once you get it you’ll never forget it. You can sing it anywhere, anytime. You’ll hit the B flat because it’s a part of you, you can’t change it.

Dr. Johnson: Yeah, that’s true.

Andy: I have a written survey of questions that I’m sending out to clergy, and it’s just in the diocese of Alabama, we have a big enough pool right there. One of the questions I ask is, “What’s your relationship with your organist or choir master?” Coming from the choral side, being a chorister first and being very much into music, I find that now, as clergy, I’m very attentive to that. And I find that in places where clergy are not as musically adept, there become issues and problems because they don’t understand why the organist wants to do this, or the choir master wants to do that, and vice versa. So, how important is that relationship to you?

Dr. Johnson: That relationship is vital. I don’t want to overstate it, but it’s like life or death for the success of the musician, for sure. I don’t think we have to emphasize or look very hard to find a lot of bad examples of that relationship in the church. It’s really wonderful when you can observe ones that are good and see how that, I think, feeds the common life of the church. I’ve been lucky to have worked for a lot of great clergy people, so I’ve been personally kind of insulated from the experiences that I hear about where the musicians are unhappy because they’re micromanaged by the priest who doesn’t have enough know how about music to do that well. Or, the musician can also, of course, be extremely difficult for people who have an expertise in an art but fail to see the context in which it thrives in the church. There’s lots of reasons for those relationships being not automatic, I think, and, of course, there’s a huge power differential. The clergy have the power, and they are canonically given the control of music. I left grad school in 2003 and when I got out in the profession I realized the obvious which is that the Canons of the church put priests in charge of the music. I think sometimes a lot of priests just want to do a good job and they read the laws saying, “you’re in charge of this.” In a good circumstance a priest will have someone they trust and delegate that responsibility. Then that delegee will try really hard to do what the priest
wants and should figure out what that should be together. Music is a complicated issue, and it’s emotional for everyone – for all the parishioners and the singers and the clergy and so forth. Part of it is there needs to be a really good symbiotic relationship between the clergy and musicians because if they don’t get along it shows.

Andy: Yeah.

Dr. Johnson: It shows in the worship and it hurts the congregation as a whole.

Andy: One thing I’ll say (to this) is that what I have found in my experience as a priest is I inherited musicians who didn’t come from an Anglican or an Episcopal background, who don’t understand, or wouldn’t understand, why I want to do certain things.

Dr. Johnson: Yeah, I think it can work that way as well.

Andy: I’ve had people tell me from time to time that the organist is so difficult, and I would say, “I don’t agree, you just don’t understand music.”

Dr. Johnson: I think in the Episcopal Church it would be helpful in the training of musicians for them to get some education in liturgy and scripture for sure. I think many do, but it’s critical. I think it’d be hard to have someone who’s just a performer do a good job for you.

Andy: Well...there’s clergy, too, who just want to get up there and listen to themselves talk, and that’s not helpful either.

Dr. Johnson: I think musicians should have an obligation to try to empathize or to understand what a priest is doing. We see the tip of the iceberg and we don’t see all the time you spend in the hospital or in the home of bereaved families. We know that happens, but we don’t necessarily notice it. That’s just probably human nature, and that’s probably true in any profession. Between two people, we can’t fully know what the other life is like.

Andy: Sure.

Dr. Johnson: I think musicians get a chip on their shoulder sometimes because they feel misunderstood. No one knows that I’m here on Saturday night practicing really hard, or that I have to do all this administrative work during the week in order for the choir to be prepared. We ought to just sit down together and try, try to know what each other is doing. Why is your job
hard? What are its joys and its challenges? I think those are signs of good, fruitful relationships with clergy and musicians.

Andy: I think you’re quite right. I think you can tell when you go to church if that’s good or not good. For me the staff is a cohesive group, so I always want to be able to have a good relationship with the staff. If I don’t understand what you’re doing then I’m going to try to learn and vice versa. But this is about music.

Dr. Johnson: I think one thing, and it’s kind of an answer to what we were just talking about, but I often say to the choir that music is not about music, it’s a language that does something else. It’s hard to say exactly what, but even if you’re just in a concert...and I don’t mean to under value that, but I believe music in the liturgy to have arguably a higher purpose than music in the concert. It connects people – some kind of language that goes deeper and higher than words. In our culture – I think a lot of times it happens in public life and funding battles and politics – we have music put in this velvet box where it’s elite or a luxury item, and in the minds of many it’s forgotten as a way people connect to one another and the church connects up to our creator. It’s such a common ground that all people make sound and all people hear sound and not a velvet rope thing at all. You probably don’t have to look very hard to find examples of that struggle in schools and in budgets. One of the reasons that I think our church has been successful with the chorister program is that we’re actually filling a niche that a lot of schools can’t fill anymore because they either don’t have a full-time music teacher, or they don’t have enough class time to teach, or for whatever reason have decided not to teach kids to read music and keep up with the pace of the church. You have to learn to read it, and kids (here) get this great education that they’re not able to find in a lot of places. It’s still not just about music, it’s music as a means to get to some other higher purpose.

Andy: Thank you, I think you’re right. I have two children. My oldest is a freshman in high school and it was ridiculous looking at the scheduling choices to think that a kid who was in band wouldn’t be able to take it if they also wanted to take theater.

Dr. Johnson: I feel that’s so common. That’s ridiculous. That is the times we’re in right now.

Andy: Let me ask you this as a concluding question, just for fun.

Dr. Johnson: OK
Andy: As an organist and musician, who is your sort of go-to composer?

Dr. Johnson: Oh, my go-to composer?

Andy: Yes, one who takes you to your happy place.

Dr. Johnson: It’s hard to pick just one. I’m a nut for Herbert Howells. I think there’s something about that language that just transports me to my kind of imaginary ideal spiritual vocation. It’s probably the wrapping together of that influence of Tudor polyphony and English Romantic harmony and, I don’t know, a love of words. I’m very, very happy when we’re singing Howells or I’m listening to it, but that’s the first of dozens of composers that take me to that place.

Andy: I’m a big Stanford fan, so Howells is OK because he was his student, so I’ll give you that.

Dr. Johnson: [Laughing] Right, good. Stanford is such a great composer, very, really underrated, I think, in history.

Andy: Well, I thank you for your time. I hope we do get to meet one day.

Dr. Johnson: I hope so, too, my pleasure. If I can answer any other questions jest call or email or whatever. I am really interested in your project. It’s a great topic and one that’s worthy of being thought of more often in the church because music is such a great tool for formation. Congratulations on highlighting that for whoever reads your paper.

Andy: I will let you have a look at it and, certainly, the places where I use this interview to check it with you to make sure you are all right with it.

Dr. Johnson: I appreciate that.

Andy: Of course, the full paper will be available to you as well.

Dr. Johnson: Wonderful, good. Well good luck with your work and thanks for talking to me today.

Andy: All right, thank you.

Dr. Johnson: My pleasure.

Andy: All right, bye.
Dr. Johnson:  Bye.
Interview with Dr. Marty Burnett – September 21, 2017

Andy: Thank you for agreeing to do this with me.

Dr. Burnett: Oh sure, I’m glad to help.

Andy: Ok, I think I gave you a little bit of background in one of the things I wrote to you, but my basic premise was I remember singing in the choir as a six-year-old, and the anthem that comes to mind is one that had to do with Ascension Day. It just has always stuck in my head and it made a significant mark on me as a six-year-old just starting to sing. I thought about that a little more, and then thought about my own experience. From that point on, it was kind of where I found my place in the church. At that point, with my dad being a priest, the church had always been a part of my life, but I didn’t really feel any part of it until I started singing in the choir. So, my experience kind of goes from there, staying in choirs all through school and then in college, and staying close to the church. And I really view music, at least for me, was a form of spiritual formation. And so, what I’m looking at in this project is music as a tool for spiritual formation and how people utilize it in that way, or how music affects people in certain ways. Part of what I want to do with this project is look at some psychological aspects, some behavioral aspects especially with child development, and where music plays a role there. A lot of people will say, well, music helps you remember things, tools like that, and then cross it over into the spiritual formation side, particularly with regard to choirs, because that’s my experience. Also, as clergy, how do I use music in my own way as a tool for spiritual formation and how did others do it. So part of this is these interviews I’m doing, and I have seven people that I’ve targeted, two clergy and five lay. The five lay are all choirmasters or are involved in music at a diocesan level in some way. So that’s what I’m going with and you’re on my list. I mentioned you to Neil and he said, yeah! And, I saw Joe this summer and I mentioned it to him, and he said I’m sure Marty would love to talk with you.
Dr. Burnett: Yeah, well, of course I am. I am happy to talk to you, and you know if this conversation goes the way I expect it will we may want to talk again because I’ll think of other things.

Andy: And that’s fine. And I hope that we can do that. Now, I am recording this so I want you to know that, but that’s just for my own data so I can go back and make sure I have the information correct as I use it in the paper.

Dr. Burnett: And that’s fine.

Andy: So, what I’ve told the other people I’ve interviewed is that, when this is done, I will send you the whole paper or the parts of the paper where I use our conversation to make sure you’re okay with it, that everything looks OK and it’s how you remembered it. I’ve shared a little bit about what my experience was. I want to hear what your experience with music has been, in particular, to the church. You didn’t have to start out with the church but how it came to the church.

Dr. Burnett: In terms of my own self?

Andy: Yes, it’s your own personal experience

Dr. Burnett: Yeah. Well, like you, I grew up in the church. I have memories of the church from very early childhood. I remember when we lived in Houston, Texas for the first three years of my life, and I actually have memories of that church, primarily getting dressed up in scratchy clothes which I hated and wearing a hat and gloves which people still did in Texas in the sixties. I don’t remember much about worship or music there, but I have very strong memories of the next place we lived which was Midland, Michigan. We were there for five years, and it was a beautiful church building, modern architecture, one whole side wall was glass. It looked out on a beautiful garden with a reflecting pool and the music was a big part of church there, and I remember being so impressed and in awe of the choir and the organ. And particularly they had a huge Christmas pageant every year that was so impressive including an angel who flew in on a wire like in
Peter Pan. That made a big impression on me. We moved back to Houston when I started third grade, and I lived there the rest of my childhood, grew up in the Methodist church, the United Methodist church. And the church when we returned had an active children and youth choir program. I was already taking piano lessons at that point, and I was interested in music and wanted to get involved. We moved in 1969 so that was mostly in the seventies which was the time when we had a lot of hymnal supplements, a lot of folk and contemporary music that was coming into use in addition to traditional music, and so the children and youth choir had a very active role in musical leadership. I think partly because the adults didn’t want to do some of that music but we, at the early service, the 8:30 service, we sang regularly - if not every week probably every other week. So not only did we have a great musical opportunity in choir at the church but we had responsibility. We had a leadership role which was important to all of us. It was important to me. So those were very formative years for me as a youth. The youth choir regularly went on tour every summer, so we got to see places and sing in different kinds of churches. That was fascinating. One of the interesting things about that particular church was that as we got to be older youths we got to sing with the adults, and we did Handel’s Messiah and various oratorios and cantatas. So, there was a real breadth of music in that particular Methodist church which, I found out later, I had to go to the Episcopal Church to find.

Andy:  You don’t see it so much any more.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, a lot of Methodist churches, you know, at least ours had that breadth, but a lot didn’t. So I was very lucky in that I had a good exposure to a wide range of choral literature. And the opportunity as a young person to sing and then, of course, to study the organ and play.

Andy:  My experience with the children’s choir I was in would have been mid-seventies, so we were singing out of those folksy children’s anthem books.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah. A funny story about that, which is unrelated to your paper, but I’ll tell you because I think you’ll find it amusing, is that I remember
I was in elementary school. One of those Sunday mornings really early, the organist and the choir director were frantically rummaging through the choir room and trying to find the copy of whatever song it was we were singing that week. It was called “A – le – lu”, and they were racing around saying, “What’s it in? What’s it in?” because there were so many different supplements. “What’s it in,” and I thought for a minute, I looked and said, “Well, it’s in G!” I didn’t realize at the time what they were asking, they just kind of stopped cold and looked at each other. We have a fun thing here. But, yeah, it was a great experience for me and my first playing gig was with what was called the Men’s Bible Class. Sunday school was not as engaging for me as choir was. It was really pretty boring. So, starting in about fifth and sixth grade, I started figuring out ways to get out of it. So, I volunteered to be the pianist for the men’s Bible class. The average age of these men was probably 80. And what they did was they pulled out the old Cokesbury Hymnal, they sang hymns for the first fifteen or twenty minutes of their class. And so, I would go down there and play for them and they’d call out hymn numbers, and we’d flip the book open and play, and it was a great experience for me to kind of learn how to sight read and play in different keys. And, you know, if I made a mistake some of them were hearing impaired so they didn’t really notice.

Andy: You could get away with it!

Dr. Burnett: So, I guess that was it. Reflecting back on it, that was one of the unique things about that church besides the quality of the program was the fact that young people actually got to do things. And so, it wasn’t just sitting back and waiting your turn, you know, if you wanted to be involved and have a leadership role there were opportunities to do that. So that was kind of significant. They also had a summer musical program every summer where they did a musical, and I was in musicals and played the piano for musicals. There was just a lot to do with a lot of opportunity.

Andy: Well, and you probably learned a lot more bible-based things in the music field than you would have in Sunday school, anyway.
Dr. Burnett: Exactly. Yeah. So, it was a great experience for me growing up, but I do think, and I’m sure you agree, that we learned through church music about the church, we learn about scripture. We internalize a lot of it by living it and doing it.

Andy: Right, and that, to me, is just the point.

It’s exactly the right word, “internalize.” We do that as we sing these things, especially in a choir setting where we do it over and over and over and over. And, as you well know, someone can say, “well, sing this piece from the Messiah” and you can do it at the drop of a hat and you know it because it has formed you. That’s kind of my premise that it allows us to learn these things in very deep and meaningful ways because we do it so much.

Dr. Burnett: And when you hear a scripture read you associate it so many times with a musical setting. I mean you actually hear it in your mind. I’m sure that’s true for you, too.

Andy: Oh my goodness, ask my congregation! They get tired of me, especially in Advent, when I preach because I always mention something out of Messiah, or something of this piece or that piece, or a psalm - I can’t hear it without singing it.

Dr. Burnett: So, yes, I think we had similar experiences growing up in that way.

Andy: So, to go a little further into that, how would you then view music as a tool for spiritual formation?

Dr. Burnett: Well, that’s a big question. An important one. I think it’s one of the best tools that we have at our disposal because of the way that it appeals, first of all, to people of all ages but also integrates the senses and reaches people at a deeper spiritual level. I think for kids, for young people, music is so natural, particularly, when you think of young children, singing is as natural an expression as talking, and movement to music is very natural. And it simply makes sense to use that as a tool for spiritual formation. It also fills a spiritual need. We
have so many young children who are not getting music in school or
any other place else, but that’s one of the things that we have. Some
people are working actively in Omaha figuring out a way to make it
available across the board to kids from all types of economic
backgrounds. There was a time when most of us got music and the
inherent spiritual nature of it. We got some of that in school. That
doesn’t happen as much anymore. I think music, it’s hard to define,
isn’t it? But it reaches a place for many of us that nothing else
reaches. It allows us a sense of communion that’s very deep and
profound. It goes beyond words, and words are important, but the
music, for me, is a path to the divine. It’s a path to a deeper level and
allows me to encounter God in a way that I don’t in any other
method. Not to say that there aren’t other wonderful ways of spiritual
formation but, for many people, I think music is a profound and
important way to experience God.

Andy: I do think that. Singing, in particular, the music itself will stir us, will
arouse emotions within us. And then when you attach words with
that it’s going to teach you something that having someone standing
in front of you with the Bible in their hand isn’t going to be able to
teach you.

Dr. Burnett: And there’s the element of memory as well. You know, so many
times you can memorize a piece of music. And then, as we said, you
come back to it again, and it’s forever seared into your brain. And
there’s lots of interesting studies about the brain and how music
functions in it. I’m by no means an expert in this area. But I’ve seen
some personal examples of that including a Christmas concert that I
did once with my choir and a woman wrote to me afterwards. She
came to the concert with her husband who was a stroke victim. He
had not been able to speak since the stroke and one of the things we
did at this concert was we gave the audience the opportunity to sing
along on some Christmas carols. And when we started “Hark, the
Herald Angels Sing,” he stood up and sang the entire thing from
memory. Perfectly. And she was in tears because she said, you know,
I haven’t heard him speak, and he hasn’t spoken again since but
that’s something his brain remembers – that music. And that was the
trigger. That’s an amazing story to think about.
Andy: That’s a wonderful story. So then do you implement anything in your teaching or with your choirs that is specific to spiritual formation? Or is it sort of a thing that happens out of just being there and singing and learning?

Dr. Burnett: I do some specific things. I always have at least one prayer. Anytime I have a church choir rehearsal and I’m thinking of churches now, not with the college teaching, but with the children. We teach them the RSCM choristers’ prayer, and they say that as part of every session that we do. With the adults we also have a choir prayer. With the adults, we take time typically at the end of rehearsals on a weeknight to ask if there are any prayer requests. The choir is such an important small community in a larger church. It’s almost like a small congregation within a larger church. So, it provides a lot of spiritual support, and those relationships are important. So, I really try to foster an atmosphere in the choir where people are there to support one another in life’s joys and life’s sorrows and in difficult situations in times of illness and loss. And so, I think it is important for people to be able to offer those intentions and pray for one another. With the kids, we have here at Trinity the Cantate Choral Academy which offers an RSCM model of choral training. But part of that is that every Wednesday part of our schedule, in addition to classes and rehearsals, we offer evening prayer which the kids pray together, and they assist me in leadership of that. And then we also have a meal together immediately following for the kids and their families. And again, that is so important for building community among musicians. So, we try to be intentional in offering opportunities for prayer and worship. In addition to all that’s learned and absorbed through the actual singing and learning the music. I think it’s important to offer those times for singers as well.

Andy: Thank you for that. I’ll tell you, interestingly, one of the organist/choirmasters I spoke with also shared the thing you mentioned a little bit ago about schools not being as good to teach music as they once did, not having a place for it to where church choirs are beginning to fill the void that’s needed. And so, it’s the same sort of thing because you provide that. It gives a community that is a safe community where they feel they can come and learn and be and enjoy, so it feeds into itself.
Dr. Burnett: One of the things I find in this part of the country, and I don’t know if it’s true everywhere, but from what I read I suspect it may be, is that even in schools with a solid music program, they are not doing classic repertoire the way that people did when I was growing up. I went to public schools all the way through, but we did major sacred choral works and secular choral works. In high school we sang the Duruflé *Requiem* at a district choir festival. We sang the Britten *Ceremony of Carols* with our high school women. We did a lot of profoundly wonderful choral works. I remember singing the Christmas concert at school. With the Christmas concert we sang the Victoria *O Magnum Mysterium* and that simply isn’t happening. Obviously, there’s a lot more emphasis on popular music and show choirs and things in public schools now. But even in schools that have classical repertoire, the sacred repertoire is largely ignored. And there’s not that same opportunity in school choir for that spiritual connection which is where a lot of people got it who didn’t grow up in the church hearing that type of music. So really, more and more, we’re finding that the church is the only place where young people are going to have the opportunity to encounter the great music of the church throughout history. And that’s so meaningful, I think, for them to see. Not just tradition but that history of all these great composers who created art glorifying God. There’s that sense of being a part of this long procession of Christians, of people who have encountered God through music. And I really try to make a point with all my choirs, at any age, to program music from very early music all the way through modern music so that they can see that God’s spirit is still working in composers and artists and musicians and make sure that we’re programming music written by both men and women. These types of things are not happening in school and the church is the only place where they encounter the great music of our tradition.

Andy: How long have you been with this program in Omaha?

Dr. Burnett: Well, I’ve been at Trinity since 2008 and our children’s choir academy started last year. So, it started in the fall of 2016.

Andy: It’s still relatively new.
Dr. Burnett: It’s relatively new. We’re in our second year now. So, we spent a year really researching and planning and we opened for business, so to speak, in the fall of 2016. One of the things I did was I had a chance to correspond with a number of people doing children’s choir programs. I’ve visited and observed several which was really useful to see, you know, get ideas for what might work well in our setting and some things I didn’t want to do as well. So, it was very informative.

Andy: Are you an RSCM group?

Dr. Burnett: Yes. We’re affiliated with RSCM through the Cathedral parish.

Andy: Does that give you some guidelines at least on how things should work?

Dr. Burnett: Yes. The Royal School of Church Music in America provides a curriculum called “Voice for Life.” You’re probably familiar with this, but it’s very adaptable to your own situation. It’s not a “lock step” sort of program, it has a lot of resources that you can use and design into a program that works in your setting. I have found the people in the national office to be very helpful. If you have a question, you can call and get someone on the phone who would be happy to talk with you, give you ideas. And we found the program itself to work well, it gives the choristers the opportunity to work through different levels and earn colored ribbons and medallions. And you might think that ribbons and medallions aren’t very important to kids these days but they love that!

Andy: Oh yeah, every group I’ve seen who has been a part of that enjoys it.

Dr. Burnett: It’s a huge thing to feel like you’ve accomplished these goals and moving forward and then you get to wear your ribbon and medallion with your vestments. So, they are very motivated to work on that. It’s fun to watch. And we have divided it up so that they have, in addition to rehearsal, every group has musicianship. And then the older ones also have a liturgy class where they learn about the hymnal, the Book
of Common Prayer, and church music. And I have an assistant director, and he and I take turns teaching units of that class, and then we have worship and food - so what more could you want?

Andy: So, there is an element of formation built into that program aside from the music, but it’s the music that brings you together in the first place, that allows you to have all this.

Dr. Burnett: Yes, absolutely. So people come because they would like to see their child in choir and because the child is interested in music, and we provide that music instruction, we make sure that these kids are learning about music, how to read music, they’re literate in music. But we build in the formation pieces and the fellowship pieces, if you will, and this is one of the things I observed visiting different programs around the country including some that are very successful and well-respected. What happens many times is, as you get closer to the “performance,” the service where you’re going to sing, a lot of the other pieces drop by the wayside, and it becomes really focused on getting the piece ready to sing in church, right?

Andy: Sure, sure.

Dr. Burnett: Which is important. But that could get into a pattern of focusing on strictly the performance and not having time for the other things. And I felt strongly that in designing our program that we wanted to actually have class periods on the schedule, you know, for these different times. So that, with the exception of three or four times a year, when we are getting ready for Christmas Eve or the Easter Vigil, every time we come together, we’re going to have the rehearsal, we’re going to have study, we’re going to have worship, and we’re going to break bread together and share a meal. And I think all those components are so important.

Andy: They are, I think, definitely important, and even taking that focused time to prepare the music for whatever service it’s going to be used only enhances the classes they’ve had, especially when it comes to
liturgy. To understand how that fits in and why that’s important and what role it serves in the service they’re going to be a part of.

Dr. Burnett: Right. They had a children’s choir program here years ago which died. And there was nothing for a long period of time. And then we have a lot of young kids right now, so we started this new program that’s in the second year. The previous program really was performance-oriented. And they would bring the kids in to sing an anthem and then take them out. And that’s not the approach that I have – if the kids are going to be there they’re going to sing the liturgy and they’ll be up there. And when they’re younger, especially, the behavior may not be perfect but that’s okay. That’s when we learn.

Andy: They’ll learn, yeah.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, that’s how I learned.

Andy: Well, the priest’s behavior isn’t perfect either up there.

Dr. Burnett: And to let them understand that it’s different from performance. So, it’s not just about coming in and putting the cute kids up there and letting them perform - it’s really taking them seriously and letting them understand that they have a leadership role as a choir, and developing that understanding from an early age and they get it. We start with first graders. So even the first to third grade choir gets it. They understand that they have an important ministry to do.

Andy: Oh yeah, and I think that’s great.

Dr. Burnett: So that was a big change for people who have been here a long time. You know, it’s taken a while to sort of educate them to the fact that this is something different from what they’ve had before. But I think they like it. I think they’re understanding it.
Andy: Well, I would venture to guess that the children are more invested in the music they sing because of it.

Dr. Burnett: Right.

Andy: It’s not just a show, it’s deeper than that.

Dr. Burnett: And it’s not just camp songs, they’re actually getting to do something significant musically. And they appreciate it. And it’s fun now to have them for the second year and we can pull out some of the things we did last year and they’re so excited to sing them again because they have a lot of enthusiasm and several of them are studying instruments now. And we’re going to be at the stage soon where we can start incorporating some of those instruments into worship. That’s exciting to me.

Andy: I think it’s great. And the reason I asked about how long this has been going on, I wanted to see if you have any data and you won’t yet, but you will eventually, to see if once the kids have gone through this program, and they’ve moved on, how many of them stay within a music field or within a church field or at least some participation. I spoke about this with one of the other people I interviewed. They’ve had the school for years and he finds a majority of them stay with it because it has formed them.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, I think that has that potential. Because it gives kids a chance to not only experience God in a deep and meaningful way, but to see how they can use their own gifts and talents in service of God in the church. That’s key, I think, for them to understand that they have a place, they have an important role and that everyone’s needed.

Andy: Were you at the choir reunion at Sewanee for Delcamp’s retirement?
Dr. Burnett: I was there.

Andy: I thought you were. I thought I remembered you being there. And I’m sure I talked to you, but the thing I remember, and maybe you remember this, too, is that Robbe asked how many are still involved when we were there. How many of you are still singing, and I have to say the majority of the people raised their hands. They weren’t necessarily singing but were still involved in some capacity, which I thought was great.

Dr. Burnett: Once it’s in your blood

Andy: Well, yeah, but I think even so in that case some of those people didn’t have an experience with it until they came to Sewanee and sang in the choir. So even just in that short time it made a profound difference.

Dr. Burnett: And, as you know, that program Robbe ran was a tight ship. So there was a very disciplined approach to choir. And the young people responded to that. They realized they were a part of something important, something bigger than themselves.

Andy: You know they also soon realized we had to rehearse five times a week!

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, and I’m so glad that the choir program is continuing. Even though it’s under new leadership it seems like it’s continuing in much the same vein, which is good news.

Andy: Shifting just a little bit, how important do you feel the relationship is between the organist/choirmaster and the rector or the dean or the clergy?
Dr. Burnett: Well, I think it’s critically important. Rector, we’ll just use that term for all. The rector has the authority over worship and that person can choose to work with a musician in an approach of shared ministry and teamwork or they can make the situation impossible and everything in between. But the places that have successful music ministries invariably have someone at the helm in the rector or dean position who understands the importance of music. That person may or may not be a musician but somebody who understands its importance, is committed to a good working relationship, to teamwork, to an approach of shared ministry. In my experience, those two things go hand in hand, both the musician relationship and the success of the program.

Andy: I’ve always had a good relationship in the two parishes I’ve been involved in with the musicians and, again, because I come from that background, so I understand that, and I would find it very hard to be an organist or choirmaster with a rector that didn’t understand it. Or in the case where you as the rector had an organist or choirmaster who’s not familiar with the Episcopal liturgy and doesn’t get that side of it. I think it can go both ways.

Dr. Burnett: Yes, I think that’s true.

Andy: The rector can change that pretty quickly.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, there’s a real difference in the way this functions when we start talking about church size, too.

Andy: Sure.

Dr. Burnett: Because, of course, in Nebraska, like many places, there’s so many small congregations, rural congregations who don’t have access to a trained musician, and it can be very difficult for those clergy to figure out how to proceed. That’s kind of a whole other issue. So, I guess, when I answered your question, I was thinking more about places where a church is large enough that it can hire someone on a full or part-time basis who actually has the skills and training. When you’re
talking about a small rural congregation that’s struggling to survive, that’s probably almost seen as a luxury, don’t you think?

Andy: Oh yeah, absolutely. One of the questions asked of me by the musicians I’ve interviewed so far was…they weren’t aware of what kind of training we get in seminary with music and what not. I said at least for me, I can’t speak to the other seminaries, I think Sewanee did a good job, and you certainly know exactly what that was like. They get music in front of them and get the soon-to-be clergy to understand the relevance of music and how to work with it. Even to the point where we had to sing, whether we could or not.

Dr. Burnett: And so many seminarians are not getting that these days. And particularly with the movement toward regional seminaries which, we have one here, at the Bishop Kemper school for Ministry. We’re seeing a lot of clergy being graduates from that school and they’re getting absolutely nothing in terms of music, and some of them were bright enough to give me a call and say, “I realize I didn’t get this, so could you recommend some books to read?” We talked about getting a group together here in Nebraska of folks who were interested in learning more. There’s a real gap in terms of training there because that is one of the most important working relationships, I think, that a priest and musician have together in a parish and so much can be accomplished if it’s a good relationship. There has to be some understanding on both sides.

Andy: Yes, absolutely. We have begun one of those local diocesan seminaries. I don’t know if I’d go so far as to say “seminary,” but I guess it’s kind of what it is.

Dr. Burnett: That’s what they call themselves, you know? So, it could be argued what the definition of a seminary is.

Andy: Yeah. And ours is mostly - or at least what I’ve found - it’s kind of become an outlet for our deacons because we do have what we’ve been calling “deacon school” every so many years and we’ll ordain a new crop of vocational deacons. And now it’s morphed into what it is now. It has absorbed deacon school, but the priests can be trained,
too, and it kind of goes along the lines with the old Canon Nine priests. It’s kind of done for a specific community. They’re still a priest, but it is interesting.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, but the Bishop Kemper school here, I think…we still have people from this diocese who are termed bi-vocational priests. They’re going to be working part-time or full-time in another profession on the side. But, you know, with the diocese like this where so many of our parishes are small rural parishes, we’re going to end up with a fair number of these clergy.

It’s interesting. If you start looking at how the model will change, to the point that these locally formed clergy are going to outnumber the seminary-trained priests. Interesting times for the church.

Andy: Yeah, it almost puts us backwards because we’re not giving the people someone who understands scripture and understands music and understands all the other things. It’s not to take away from their ability to pastor and be a minister, its’ just, I think, you need some of those other disciplines as well.

Dr. Burnett: You know, Sunday morning is when most of our people encounter church. What happens on Sunday morning is pretty important in my opinion, and if you don’t understand the liturgy and the music, that’s a problem. It’s going to hold your ministry back.

Andy: Oh yeah, that’s right, and it’s going to hurt the growth of the parish.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, we have people who are being ordained deacon and priest who are having leadership roles in congregations who have no background whatsoever in liturgy or music. Maybe some in liturgy, I should not say all who have no background in music.

Andy: Well, I do think the residential seminaries are still the way to go. Sewanee still very much teaches music and incorporates that into the studies in the seminary, and I know that for sure because Ken Miller’s doing it! So, I know that’s going on. And then, of course,
with Neil [Alexander] there it would have to go on. I think he would insist on it.

Dr. Burnett: Yeah, hopefully that will continue with the generations to come.

Andy: So, do you have any questions for me or any thoughts or ideas? Again, you can call me any time and add something or if I think of something I can call you back, too.

Dr. Burnett: Let me think on that for a second. I guess the one area that I think might be interesting to discuss is how important it is, in music training for the kids, not only to have people who have experience in teaching music but people who have healthy educational approaches. And it goes without saying making sure that safeguarding training is part of that from the very beginning. Everyone who is working in the program – volunteers and staff need to have that. But one of the things that I reflected on a lot is the number of people who come to me as adults who had really horrible experiences in children’s choirs to the point that they truly believed they can’t sing. And so, this is something I think about a lot in my own teaching about creating healthy, affirming environments for our kids. I’ll tell you a story about a Sewanee seminarian who ended up in one my classes. He was convinced he couldn’t sing and, of course, he was going to have to at some point. He came to talk to me after class one day and said, “I want to tell you my story. I grew up in children’s choirs and sang in the junior choir at my church for eight years. The way that the director ended every rehearsal every week was she would line everybody up and go down the row and point at you. When it’s your turn, a pitch was played on the piano, and you had to match that pitch. And when you did that, then you got to leave and go have juice and cookies. And if you didn’t get it, you had to sit down.” And he said, “for eight years I sat alone in the choir room while all the rest of the group had juice and cookies because I could never match the pitch.”

Andy: That’s not exactly formative is it? Well, it is, but in a bad way.
Dr. Burnett: Well, it is in a negative way. That’s a shocking story, but I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard stories like that where so much damage can be done to kids that carries over into their adult lives – this guy was, you know, forty-five years old, and he’s telling the story and it’s so painful to him. So, I think this is a concern as well. We talk about what a positive difference music can make in spiritual formation with kids. But the flip side of that is that we have a responsibility to make sure that our children are taught in healthy and affirming ways. Particularly in the church. And we have a lot of places where that isn’t happening. I think we have a real responsibility for those of us who care about this, not only to create healthy, high quality programs in our own churches that figure out ways to reach professional organizations through education, through writing, through workshops, whatever we can do to try to equip people who want to work in this field, to do it well, and do it in a healthy, caring affirming way. I don’t know all the answers to that, but I’ve heard this story enough times to realize how widespread it is. These are well-meaning people in churches attempting to teach children something, but there are some seriously wrong practices that are in effect. And I think it’s important that we find ways to hold up healthy models of music education and spiritual formation.

Andy: I agree. That’s very interesting.

Dr. Burnett: So, this is something that I think bears repeating, and maybe there is a way. I know there’s not an office to handle something like this on the national level. But if we care about continuing our tradition of church music, if we want to be able to equip the future generations to carry that tradition forward, the typical church has got to find a way to address this at a national level. Being able to provide resources. I have the ability and was fortunate to have the education and experience where I can take the RSCM model and figure out how to make it work here and how to adapt it. And I had a dean who supported me going to see other programs and everything. Most churches are not going to have somebody like that, even more so as time goes by. So, figuring out a way to be able to package these resources in a way that smaller congregations can use them.

Andy: Right.
Dr. Burnett: People who don’t have degrees in music can effectively teach them. And people who are not full-time can have something that’s a little more pre-packaged and organized where they can take a curriculum and run with it. We need to provide quality educational resources for our churches to use. And, as you know, I mean the corollary is, fewer and fewer people are going into the field of church music. We have fewer organists all the time. Right now I’m in Omaha which means you can count it, along with Lincoln, as an urban area of about a million people. To find a substitute organist who can do what I do at the level we do music here at the Cathedral, there are really only two people. They’re both retired and over seventy. You know, that’s it. We have no organ students at universities in Omaha. There are four or five students at University of Nebraska, Lincoln. It’s the one school in Nebraska with a doctoral program in music. So more and more churches that have full time music staff are going to be your big city churches, and most places are not going to have anybody. So, it’s, not to make dire predictions, but it’s a rapidly growing problem. When I retire, which is going to be you know, at least fifteen years down the road, but they’re going to have to look hard and probably raise their salary package to be able to recruit someone to come to Omaha because there’s nobody here who can do it – they’ll have to recruit someone from another part of the country. Or someone overseeing an organ program at the big schools, at the regional centers, and you just don’t have students in other places. And, of course, the Episcopal Church has drawn a lot of their church musicians from organ majors.

Andy: Right.

Dr. Burnett: Or find ways that we can integrate music into our Sunday School curriculum so that we can create programs that churches could offer with someone without quite as much specialized music training. I think that’s important.

Andy: I face it here. Our organist is part-time and she’s both organist and choirmaster. I’ve had them split out before but this one’s the same, we really don’t have anyone who plays the organ in this part of the state – you have to go to Birmingham or Mobile. Here at the
University of North Alabama, they used to have an organ program. They don’t anymore, so they’re hard to find.

Dr. Burnett: That’s the same story all over the country.

Andy: Well, I have one final question for you, and I’ve asked this to the other people I’ve interviewed, and it’s just for fun. So, at the end of the day, who’s your go-to composer? That could be playing or singing or whatever you want to make it.

Dr. Burnett: Well, I’m going to have to say Johann Sebastian Bach, and it’s hard to choose just one but if you have to, that’s the one I’ll choose. Bach’s music - of course, I’m an organist - Bach’s music continues to speak on so many levels. It’s a music language that transports me to another place and helps me see the divine. I was lucky enough to go on a Bach pilgrimage two years ago, and we went to all the places in Germany where he lived and worked, and there aren’t that many organs left in some of those churches, but I got to play an organ that he undoubtedly played in another church which was a deeply spiritual experience for me. Bach’s music speaks of the Divine to me, and I’ll never tire of it. And one kind of fun thing that people did in previous generations, in my teachers’ generation, for example, was to trace your musical lineage back to Bach. So a teacher studied with this teacher and another teacher and, eventually, you get back to J.S. Bach, and I can actually do that!

Andy: Oh that’s great!

Dr. Burnett: Yeah. So, there is a sense of connection when you hear his music that you look at his genius musically as it speaks to spirituality. And the fact that even though he lived a very hard life with every imaginable difficulty both in employment and in his own personal life, he overcame all of that to create such great art. For all those reasons, Bach would be my choice.

Andy: Well, I think that’s a pretty good choice.
Dr. Burnett: I’d like to go back to Germany; it was an amazing trip. I actually have pictures here in my office that I’m looking at from that trip.

Andy: I’ve interviewed two other organist/choir directors, and one of their responses was Bach. And he said, “I really don’t trust an organist who doesn’t play Bach,” and then, the other one was Howells, Herbert Howells.

Dr. Burnett: Yes, Howells is wonderful as you know.

Andy: Alright, thank you very much.

Dr. Burnett: I’m glad to help.

Andy: And feel free to contact me if anything else comes up.

Dr. Burnett: And you can do the same.

Andy: And at some point, you’ll see something in writing.

Dr. Burnett: That sounds great. I’m glad to help, and I’m glad you’re doing this project. It’s important work.

Andy: Thank you. If all goes well, I’ll graduate in May

Dr. Burnett: I remember that feeling, it’s a good feeling.
Andy: The basic idea of what I’m trying to do is write about music as a tool for spiritual formation. What got me started on this was my own experience of starting to sing in a church choir at age six. Here I immediately felt a part of the liturgy and a part of the service. There was one particular anthem we sang about the Ascension that stuck with me and still sticks with me today. It was a campy, 1970s piece, but straight from scripture. It was out of a Roman Catholic children’s worship book. That’s what got me started and I thought if I still remember that, something that shaped and formed me, others have to have had a similar experience. What I’d like to start with is to ask you what was your experience coming into music and so forth to get you where you are today.

Ms. DeDakis: Well, it goes back to - we won’t talk about how long ago this was (laughter) - but I was a young child, probably 3 or 4, and I started singing in the church choir. I grew up in the Lutheran Church, so officially back then, from what I know from talking to other people, growing up in the Lutheran Church was a different experience than growing up in the Episcopal Church. It was the same in many ways, because it’s liturgical, but in the Lutheran Church, everybody sang, everybody sang, not just the choir but everybody. And, as a child, I was in church from the first time my parents dragged my little wee body to church. There was no having Sunday school at the same time as church, getting the kids out of the church. This sounds kind of negative, but when I was first coming in to the Episcopal Church, which was through a music position in St. Andrews in Madison, Wisconsin, I looked around and I kept thinking “where are the children?” They would come in later on in the service. I think there were some long-term effects to that, if you think about it, actually, it’s just kind of coming to me now that, like you had an early experience of participating in liturgy and being, as you said, connected to the liturgy, and I had the same experience. Slightly different, but I was singing in a choir from an early age and, frankly for me, I cannot separate music and worship. They are so intertwined with me that my faith, my
spirituality is just very tied to music and always has been. So I felt that was my place. The other thing is, when I was growing up in the fifties, for the most part what we did was church. Outside of that there weren’t many other outside activities. It’s not that there weren’t any, but, all these sports things and everything the kids in some families are doing now, then there wasn’t a competition. So youth group, choir, all those types of things. So that just gives you an idea of my background. So, I went through two years of every Saturday morning confirmation classes before I was confirmed, which is common in the Lutheran church – and you know, Luther’s catechism isn’t just some abstract thing, it’s a real thing, a real book.

Andy And it’s not short!

Ms. DeDakis But I knew even from an early age that when you sing something, you know when music is tied to it, and you’ve sung texts, they get implanted, like that piece did with you – stuck in there deep, and it doesn’t really come out. You know, it’s always there. So that was my own experience. I sang in church all the way through high school and then, of course, I went to music school, and started even before I graduated from undergraduate school. I was doing some work in church as a musician, although my initial thing in music school was music education, and my intention was to be a music teacher. And I did teach in public school for a while. Then I went to graduate school. I went to Madison, Wisconsin. My graduate degree is in choral conducting. I studied with Robert Fountain, I don’t know if you know who he is, but people into choral music generally know that name, and I had a wonderful experience. And also, at that same time, being in grad school and not having enough money – looking for jobs and so on, I was working in a little Lutheran church out in the country outside of Madison and got a note one day that said the Episcopal church would like you to …I’d been recommended to them, and they wanted me to come and addition to be their choir director. So I did that, and I got the job. Here’s the thing, I mean, growing up in the Lutheran church, I still, when I hear a Bach chorale that speaks to me very deeply because so many of our hymns in the Lutheran hymnal were wonderful chorales, and I think a lot of people find them just sort of boring, but you know it’s a whole different thing for me. Anyway, so I came to this Episcopal church, and it’s in the summer, and I’m starting
to get ready to start the choir season, I’m choosing repertoire, and I’m going through their library, and I’m finding all these anthems that I never knew. I started working there before the 1982 hymnal came out, So I’m in the 1940 hymnal. And hymns, Anglican hymns, that I’ve never known before, having been in church my whole life. But nope. I hadn’t heard any of these things before, and they really deeply spoke to me. I mean, I was just in love with these hymns, and you know Howells and Stanford and stuff, which is, you know, its’ very standard repertoire in an Episcopal church. In the Lutheran church back then, it wasn’t so much, and we didn’t do Evensong, you know what I’m saying? So, this whole world – musical, spiritual world – opened up to me because, again, spiritual because when I learned something new musically, when I’m singing a new hymn that really speaks to me, it’s not just speaking to my musical self. You know, it’s the whole thing. And, I think, especially in the Episcopal church, one of the many treasures is that we have texts that are amazing texts, great poetry, and it’s wedded to really incredible music, and the combination of those things is very powerful. It’s very powerful. You can read one of those poems, and it can touch you, and you can listen to one of those tunes, and it might really affect you emotionally. But when you put the best combination of the text and the tune, you know it can really have an amazing effect on people. I don’t necessarily mean on the musician, but one of the things that I loved in working with kids as well as my own musical spiritual practice, is that in Evensong, you’re doing the same – you’re singing the same texts every time you do Evensong, you’re singing the Mag and Nunc. The same words. But every time you learn a new setting by a different composer, those words can mean something new and different to you. You hear something new in the word that you wouldn’t have heard, except that the composer did something right there that spoke to you. So, I remember having conversations with choristers about it, especially when they were new to the idea of Evensong, and they’re saying “we’re singing this? Wait! We’ve already sung this!” and I say, “Well, guess what? You’re going to sing it a lot more.” But then we’d have a conversation about being a composer and the idea that these texts are going to be used on a regular basis, and that people are going to be singing them all over the world. And at almost every hour of the day, somebody is singing Evensong. So, there’s a connection there – not just with the person and what you’re doing there, but this sense that, “Wow! I’m doing something that other people are doing all over the world!” and that connects us spiritually with them as well. So, that’s sort of in a nutshell really how I ended up where I am because, for a couple of reasons, but once I started working in the Episcopal church...one of the other great
advantages or perks that I got when I took that job in the Episcopal Church was that I met the person who is now my husband and has been for over 39 years. He was singing in the choir. So how about that?

Andy You know, Beth and I met in the choir at Sewanee. I understand it, and that’s a good way to do it!

Ms. DeDakis So it was great. Yeah, it still is. So, anyway, that was my formation. Then I was teaching public school while I was working at St. Andrew’s. And then we had our first child, and I decided at that time that I didn’t want to teach school all day and be away from our daughter for that long. So I chose to just stay with my church business and followed that career of being a choral conductor, but specifically working in the church. I just have followed that. I have been fortunate to have had positions in places where I’ve learned a lot from people. Not just people in the music department, but working with clergy and so on which, you know all of that. Because my husband is a journalist, we moved around. And so I have worked in a lot of different churches, different locations and demographics and different sizes of parishes. So that brings me to where I am today as a partly retired consultant to the Diocese of Maryland helping parishes with their music programs. And it was when I came to St. Philip’s in Atlanta that I, up until then, hadn’t heard anything about Royal School of Church Music, which I will call RSCM from now on, and I began using it because it was part of their chorister program and chorister training. So I began using it there and learned more and more about it and also became involved in the national organization. And I observed in Atlanta, that the choristers, the girls, that I worked with at that time…the way it was structured, the girls were 4th grade through 12th grade which is a very wide age range. And, you know, a lot of churches have developed their music programs, calling them a “children’s program,” “children’s choir” and they had to be graded choirs. And for those of us who studied music education, much of what we learned was all based on a graded system. So when you bought the books for music class, the text books, there was the 3rd grade book – “this is what 3rd graders can do or should be learning. This is what 4th graders can do or should be learning,” and so on. And really, the RSCM system turns that a bit on its ear. It says, “put those young singers with the older singers and allow them to, in part, train them. You give them skills, you give them the building blocks of becoming musicians, but you’re also just
throwing them right into the music. And what they are capable of doing at a very early age is amazing. They are able to participate really as equals with adults in music. And I think that’s one of the few things that children can participate in, along with adults, on the same level.

Andy They find their place, and it works.

Ms. DeDakis They do, but their place is every bit as significant as the place of the 40-year-old alto sitting in the row. It’s one of my selling points when I’ve started chorister programs in several churches where I have worked. And one of the selling points to parents is, you know, when your child joins this choir he or she is never going to be “sitting on the bench waiting to be called in, you know, at the 11th hour when the team is ahead by 11 points,” they’re going to be participating all the time, and it’s through that continued participation, of course, that they absorb and learn and become better and better musicians, but they’re also absorbing everything else. When they’re processing down the aisle and they’re wearing their vestments which are just like the vestments the adult choir is wearing, it’s not the same color, just the same style.

Andy Without the funky hats!

Ms. DeDakis Oh my gosh! Those things were like torture! Holy mackerel! But that was one of the reasons I wasn’t that excited when I was asked to sing. Oh, terrible, terrible, I’m so glad they got rid of those. Anyway, they’re processing down the aisle, they’re singing the hymn, and there’s no differentiation between what they are offering and what the adults are offering. And you know that when they’re young, when they’re just starting out, it’s not like you threw them into the pool and just say “swim.” You put them in the water with a lot of other people who are kind of “the tide” and they’ve pulled them along with the tide, and gradually that young singer over two or three or four or five years, becomes the tide that’s pulling other younger singers along. I think that I should stop because you may want to ask me specific questions.
Andy: That’s fine. You’re leading me into the next question, but please continue.

Ms. DeDakis: Well, maybe as your questions go on I will talk about the multiple advantages of kids being in a chorister program and I always use that term. I always use the “chorister” term because there’s a sense from our tradition, from over in England, and Anglican churches from hundreds and hundreds of years back. That was the term they used for these young treble singers who all, at that time, happened to be boys. But thankfully, now, we have integrated that. But those programs pull children into the deepest connection of the faith and that is worship.

That’s the lynchpin the church has recognized and because the church says “it’s out of our collective worship that all the other things that we are able to do that we feel compelled to do,” those things start with worship. And that transcended time. That happens maybe differently for everybody, but at least it’s offered. The possibility is offered every time we come together for corporate worship that we have this, a moment, when we glimpse something that is beyond ourselves and so, involving children in that, in a let’s say “professional” way, because really there is a professional sense to what we’re doing. It’s not window dressing. It’s not “cute for cute.” There’s nothing, or there should not be, anything that is simplistic about it. And one of my terms that I use for music that we should never do, when I work with young people, is “happy sunshine music.” I think you know what I mean by that. Because it’s demeaning to that young person, frankly. Now I mean, really young – the one, two, and three years old - yes, engage them in lots of fun things and give them opportunities to discover what their voice is. And I don’t believe in starting choristers as choristers too early. And I do have stepping stones into the chorister program. But, as soon as they’re ready, grab them with something that has a lot of meat on that bone, is something that really appeals to them. It gets them excited about it. And I don’t like the idea of bringing up the cute little kids standing in front of the congregation and having them sing their happy sunshine song, everybody claps, and they go away. It does nothing. And it just teaches them, really, the wrong thing about worship and their place in it, and where they belong. And, I’ve had parents say to me, “oh gosh, my child could never sit through church!” And I say, “it’s ok. Let me worry about that,” because you process them up with the whole choir. You have them sitting in a place where the worship leaders are sitting, and they will behave themselves,
especially because we’ve introduced them to the work that we’re about
to do and the importance of that work. And they know what comes
next in the service. And they know when to stand up and they’re
speaking the responses, loudly and clearly, and showing everyone else.
This is what we’re doing in worship, and they take pride in a positive
way in their leadership, and they feel a sense of responsibility. So, it
does involve them, because we introduce them to all these different
pieces, and I know there are Christian education programs that are
based on this sort of a Montessori-type involvement, doing worship
kinds of things, and so on.

And all those things are excellent but, frankly, I think chorister
programs, especially with an RSCM-based program, that the nuts and
bolts of it changes from place – not every place does it exactly the
same way, but RSCM has five different areas we are saying to our
choristers are important areas for growth. One, of course, is musical
skills. Learning about the music that we sing is another one. Our
attendance and our participation, our discipline, our responsibility.
Leadership skills. I can’t even remember the fourth one, but the fifth
one is, and this is of course designed for choirs that are not necessarily
church choirs, but they might be community or school choirs. But it’s
“where are you singing? What is the community in which your choir
exists? And what does your choir, or you, add to that community?
How do you serve that community? How does the community help
you?” So, for a chorister in a church program, RSCM says, “we want
you to learn everything you can about why you’re here and what
you’re doing.” And that means learning what the liturgy is and why we
do certain things. Understanding. One of the first things I always
started with was just the liturgical calendar for the year. What season is
it? Why are we singing this song? What does it have to do with, and so
on. So, my gosh, you know kids learn so much from participating in
choir, singing the psalms is, as you know, I don’t know if you sang in
the evensong choir, but I’m sure you’ve sung evensong at some place.
There are psalm chants. Are you a tenor or a bass?

Andy I’m a tenor.

Ms. DeDakis OK. So how many psalm chants, once you start hearing it, can you
sing the tenor part? I mean, and you’ll remember, “Oh! I remember
which psalm that’s for…that’s for psalm 67!” And I never knew until I
was singing regularly in the evensong choir in Atlanta. I had no idea how much I would get, as an adult, who has been in church her whole life, from singing the psalms.

Andy  

I’ll say, when I sang with the University Choir in Sewanee, we probably worked on psalms more than anything else.

Ms. DeDakis  

Exactly right. And, frankly, for any choir, learning to sing Anglican chant well makes everything else that choir does that much better. So yeah, totally. You are a lucky person who got to sing with Robbe [Delcamp].

Andy  

Yeah! Oh my gosh, and then I got to do it again in seminary, which was great.

Ms. DeDakis  

Oh, nice.

Andy  

And they stick with you! They completely stick with you. You can’t forget those tunes.

Ms. DeDakis  

Right, of course. So, I loved working with adult choirs, and I actually did some RSCM things and teaching music reading to volunteers in my adult choirs. And I love that. But starting the chorister program and getting kids really jazzed about it, to me, was the best thing that I did. And I, at least, have already managed to get one parish to start a chorister program since I’ve come to the Diocese of Maryland, and, of all the various things that I’ve done, I’m most excited about that. And hope that more parishes will try to do that. And really, one of the reasons why, and I had a long conversation with the rector. She just asked me to meet with her because she wanted to know what they could do with music in particular, to help grow the parish, although growth per se is not what we’re looking for but enlivening the parish. So she started telling me about where they were and so on. And, of course, I’m always asking questions - what about kids? What’s happening with kids? And as I listened to her, I thought, I said, “you have the perfect place to start a chorister program and to reach out to the community with your chorister program.” And I don’t believe that
evangelism or church growth is the reason to do a chorister program. What I believe is that the program is inherently valuable for whoever is in it. But I also know that evangelism and church growth can be enhanced when you have a chorister program. They can be a fantastic outcome of the program.

Andy

That would be something that grows out of that.

Ms. DeDakis

Exactly, exactly. It should never be the reason you’re doing it. The reason you do it is because it is inherently valuable for those young people.

Andy

If you could let me interject something here, one of the things I’m hearing, and I’ve spoken with — you’re my fourth interview out of seven — and of my seven, five are musicians, and two are clergy. I have yet to talk to the clergy — they’re hardest to get ahold of. But what I’ve found in the other musicians is they have chorister programs that fill a void that the community doesn’t have especially with schools cutting back on arts and things like that now. They provide a safe space where kids not only form their own community being a chorister, but they’re learning these valuable spiritual lessons through this program, and it’s not necessarily that they set out to use it as a spiritual tool, but it becomes that.

Ms. DeDakis

Right. One of my positions was at St. John’s Lafayette Square in DC, and I worked with Bill Roberts. But the reason that I went to St. John’s was that they wanted to start a chorister program that was an outreach program. I would say a lot of the families that went to St. John’s Lafayette Square had their kids in private school in the DC area, so it wasn’t really necessarily for the kids in the parish, but they were invited to participate. But this was to fill a need with young people in the District who needed something like this. And so I had a wild mixture, and I’m sure you’re going to hear this when you talk to Richard Webster. Richard has just a wonderful diverse group of young people singing at Trinity. I had, you know, kids from a lot of different countries. I don’t know whether their parents were here legally or not, but what I know is that all the parents and kids who came to interview for the program — I didn’t do auditions – I did interviews, because I never ever have turned a child away based on musical ability. They
wanted something for their children, and we actually combined choir, if you can believe this, we did choir and karate! And one of the reasons that we did karate was that, for some kids who were kind of on the fence about “I’m not sure I wanted to do music” or something, they all thought karate was cool. So we did choir and karate, of course most of the focus was on choir, and they sang in church, and I had kids whose families were atheists who were in the program. And my feeling was I didn’t change the curriculum at all. They participated in church. And I feel, you know, the families knew that they were expected to participate in these things but they didn’t have to take communion and all that kind of stuff. I mean, we really tried to be sensitive to who the families were the family belief system or whatever. But I took some heat from some of my colleagues about, you know, because some of the kids, a couple of the kids, did not want to say the creed. Well, in fact, at that church, there were adults who didn’t say the creed. So why should I ask something of a kid that I wouldn’t ask of an adult, number one? And, secondly, my feeling was, they’re not saying it, but they’re hearing other people say it, they’re hearing everything that’s being spoken and sung and prayed in these services. And we can never say what kinds of things are sinking in with these children. Who knows what they’re going to get out of it? But they developed. We developed a great community out of it. We did lots of fun things with the families. And it was sort of a crazy mixture of people, and kids, but, have you talked to or has anyone recommended to you talking to Diane Caruso? She’s at Trinity Church in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

Andy No. That’s not a name I’m familiar with so far.
Ms. DeDakis  Oh, okay, Well, this is just an example, but Asbury Park is a tough place. And this church was not doing well, but they brought Diane in, and Diane started a chorister program there. And it was really specifically an outreach program because there weren’t a lot of young people in the church. As a lot of the people that went to that church were “weekend people” from New York City, that kind of thing. And they, you know, coming to the shore or as they say, “they’re down the shore.” And, so she really literally on a wing and a prayer started this program with almost no financial resources whatsoever and has developed this wonderful program providing piano lessons, homework help, as well as choir and music learning to kids in that community. And it has flourished in an amazing way. I visited a couple of times, and the work that she does is incredible. It’s really inspiring. It’s absolutely inspiring. So, I don’t know if you’d have time to add anybody else to your list, but she would be a wonderful person to talk to, or the rector of that church or somebody who’s a member of the church. I’m wondering, have you spoken to any parents of choristers? Of course, I don’t know if that’s anything you even want to do.

Andy  I think that I have to be somewhat narrow in what I’m doing, or it will get away from me. As wonderful as it would be, I think that’s a whole paper on its own.

Ms. DeDakis  Yeah. Yeah, so what else can I help you with?

Andy  Well, you spoke to it a little bit – I’d like to hear your thoughts on the relationship between the musicians and clergy.

Ms. DeDakis  Well, in developing, you’re talking about as related to a chorister program, or in general?

Andy  Well, it’s hard to separate those. I’m coming into this with a background as a chorister, but now I’m clergy. So, to me, music is an important part of the liturgy, and the two go hand-in-hand, and you can’t really separate, so if I encounter a musician who’s not really adept at the Anglican style of worship, it’s very frustrating. At the same time, I think that, if a musician or an organist/choirmaster comes
in to a rector who has no music knowledge or background, that can make it really hard to accomplish what you want to accomplish.

Ms. DeDakis Right. I will say one other thing about that, and I totally agree with you, but there are times when a musician can encounter a rector who thinks he or she knows more about music than they do. That’s also dangerous. I’m just putting that out there. You know what I’m saying?

Andy I do. I know, yeah, exactly.

Ms. DeDakis And the musician/clergy relationship is crucial. And if a person is thinking of starting a chorister program, or if the rector wants to start a chorister program, those two people need to be on the same page. The clergy support of the program is crucial. If you have a rector who will come and be the cantor for evensong or attend evensong and do a homily, if you do homilies at evensong, if you have a rector who’s involved who shows up at rehearsals who sits down and talks to the parents and understands that the role that these choristers play in liturgy, in worship, in the life of the community is really an important one and will strengthen the community. I think one of the benefits of having a chorister program is, if there are people in the church who want to dumb down the music in the church, the chorister program is a really good selling point for not doing that. Number one, you can use the choristers to help the congregation learn new music. And if the choristers can sing it, certainly these adults can give it a try. But secondly, we deserve to challenge them and to give them the best of what we have. I think one of the struggles that I’ve had, especially later on in my career, was the fact that you have parents and people in the congregation who haven’t learned music who don’t know even basic things or think they can’t do it and therefore they don’t want to be challenged. And we’re trying to balance that out and say, but you know, I have a seven-year-old who really, really does not want to sing. You know, often, it’s a bad praise song being sung somewhere, and a chorister is asked to sing it, you know they’re sticking out their tongues and saying, “why are we doing this?” And I don’t mean to make snobs out of them or something. You don’t hand them a piece and say, “this is junk, I want you to sing it.” You give them a piece of music and, based on their experience, they are going to make judgments about it regardless of what one says. And you do your best to, if something has to be done that we don’t like, well, let’s find the
best that we can, to focus on this and let’s do it in the best possible way. And take that as a challenge. Let’s make this music sound even better than it is, or whatever, and not allow our personal feeling about it get in the way of us providing our excellent leadership of worship. I see communication as being the clergy and the music director being really on the team together to get this program going and to support the program.

Andy

Yeah. Good. When I go to a place, now I’m only in my second parish, I’m one of those people who, for good or ill, tends to stay somewhere for a long time.

Ms. DeDakis

And where are you again? Remind me.

Andy

I’m at Trinity Church in Florence, Alabama, the diocese of Alabama. I’ve been here just over ten years as the rector and was an assistant in Chicago for five years right out of seminary. But I sit down with the musicians, with the organist and choir directors, and say “this is where I’m coming from. This is my background, this is my experience, and I want to work to make sure we have a good strong music program.” And it’s always been a healthy thing, it’s been a good deal. We’re not a huge parish so we don’t have multiple choirs, I would love to have that. We have tried to start a children’s chorister program, and we don’t get the buy in from the parents, that’s the hard part. They won’t commit to the participation.

Ms. DeDakis

It’s a struggle. But I think there are a lot of people in my profession with chorister programs who probably more than one time have just wanted to throw up their hands and quit because of that. Because of not being able to get parents to make the commitment that actually more of the kids would be willing to make it if their parents would back them up. You know what I’m saying? It’s tough. And I talk to people all the time who have been doing this for years, and they’ll hit a year or a bunch of years where they just say, “oh my gosh, I don’t know if I can do this.” It’s really hard, but it’s such, it’s such a crucial valuable thing. I don’t know of anything else, I know, that’s - a really strong youth group can be very very good, but I will say when I was at the Cathedral in Atlanta, the choristers were more committed to the
Andy We worked with the youth group for a few years while we were there.

Ms. DeDakis Well, and one of my choristers from the time I was in Atlanta is actually teaching at Sewanee now, it’s (the Reverend) Leigh Preston, and she is a dear friend of our daughter, Emily. They grew up together in the choir, in the chorister program in Atlanta, did RSCM things together, and so on. And she’s, I mean, you don’t have to become a priest to have been changed in a significant way by being involved in a chorister program. I think there are other... I think that it can bleed into other things in terms of liturgical formation with youth and kids. If you have an excellent course or program, if you expect excellence from the program, and by excellence I in no way mean perfection, I mean at any given time, what is the very best that we can do right now? Right now can we be excellent? That sort of thing. That should be included in your acolyte program. How well are we going to do our job? I remember I was struck the first time I went to a service at the National Cathedral, and I was really moved by the way the acolytes did their job at the National Cathedral. And I’m sure you’ve been there, and you’ve seen this, and how really, just attentive to every detail and serious and doing with as much, I’m not sure what to call it.

Andy Respect, I think, is one of them. Reverence.

Ms. DeDakis Absolutely. That’s in the same way that any of us who are leading worship show respect for that. By the way we carry ourselves. The way we hold our hymnal or stand and participate. And it’s not just respect, it’s respect for the whole thing, but it’s respect for the other people who are doing this job, too. And just yeah, absolutely. Those things are very important. And, I think that model, I really think the RSCM model of looking at the whole person, the whole involvement, because of the things they talk about is, do you come regularly to rehearsal? Are you on time at rehearsal? Do you take care of your music? Do you take care of your vestments? Do you help younger choristers? All of those things are of equal importance as can you sing a minor scale. Right?
Andy: Yeah, absolutely.

Ms. DeDakis: It doesn’t draw a distinction among any of those things. There isn’t a hierarchy of skills. It’s just as important to show up and be on time. It’s just as important to sit quietly during the service as it is to sing all the right notes of that Bach aria. It’s just as important. So, you know, there’s that “whole person” aspect to it. And I think a lot of the really important spiritual things can seep in without necessarily hitting them head-on, if that makes sense.

Andy: Yeah, well, that’s part of the formation, it’s in the repetitiveness, hearing it over and over and over.

Ms. DeDakis: And it speaks to them, I mean you can have a conversation about the text of a hymn and say, “wow, you know because some of our hymns, the language is older or maybe slightly obscure” and, yes, we absolutely talk about that. “What did that word mean?” And it’s fun for kids to explore that, and I think, another thing that many programs do is with choristers as well as adults is do a pilgrimage to England, Wales, Scotland, or whatever. And the value of that, I mean, to a lot of people it’s like, “why are they going on this trip? Why are they going on vacation?” Well, we all know it’s not. It’s not vacation. We’re singing services almost every day. And for most of our choirs over here, you’re not, unless you’re St. Thomas or National Cathedral or a couple other places, you’re not singing daily services. And that daily, it’s whatever hour in the afternoon, it’s time to go to the choir room and get vested and practice and line up and process in for however many people have been able to show up for evensong that day. Singing your prayers, singing your scripture, doing the service and thinking about that, when you’re processing in, you are joining a procession of thousands of choristers over hundreds of years who’ve done the same thing. And why do we do this? Well, you let each person kind of figure that out for him or herself and it’s going to be different for different people. But the fact of doing it says something really important to them, it says something deep to them, that repetitive thing. For a while, I ran the RSCM Atlanta Chorus for Girls and Adults. I was the manager of that chorus for a number of years. And after we took our choristers, this is the first time that the choir from St. Philip’s had done
a pilgrimage, and it was actually choristers with adult ATB [alto, tenor, bass] that did the pilgrimage. And after that I had these girls coming from all over the place including a number of churches in Alabama. As a matter of fact, for this RSCM chorus, I wanted those kids who went to churches where they were never going to be able to do this. I wanted them to experience this. So I decided to take the Atlanta chorus on a pilgrimage to Wales and Ireland and the UK. And it was just for girls from smaller parishes who had never done this before and weren’t likely to do it again, whose parishes did not have the resources to do it and pulled those together. One of my friends who worked at the time as an organist at All Saints’ in Atlanta had the evensong choir there. So his choir was our backup singers, so to speak, our ATBs, and he was the organist and Ben Hutto, who you may know, directed it and I managed it. And, so, we were able to give those girls that experience, and it was really wonderful. It was a great experience for them, and I knew that, if we didn’t do it, they wouldn’t have the opportunity, at least not as students, to do it. So that was really valuable. Out of starting little, you can go a lot of places singing together with other people. You know the RSCM summer choristers were kids, and I think children who are involved as choristers, especially in a smaller parish, that is hard work. It’s hard work, and they are dedicated, and they don’t get a lot of perks from that. You know what I’m saying? Within a smaller parish, you don’t necessarily get the feedback or the sense that you do if you’re a chorister at the Cathedral in Atlanta and when you’re singing your anthem you know there are 400 people out there for whom you are singing. When you’re in a little church, musicians in small churches, as rectors, they work hard, and they don’t get a lot of pats on the back. You probably know that.

Andy         Yes indeed!

Ms. DeDakis  Yeah. So, of course when we have an RSCM summer chorus, and those kids from those little parishes come together and form much larger choirs and get to sing with other adults who are really into it and they get to sing with other kids. And what kids go to summer camp and sing for eight hours a day? Maybe not eight, but probably at least six, minimum of six. And they get to be with other kids and adults who love the same thing. And it’s such a great experience. It’s like giving them a gift but then, when they come back to their little parish, they’re
just that much more energized and confident. And their leadership ability has grown.

Andy And they know what can be! They know what can happen.

Ms. DeDakis Exactly. Exactly. I’ve said to people that what a chorister can do is really only limited by the ability or lack of imagination of the music director. You ask, you say, well, I’m going to give you something really challenging and you know you can do it. You get them from point A to point B whether it’s your adult volunteer choir or your choristers. Whatever it is. And when they do it when, you know, when it comes to fruition at a service, when you get to the point where the rubber hits the road and they’ve actually done it, they’ve gotten from the beginning to the end. And they’ve said what that music has to say and, you know, expressed that in worship. Wow, it just feels awesome. It feels awesome. And they know it, you don’t have to tell them. Nobody has to clap because it’s way beyond applause. Isn’t it? It’s way beyond.

Andy Oh, just the sheer silence and awe is applause enough.

Ms. DeDakis Exactly, exactly. And I have to say that when choristers do that, and they do it, and the rector, the priests come up to them afterward and say, “thank you for that. That really moved me, that was a special moment for everybody here,” or whatever. That’s really valuable to them because their offering has been validated. I will say validated. That’s a really important thing. So, again, the clergy go hand in hand with this and, when they do, when that happens, wow. It’s great. Even in a small place it can be a great thing.

Andy Ms. DeDakis, I’m trying to be mindful of time here, so I have one final thing I want to ask you. I’ve closed every interview with this, and it’s been interesting to hear what the answers have been. This is just kind of for fun – so, at the end of the day, who would you say your go-to composer is?
Ms. DeDakis  Oh boy, we’re talking about for me personally?

Andy  Yes, for you personally. What’s the one that energizes you?

Ms. DeDakis  This is so hard! This is the hardest question you’ve asked me! Oh, my goodness. How can I choose from all of the moments I have had as a musician? Oh my gosh. Okay, I’m going to say this, but it’s not just going to be one little answer. It’s going to be the Howells *Collegium Regale Te Deum*, and it’s going to be because it was just such a moving experience. This was at the end of an RSCM chorus in Atlanta and because I was singing it with all these other people who felt the same way about it, who I knew were also being moved. But I could say that about so many things. But that’s one time when it really, it really stands out to me. I remember, did you know the director of the Atlanta opera, Fred Scott?

Andy  Oh yeah!

Ms. DeDakis  Oh, Ok. So, here’s the guy – he’s conducted all over the world, big things, and major performances. And he was one of the singers there, and I remember when we took our choristers on that trip to Wales, Fred was one of the adult singers that went with us. And we were just lining up one afternoon in the cloister, just getting ready to process in, this was St. David’s in Wales. And we’re just kind of hanging out waiting for the service to start. And he said, “this is like the best thing I’ve ever done.” And the fact that he felt that way with all of his life experience with music and it didn’t have anything to do with this specific piece we were singing that day, even. So I would have to say, you know, in answer to your question, I think it’s any piece of music that moves you. And that you share that with other people. I mean, I can listen to a lot of music here at home, you know? And it’s gorgeous, and it really moves me. But there’s something that I think also comes in a chorister program of any age – adults, teenagers, young people – where you are sharing that moment of music making with others. And I think that has to be why corporate worship is so important. But we don’t, we’re not doing it in a vacuum, we’re sharing that experience with others. And anyway, so I could have said hundreds of other pieces
Andy: It’s been interesting to hear, at least in the four that I’ve talked to, from those who are much more on the teaching music/teaching choristers/the choral side of it, and those who are on the organist side of it, how the answers have been.

Ms. DeDakis: Yeah, I know, because my background is music education number one, and number two, I am not an organist. I don’t know if you knew that.

Andy: Yeah, I did.

Ms. DeDakis: Okay, yeah, there is a difference in a way, but we share a lot of the other.

Andy: My two organists have said Bach, and you being more on the chorister side of things, and also another person I spoke with at Trinity Cathedral in Columbia, South Carolina, you both said Howells. I’ll always be Stanford, that’s my go-to.

Ms. DeDakis: Well, yeah, even composers that, my God yes, I love Stanford. Howells, Stanford you name it. I mean it’s all just amazing, but anyway.

Andy: And Howells was a student of Stanford’s, so I’ll take Howells.

Ms. DeDakis: Well, exactly. I think sometimes there are pieces that maybe when you play it on the organ, it isn’t as satisfying to play, as accomplishing a great piece by Bach, but it’s the sum total of it. You’ve probably sung some or a lot of Sowerby. I don’t know if you know Sowerby. When you’re learning Sowerby, like the alto part, I’ll tell you the alto part of Sowerby, it’s like, “oh my gosh, this doesn’t make sense. I don’t, I don’t get this. I don’t know if I like this music.” And then, when you do the whole thing and put it all together, and it’s finally done and you hear all the choral parts with the organ accompaniment. It totally makes sense. You go, wow. You know, this is really something. So,
anyway, as a singer, we have to appreciate the people who are doing everything else, right? In choir? You can’t do it without them.

Andy: I do have to say that, as a tenor, I think Bach hated tenors, sometimes.

Ms. DeDakis: Well, as an alto – there are very few people who are in love with altos enough to write us a decent line. You know, it’s all about the end product.

Andy: You get two notes and you’re just gonna go back and forth between them.

Ms. DeDakis: But we know if those notes weren’t there, it would just be so awful, and that’s why they’re willing to do it.

Andy: Thank you so much for your time and your willingness to participate.

Ms. DeDakis: Great talking to you.

Andy: And, what I will do is, I’ve recorded this so I have it for my own notes, and before the paper is finalized I will give you the opportunity to see it and make sure you’re ok with how I used our conversation.

Ms. DeDakis: That’s fine. It was really nice talking with you. I look forward to seeing what you do. I’m grateful and excited about what you are doing.

Andy: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your help, and I will talk with you soon.
Interview with Fr. Sean Mullen – October 2, 2017

Andy: I’m working on my D.Min. and my paper is on music as a tool for spiritual formation, and what really kicked this off was my own experience. My father was a priest, retired now, so I grew up in the church, and I can remember joining the choir at six years old. This was in the Cleveland, Ohio area. That’s really the first place I felt a part of the church, being in the choir.

Fr. Mullen: Yeah.

Andy: I remember an anthem that we did in, roughly, 1976, on Ascension Sunday, a really folksy song, but it stuck with me. I still remember that song to this day, and it made me think about how many six year olds have a grasp or understanding of the Ascension and what that means, and it led me to this idea of music as a tool for spiritual formation and how prevalent it is and how many people buy into that and utilize that.

Fr. Mullen: Sure.

Andy: So for part of this project I’m interviewing seven people, five musicians and two clergy. I have spoken to your organist, Robert, and that was a great conversation.

Fr. Mullen: He’s pretty terrific.

Andy: It sounds like it. We’re friends on Facebook and now that I’ve seen him I see he knows a lot of my organist friends because that’s a tight community. So, what I want to ask you, then, is for you to give me your background and experience in music and how you’ve made this connection as well to music as a tool for spiritual formation.

Fr. Mullen: Well, I’m trying to keep this short and if you want me to expand on it I can. So, this topic I’m pretty happy to talk about. I am, uncharacteristically, like yourself, or I’m assuming like yourself, a cradle Episcopalian, which puts us in the minority as Episcopal clergy. My parents were, and remain, involved in the church and so we were involved in the church. There’s not a time in my life I can remember not being involved in the church. My brother and sister and I went to an Episcopal school, I started in nursery, where we actually sang the canticles at Morning Prayer every day. It was a little Episcopal school connected to our parish in Long Island. I sang in the choir there, and I apparently loved
to sing. I do love to sing and there’s not a time I can’t remember actively
enjoying singing or performing. When I was a kid of about eight years old
we lived on Long Island, on the south shore of Nassau County, and my
parents were the type that would take us to do new things, including going
into the city to see big New York City churches. I don’t remember the
sequence of events – whether or not my mother had read about the choir
school at St. Thomas Church, or before going to church they were reading,
or we went to church and my mother read about it, or in some
combination, but we went there for something like Palm Sunday and my
parents became aware of the choir school. I think at age eight or nine, I
was too young to go, so they contacted the school and the headmaster at
the time said Sean’s too young – I guess I was eight – but if in a year he’s
still interested then contact us and we’ll go through the process. So a year
went by and, apparently, I was still interested and I began going to St.
Thomas Choir School in New York City, which was a terrific and deeply
formative experience for me.

Andy: I would imagine it would be.

Fr. Mullen: And I would say that it was formative in a lot of different ways. It was
certainly formative in my Christian identity, it was formative in my
understanding of the liturgy and, in a strange way – I went to school there
in 1977, before the regular adoption of the 1979 prayer book where we
were still singing Morning Prayer except for the first Sunday of the month,
and I left in 1981. So, I went through the church’s adoption of the ’79
prayer book there and being a predominantly Morning Prayer parish to a
completely eucharistically centered parish when I was a child, and I
couldn’t, obviously, have articulated all this at the time, but I found all that
deeply engaging and important and loved being involved in it. I had four
 hugely important influences in my life at the time in the choir school.
There was the headmaster, Gordon Clem, who was a low churchman, to
be sure, but was a committed church person and his idea that the school
was a prestigious school was never wavering. John Andrew, the rector at
the time, whose presence and preaching, and general persona, had a big
influence on me. Gerre Hancock was my choirmaster, his musicianship
and excellence had a very profound effect on me. And, for most of that
time, Gary Fertig was the chaplain of the choir school and who would
become a mentor and friend of mine over the years, and had a profound
influence on me and my ministry. So that was a really important
undertaking. In those days, Gerre taught the theology class, which seems
really comical, and we were still using the 1940 hymnal, because that was
the hymnal at the time, and I’m sure he told us that would be our text and
I’m sure he used it as our text. I remember, well, actually, I remember
very little of any theology Gerre might have taught us, except that his
personal influence on us was immense. Our devotion to him, our affection to him, and our conviction that Gerre was one of the best teachers and friends we could have was unshakable. I could line people up from those days in the choir school who would tell you the same thing and talk about the incredible influence he had, and many people from those days ended up going into church music…and a lot of other people from that era were deeply affected by Gerre, and his influence over us, in many, many ways. He was a really profound presence in our lives. So then when I left the choir school I went to prep school in Connecticut. I sang in the choir, but I was deeply unhappy about it because the quality of the singing was so inferior that it was always a frustration. When I was in prep school my school was just down the road from the town, and as a freshman I would walk down the road on Sunday morning, which is not something a lot of prep school freshmen did, to go sing in the little parish choir of Grace Church in Windsor, Connecticut. And at the time there was an English teacher whose name was Frank, a Yale grad – he was a former Whiffenpoof – and he had a lovely bass voice. He was probably in his early fifties at the time, and he took me under his wing. He used to invite me to their house for breakfast after church and he was a very warm presence. In fact, he invited me to the first men’s a cappella singing gig I had ever heard because he sang with a group called The Spare Parts. They were all former Whiffenpoofs who lived around the area and sang together. It opened up a whole other area of music for me that was just a thrill and charming for me to experience, and he was just a very benevolent presence in my life. After my freshman year in prep school, the pull of singing in a men and boys choir pulled me in and so I ended up going every Sunday morning into Hartford to sing with the Cathedral Choir in Hartford, Connecticut, where, at the time, Phil Isaacson was the organist and choirmaster. There was a men and boys choir and there was a girls choir as well, and I doubt very much that any of that exists there anymore. I do have really clear memories of a couple of things in my days there, not only the commute on Sunday mornings…and the lovely guy who sang in the choir who lived in Windsor who gave me rides home. I remember very much that we had Thursday night rehearsals that included a meal, and the meal…it seems to me, I could be wrong about this…but it seems to meal the meal either followed or was adjacent to a meal that was being served to the hungry and the homeless in the city. It was certainly an opportunity for the men and boys…we ate together, at least in the same room – I don’t know how much interaction there was between us, certainly there was some, and then we rehearsed, and then we sang on Sundays. I also remember that at that time I believe I had only sung one of the Bach motets, which would have been *Lobet den Herrn*, and when I was in Hartford – now why I can remember this I can’t tell you – but,
there, as a fifteen or sixteen year old tenor, I learned my second Bach motet which was *Jesu, meine Freude*. I think if I could only have six pieces of music in my life, they might be the six Bach motets, at this point. So, I’d say it’s a pretty valuable thing to learn as a kid. So I sang in the Cathedral in Hartford for most of the rest of my time in prep school, then I went off to college in Virginia, and I remember I certainly drifted away from church life...but it was the Canterbury Club at the local parish church that kept me connected and singing at the Sunday evening service that they had for college kids. So it was still the music that kept me connected to the life of the church, even if it was more tenuous than in the past. When I graduated from college I moved to Washington, DC, and I guess I would have moved in August of that year, which was 1989. By September, and I don’t even know if I had a full time job yet, again, the pull of music and, especially, the idea of singing in the men and boys choir was there, and I found myself up at the Cathedral in Washington where Doug Major was the organist and choir master, auditioning for him. I remember clearly that he hired me to sing as one of the men in the choir the week during which Bishop John Walker died. So he called me and said, “This is not a good week for you to start, come next week.” And so I never knew Bishop Walker but I feel kind of connected to him through his death at the beginning of my time at the cathedral. I ended up singing at the cathedral for the four years I lived in Washington. In those days the cathedral was committedly a non-parochial cathedral, but I was an early twenty-something, singing in the cathedral choir. My roommates were fraternity brothers of mine, I was one of thousands working on Capitol Hill, it’s not like I didn’t have any other social outlets, but the church and, particularly, the choir and the regular community of people involved in the worship – because there was a regular community of people involved in the worship, even though it was non-parochial – became a very important community for me. When, as a young man, I began to figure out what I was going to try to do with my life, the fact that I was involved in that community was hugely important for me. Everybody from The Hill was going to business school or law school and I just didn’t feel drawn to any of that, and I had a long thought I might want to be an educator and made some faint-hearted stabs at exploring that possibility. Eventually a conversation took place between me and a priest who was the father of a friend of mine from Choir School, who was my oldest friend in the world, and it revived an old conversation that he had with me when I was thirteen years old about ministry. That was the seminal conversation that launched, or ignited, my own internal discernment. Washington Cathedral was a really good place for me to engage in that discernment. I still have dear friends from that community and, that was 1989, so we’re talking about a long time ago, nearly thirty years ago. I just, out of the blue,
received an e-mail from someone who worked here as a diplomat and is now involved as a lay person in a diocese somewhere, I think New York. He just happened to find me on-line and to see that he’s still connected to the church is lovely. The point of all this is to say it was a very important community to me. I relied on the clergy of the cathedral including Bruce Jenneker, who was the Canon Precentor at the time. There was no Dean at the cathedral because it was still fairly soon after the death of Bishop Walker, and there was a retired priest, who had been the long-standing rector of Christ Church, Georgetown, Sanford Garner, who became the Interim Provost. I went to see Bruce Jenneker for some spiritual advice at Sanford’s suggestion, and Sanford was just such a marvelous and superb guide for me spiritually and just exactly the kind of gentle and helpful figure that one needs to push a little bit, but not too much, at just the right time. He was just a wonderful person to have help me at the time, both in helping me to figure out how to come to grips with my own spiritual steerings and also how to just manage the process. He helped me figure out, with one or two clear insights, how to go through the process, especially since the cathedral was non-parochial and the community I worshiped with could not sponsor me. He knew I was still connected to St. Thomas, so he said if there was a way I could do it from New York, I should. I was still very connected to St. Thomas through my relationships with the rector and Gary Fertig, so after a number of conversations they said, OK, we’ll sponsor you. So it turned out that the very church in which my musical upbringing had played a big role in my life ended up being the church that sponsored me for ordination. The rector, who was the rector when I was a boy at age ten, was the rector who presented me for ordination, so that was a pretty lovely thing.

Andy: That was still John Andrew?

Fr. Mullen: Yes, John Andrew. He retired the summer I was ordained to the diaconate. He presented me for ordination to the diaconate but was retired by the time I was ordained priest.

Andy: My father knew him for some reason.

Fr. Mullen: Where was your father?

Andy: At the time he was in suburban Cleveland, Ohio. We went to New York City in June of 1981 and went to church at St. Thomas because Dad knew John. So I heard the choir, maybe I even heard you, I don’t know.

Fr. Mullen: Well, I graduated in June of 1981, so if was early June and the choir was singing…my voice had changed, so I wasn’t singing, but I was probably carrying the cross.
Andy: And Gary Fertig came to Chicago, right?

Fr. Mullen: Yes, he went to be the rector at Church of the Ascension.

Andy: I came out of the Diocese of Chicago, so I knew Gary – obviously not on the level that you knew him, but I did know him from the diocese.

Fr. Mullen: He was an extremely talented, extremely gifted man. A really fine priest in many ways. So I’ll try to bring this all around. In seminary I was very involved first with St. Thomas, but also was the seminarian for two years at St. Michael’s on the upper West side, which had a very good music program.

Andy: Were you at General?

Fr. Mullen: Yes, General and, in those days, I was a total snob about my own church musicianship – and still am to some extent – but I have it under control.

Andy: (laughing) Those of us who were brought up in it tend to be that way.

Fr. Mullen: Yes, I was sort of in recovery. So at General I thought - and especially since I was still running up to St. Thomas all the time, and David Hurd was my professor, and I was thinking I was Gerre Hancock’s student, what does David Hurd have to teach me? So I put off everything until the last possible moment, and David was always understanding and kind, and never pushed back at me once in my three years at General for being the kind of Jackass I must have been. I complained bitterly about decisions David had made about music in the chapel…and I was out of seminary for less than a year when I realized what a fine teacher he had been and how important some of his insistencies were, and how lucky I was to have been a student – albeit a reluctant student – of his and to have learned from him, even though I tried hard not to. I count David as an important influence as well. In those days, at General, chapel worship was regular, it was a traditional pattern of offices and eucharist and evensong. It was just part of life and a great part of life, and we were very much aware, even at the time, that it was being looked at with skepticism by bishops and other leaders in the church who saw us as being outmoded and preoccupied with unimportant things like Anglican chant which, frankly, was not a preoccupation, it was just part of what we did.

Andy: Right, it comes with the territory.

Fr. Mullen: We weren’t preoccupied, it’s just what we did. I’ve never been at a church where music hasn’t been important. It was more successful in some places than others, but music has been an important part of the life of any church I’ve been involved in, thank God, I wouldn’t survive well in a place where it wasn’t. I’ll just shift gears to talk about music here at St. 
Mark’s. I’ve been here for fifteen years and this is a place that has taken music seriously for a long time. There was a men and boys choir here for about one hundred thirteen years, if I’m not mistaken, and in 1979, I believe I’m right in that, in 1979 they shut down the ministry of the men and boys choir. Now I make a number of assumptions about that fact, and they are that the city of Philadelphia was in decline, and had been for decades at that point, but certainly every other city in 1979...I lived in Manhattan in 1979, I know what that was like, and it was not the Disneyland that it is today. So, I’m sure Philadelphia was pretty rough in 1979. So the city was in decline, the church was already in decline – certainly urban Anglo-Catholic parishes were in decline – and this parish was kept alive...I always say this and it’s probably too much of a generalization, but hopefully not too much, that this parish was kept alive by gay men who didn’t leave the city and who weren’t going to leave their church. I don’t know if St. Mark’s would have survived the eighties or early nineties had it not been for gay men who were here. And, of course, they weren’t producing children to sing in the kids choir, or to do anything else for that matter. So, between the decline of the city, which one major aspect of which has long been for Philadelphia, and continues to be, that as soon as anybody living in the city has a child they rush out of the city to go find a place where they can send their kids to school because Philadelphia schools are terrible. So with the decline of the city, the decline of the church, and the peculiarities of the – which I only mean in the best possible way – of the demographic of who was here keeping this parish alive, it probably would have seemed impossible to keep a men and boys choir going at that time, or anything having to do with children. I always say, and, again, this is open to criticism, I always say that at that time the parish kind of forgot what the place of children in its life and, particularly, in its worshipping life was supposed to be. Again, I think it’s understandable why they did that, what the forces were at work to cause that lapse of memory to come about, but by the time I got here in 2002, my predecessor was the first...maybe not the first married priest to be here, but the first in a while. My predecessor and his wife tried to make inroads for families and kids and it had been a steep, uphill climb. I built on what I observed when I got here. We tried every different curriculum for Sunday School, we tried a one room schoolhouse effect, we tried different classes, different teachers, different arrangements – nothing seemed to work, we never did any better and, in fact, it got worse. Then about six years ago, six or seven, when I was searching for an associate, I thought to call someone who had been sponsored by this parish for ordination, Erika Takacs, who is my associate rector here. Not only did I know that Erika is a gifted priest, and she had experience working with family ministries because she was down at Christ Church, Alexandria, doing work there, but
I also knew she had been a professional music teacher and a church musician, and she understood something about the importance of music in the life of the church. I asked her, when she came, if part of what she would take on would be to help us figure out whether or not we could somehow use music as a way to build ministries with families. By that time, I guess I had grown frustrated enough with what we were trying to realize all these things were not going well, in part, because they didn’t play to our strengths. And I began to say things like - we’re never going to be able to do a better job at Sunday School than some suburban parishes, nothing about what we do here is going to make St. Mark’s an attractive place to bring your kid because the Sunday School is so good, but if we play to our strengths which are worship and music...and we’ve always held the conviction that kids should be present with us in worship, every iteration we try was always about keeping kids in worship, we were never going to send the kids out to do Sunday School and have them come back at the offertory to worship. That’s been a constant priority for twenty years. So Erika, thank God, said that she would come here, and we tried to work on this. We had already made a change here in 2008 because, at the time, I had already started a conversation about children’s ministries. At the time we had two Sunday masses, 8:30 and 11. If you came to the 11 service with your child, you were to come here at 10 o’clock for Sunday School, stay for the High Mass at 11 which went to 12:20-12:30, and then there’s coffee hour so you are here at least until 1 o’clock. That was just to do the normal things you do at church, and that seemed like a big commitment for kids and families with young kids. So we decided that we would change the schedule back to what was actually an older schedule St. Mark’s had until the seventies. So you could come at 9 o’clock for a sung mass, go to Christian Formation at 10 and be out by 11. We heard from parents that was a schedule that would work out a little better. We were thinking about starting a children’s choir and we got a little pile of money that we thought we could use to do that, but then came October of 2008 when the financial markets all crashed, and we said we’ve got to hold on to every spare bit of cash we can now because we may need it to pay bills over the next couple years. So we had changed the schedule, but scrapped any plans to add a children’s ministry. We lived with that for a while and that service was so moribund, I can’t even tell you, for years it was a said service. (Without the choir) it was not very rewarding, not a worthy praise to God. We’d have about thirty to forty people who would come to it.

Andy: You said it was just a said service?

Fr. Mullen: With hymns. With hymns and a congregationally sung ordinary of the mass, which we still do, so it was a sung mass (but no choir). It was what
it was, and eventually Erika and I made the bold decision that we were going to stop calling it a sung mass and start calling it a family mass. We thought it was a bold decision because St. Mark’s is a place where the leadership is sensitive about pandering to the lowest common denominator, and they’re always worried that something is going to cheapen the standard here and quality of things. Calling something a “Family Mass” might seem dangerous, but I had already started using something of a catch phrase because I heard this from more than one person when I got here. People used to say to me, “Well, you know, we don’t have a lot of ministry to children and family here because there aren’t many children and families around,” and I started saying to the leadership, “maybe there aren’t a lot of children and families around because we don’t have any ministry to children and families, and maybe we need to look at it differently and not expect someone to come someplace where there is nothing for them but actually give them some ministry that’s meaningful to them.” How are we going to see the future of this parish if we don’t have kids and families around? 2011-2012 were really rough years for us financially but by 2013 we were starting to be able to see the light of day. The Vestry committed $40,000 to hire a part-time director of children’s ministry, and at the time we hired Darryl Roland. Darryl had founded the cathedral choir program at the Cathedral in Wilmington, Delaware. He spent sixteen years building this program. When the Diocese of Delaware sold the cathedral and closed down ministry there, the choir survived! The choir moved its program around to other churches. So vibrant was that ministry that it still survives today as the Cathedral Choir School of Delaware, even though there is no cathedral! Darryl is a hugely committed and wonderfully talented and terrifically energetic guy who is now at St. Peter’s, Third and Pine, here in Philadelphia. He came here for two years and we could only afford a part-time person, so we had founded a school for low income kids in north Philadelphia and we needed a teacher there. I told Darryl we could get you half time there and half time at the parish, would that work? And by the grace of God Darryl said yes and he founded our Boys and Girls choir. At the time we had a very bifurcated music program. We had an organist and choirmaster who ran a Parish Choir, we had a Boys and Girls Choir and never the twain did meet. By unexpected glitches, both of those musicians came to me June of 2015 to tell me they were quitting. We quickly hired an interim, Simon Thomas Jacobs, who came to us from Indianapolis. He was the best thing for us because Simon navigated that year when we had to figure out if we were going to be a bifurcated program or if we could be one unified music program and how we did that. That’s how we got to, two years ago, bring Robert McCormick here because, amazingly, Robert was willing to consider moving on from the
fabulous program he had built at St. Paul’s, K Street. But I left out a big chunk that I do need to tell you about. If you go back to where Erika came on board, 2011 or 2012, she came on board and I said, “Erika, we’ve got to figure out things to do, we’ve got to use music. I have this suspicion that music is not just something that’s nice and good for us, I think, because of my own personal experience, and I think you’re going to tell me you have the same experience, and others that I know, I think music is an important tool in Christian formation for kids,” and she said, “Of course it is, it’s an invaluable tool.” I said as we look to revamp our Christian formation program for kids, music should be part of it. We need to do this because we’re stuck right now and we can’t start a children’s music program right now. All the kids we have running around right now are little, little kids and they’re probably too young right now anyway as we’re starting to build this up. They’re too little now, so Erika created a program that we call Schola, and it borrows from everybody, Godly play, there’s music and there’s liturgy and singing. For a while there were more instruments, I think we use fewer instruments now, but we were deliberately trying to lay the groundwork for a program that kids and their parents could see that when they began to grow up there was some place for them to go. It did not hurt that we were starting the school back at St. James in north Philadelphia. By the time we brought Darryl on to start the Boys and Girls Choir, we had already planted the seed, and we had this relationship with the school. For three years it was our practice to bring the kids here. The school didn’t have a very robust music program so we brought the kids here for rehearsal on Wednesdays and Sundays and we provided transportation. We were directly across the street from Curtis Conservatory of Music. When we couldn’t figure out how to feed kids, and I was remembering my days at Hartford, you’ve got to feed kids, and they were coming straight from school for a six o’clock rehearsal. Every space we had available was being used for other purposes. I spoke to the administration at the Curtis Conservatory of Music, and they had just built their first residential building, and they said, “well bring them over here, we’ll feed them.” Thank goodness for the Curtis Conservatory of Music, they became fabulous partners with us. It was an amazing thing. So Erika had laid this groundwork and it was all centered on this idea that, just what your thesis says, that music is a valuable tool of Christian formation. I’m going to tell you this because it’s a story that I think is important. At the time, one of our few hanging on families, a family where the guy was a Rector’s Warden when I first came here, a lifelong member of this parish, baptized here, confirmed here, loves this parish, and would do anything for this parish. He had been married, had kids and moved out of the city, but was still coming back here. For his kids, Schola didn’t work. They didn’t see the music as a tool for Christian formation.
more conventional Sunday school approach made sense. Although they did this without any ill will or malice, they decided to leave the parish. I’ve got to tell you, when the guy who has been the Rector’s Warden and has done everything for this church, and is still coming and is one of the hanging on families, and tells you in the most loving way that this isn’t working for them and it isn’t right and he is moving away…you think twice about everything you’re doing, and you wonder hard if you are making a big mistake.

Andy: Absolutely.

Fr. Mullen: Those are people you do not want to see go. That was a testing moment for me, I promise you. Were we somehow on a fool’s errand that wasn’t going anywhere? I met with him recently, he’s still involved in church and we have a good relationship. What happened is that we had all these kids running around that had outgrown Schola and we said we need to start something else. So we talked to parents and they said, sure, let’s start something, so this fall we started a section of Christian formation for older kids…who are mostly coming out of the Boys and Girls Choir, and finishing the nine o’clock service where the Boys and Girls choir sing. We had fifteen kids at our first class this fall and I reassured my friend that it was working. I’d like to share this, since we hired Robert (McCormick), he told me something the other day which, he said, made his heart sing. He said, “I’d like to think that we have one choir here and just different iterations of it.” Which was great. On the first Sunday of the month we have choral Evensong, and the Boys and Girls Choir who sing at the nine o’clock service, now, under Robert’s tenure, sing Evensong with the Parish Choir. They’ll sing Lessons and Carols with the Parish Choir, Christmas Lessons and Carols, and on Low Sunday in April, they’ll be taking their first overnight trip to New York City where they’ll be singing Sunday morning mass at St. Thomas, 5th Avenue, and Evensong at St. John the Divine. That is a wonderful thing, a wonderful testimony to Robert’s ministry, and to these kids and their families and, I think, to the important role music is playing in this parish – not just as a standard they can hold them to, to be able to sing in these places, but that we’re a healthy enough parish to be doing that…we can see the future here because we can see kids. I saw a video of some of our kids this summer who were in the Poconos and a bird died, and these kids had a funeral with a procession and singing Ave Maria, a written homily, and a casket…a proper burial. I don’t want to drop my mic and say my work is done, but it does give you the feeling that we’re on to something, and that the kind of work that we think God wants us to be doing because we think this sacramental and musical tradition has a value beyond just appealing to certain people. It makes us feel like that is a fruitfulness of this ministry.
that is exactly what God is calling us for, and that’s what we’re after. God is calling us to be fruitful, and we want this parish to be fruitful. It has been for one hundred seventy years, and I want it to be fruitful for another one hundred seventy years. My job is to see to that…without kids I don’t think we can do it, and we certainly can’t do it without music.

Andy:  Well, certainly, just by the fact you have a High Mass shows you take music to be something important to the liturgy. That’s certainly your tradition, your background, and that’s what makes it work. Having a music background myself, I don’t understand clergy who dismiss music so easily and say we don’t need that. Or when it comes to cut budgets the first place they go is music and say we don’t need paid singers in the choir, or we don’t need this, and I say, well, you kind of do sometimes. It’s a struggle on my end when I go up against people who don’t understand how music works.

Fr. Mullen:  And we spend money on it, there’s no question, we spend a lot of money. One of the reasons we are able to do this with integrity at St. Mark’s is that we also spend a lot of money taking care of the poor. We always articulate our mission as a double mission to worship God and to care for God’s neediest people. We can articulate those things separately, and sometimes we do, but to act with integrity in the church, having that focus is really important because it’s easily perceived as overly self-indulgent. It might, in fact, be overly self-indulgent if it wasn’t serving the wider mission of the church. We’re able to do that with integrity… We’re able to sing a High Mass without taking anything away from anybody…I dread the summer, though. Our liturgy is now made to rely on the integration of music and text, they are one thing that works together, and when the music is not supported by the Boys and Girls Choir it’s so limp and pathetic and depressing.

Andy:  I agree with you. Well, listen, I don’t want to take up anymore of your time. I’ve enjoyed this immensely and have a lot of material to use in my paper, and you will see a copy of whatever I write before it’s finalized to make sure you’re OK with it.

Fr. Mullen:  Thanks, I hope it’s been a help to you.

Andy:  I want to end with one question for you. At the end of the day, whatever else is going on in the world or in your own life, who is the one composer you go to? To lift you up or to bring peace or whatever.

Fr. Mullen:  Well, I’m not good a favorites so that is a little hard for me…so I’ve already confessed that if I could only have six pieces of music, the Bach motets would be them, so I’ll say Bach. But that’s such an easy and obvious answer, so actually, if I could have more than six pieces of music
and they could be bound in one cover I would have the *Hymnal*…and I would take 1940, 1982, almost any one you give me…it fills that space of providing comfort, encouragement, and enjoyment in a way that almost no single composer could.

Andy: And it’s got some Bach in it, so you’ll get that too.

Fr. Mullen: That’s true.

Andy: Well, thank you, if you need anything please feel free to contact me and if I need anything I hope I can contact you.

Fr. Mullen: Certainly. And if you see Neil, please give him my best. He’s been here several times and it’s always great to have him around.
Andy: The reason I have you here is I am a candidate for my Doctor of Ministry degree from Sewanee, liturgy being my focus, and I’m writing about music for my final project. I think I sent this to you in an email, maybe you saw it, maybe you didn’t see it. My topic is music as a tool for spiritual formation. And what sort of got me thinking about this was an experience I had as a first-time chorister at age six when we were in Cleveland, Ohio, which, and I had to laugh when you called me from Cleveland and I’m like “well, you're not too far from the church where all this happened!” My dad was the rector of a church in Berea, Ohio, which is on the West side. I was in the children’s choir at age six, and we sang an anthem about the Ascension. Now, granted, it was the 70s, so it was a dippy, sort of folk-songy anthem, that came out of a Roman Catholic anthem book. But it stuck with me, and I still sing it in my head to this day. It’s text is pretty much verbatim out of Acts, and it made me think…how many six year olds have an understanding of what the Ascension actually is…and I felt like I did. I did because I knew that piece (of music) and I had internalized the scripture, and felt like I understood it. Now, can any of us really understand the Ascension? I don’t know, but I did. That got me thinking of my own experience growing up in the choirs and, of course, being with Robbe at Sewanee and Susan in the seminary. Music, most definitely for me, was a tool for spiritual formation, but I think it is for so many others, even those who aren’t in the choir. Just to hear that music and be in the presence of it, you’re going to pick something up eventually. So, that’s my starting off point. With this project I’m doing these interviews. I think I have seven and, of the seven, five are musicians and two are clergy. Then I did a survey that I sent out to the priests in this diocese, in Alabama, asking questions about how they view music. I’m also going to look at childhood development aspects, research on the psychological side of it and pedagogical side of it, and then various other sources that will complete my project. So, that being the history, the intro is going to be “this was my initial experience,” and then I’m going to go from there. My first question to you, if you can take all this in, is what has been your experience using music as a tool for spiritual formation? And I mean in your own experience for your own formation, and then how you, in your position, also used that.
Mr. Webster: Well, I grew up Southern Baptist, and loved singing all those wonderful, evangelical hymns that they don’t do anymore because now they have Praise bands and everything else. Anyway, when I was growing up the treasure of hymnody was very much a part of worship every Sunday morning and every Sunday evening and every Wednesday evening when we were at church. I loved those hymns. When I was 14 I went to Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly in North Carolina, near the Black Mountains. We had church every night in this 3,000 seat auditorium, and we had an Invitation hymn every night. I remember on Wednesday night the Invitation hymn was “Wherever He Leads I’ll Go.” And we were singing that hymn and I felt, just as real as anything, I felt God’s hand pick me up out of my pew and lead me by the hand down that aisle to the front of the church where they had people waiting to receive your decision for Christ. My decision for Christ that night was I wanted to serve the church, and at that time I didn’t know what that meant.

Andy: An honest to goodness Altar call.

Mr. Webster: It was an Altar call and I felt the call just as clear as can be. I went down that aisle and I said I want to give my life over to serve the church, and that’s when I was 14. And, actually, that’s what I’ve done with my life and I’ve never looked back, I’ve never wavered, and I can still hear that hymn ringing in my ears and how it compelled me to walk down that aisle. I think if there hadn’t been any music accompanying that moment, that moment would not have happened. It was that visceral and that compelling, and it was because of the music. That’s been the first step on my journey as a church musician, but all along the way that’s what I have spent my life doing. Making music with other people and, particularly, working with children. That’s the thing I’m most passionate about and what I love the most. I do a number of things in music…as a composer, as an organist, as a conductor, an orchestral conductor, I directed a Bach festival in Chicago, etc., but the thing I really love is working with kids and introducing them to the great music of the church which forms them as little Christians. Now, they don’t know it yet and they don’t understand what’s happening, but they feel it. It’s very real in their hearts and in their brains, and that’s what I’ve done for the last 45 years and I’m continuing to do it. The thing that shocks me is that some of my first choristers that I had when I was a young choirmaster are now in their mid to late fifties, and they all come back to me at some point and say, “You have no idea what singing in the choir meant to me as a child. It was the single most important thing I did as a child and it has made me the kind of adult that I am today.” That is gold to me to hear them say that. It’s because of the music, and it’s not just the music, it’s the music in service of the Word. When you sing a hymn by Charles Wesley or Isaac Watts with a really
good tune like *Hereford*, “O thou who camest from above,” or when you match a Charles Wesley text with a Samuel Sebastian Wesley hymn tune...now that’s a taste of heaven. It speaks to your heart and to your brain and it changes you. It changes you in a way that just mere words can’t do. Words without music have a different effect, a different power, and I think when you put the two together it’s an unbeatable combination. I think that’s how people see Jesus. That’s how I encounter Jesus.

Andy: Right...I didn’t mean to interrupt you if you’re still going.

Mr. Webster: No, I’ve just taken a little pause to see if what I just said raises any questions or needs any clarification.

Andy: No, but just a comment. I fully believe this and I’ve been hearing it from the other people I’ve been interviewing and, particularly, the musicians, that what you said about it not just being the music, but the music in service of the Lord. It’s the liturgical aspect of it, of putting it into something that’s worshipful.

Mr. Webster: Yes. Music in service of the Word.

Andy: Right, the Word.

Mr. Webster: And it’s not just scripture. When you take a George Herbert text like “King of glory, King of peace,” and you put it with that beautiful David Walker tune, number 382 in the Hymnal...I will never forget the first time I heard that. It was 1984 at the AAM Conference in Los Angeles and I’m already a practicing church musician, experienced, and all that, and I’d never heard that hymn. We were in worship and singing it and it just undid me. The beauty of that text and the suitability of that tune for the text. It’s amazing I still remember that to this day and that was 1984. It’s just like you remember your Ascension anthem from when you were six years old. Those experiences are so powerful and so indelible that they change your life, and that’s what we’re in the business of doing – changing lives.

Andy: Exactly. Just an interesting aside about Herbert. As an English major at Sewanee I studied George Herbert. I was already familiar with all the hymns that used his text and it was interesting studying them from the viewpoint of already knowing the texts set to music. Just to read the texts on their own was almost a backwards way of looking at it, but it was interesting.

Mr. Webster: Well, I love his poetry and, as a composer, I’ve spent many hours setting some of his texts like, you know the poem, “The Church Floor?” I set that. I wrote an anthem based on that for choir and organ, and we performed it on our last England tour singing it at Winchester Cathedral.
and Westminster Abbey. I’m kind of proud of what emerged as far as the musical result, but that poem is so dense and concentrated and has so much in it. I just loved the process of sitting down and wrestling with those words backwards and forwards and coming up with music that I thought expressed the text in a way that would enliven those words. So, that’s another aspect for me, as a composer, of how music infuses meaning and life into a text that, otherwise, somebody might just sort of gloss over it…like, who even knows about “The Church Floor?”

Andy: Yes, I mean, he kind of goes through every bit of the building itself and talks about this and about this and…yeah, you could easily gloss over it.

Mr. Webster: Right. I came up with a passacaglia for that anthem which is a bass line with variations up at the top of it for choir and organ. My music is hard and it’s challenging, but it’s hard in a good way so that by the time you’ve really learned it, the choir loves to sing it. They tell me that all the time. When I first give them a piece of [my] music they’re like, “Oh no, not another one!” And then by the time they learn it, they adore it. That’s one of the things that I feel I stay called to, as a composer, is to come up with music in service of the liturgy that makes people have to work. It’s not a simple, straight forward piece that you can get the first time. You have to work at it, but it’s worth the work. And the reward is, I think, a new level of spiritual growth. When you’ve had to wrestle with some music to the point where it stretches you, you’re better off for it. Especially at Trinity Church in Boston I get some resistance, “Why do we have to sing this new hymn? Why do we have to sing this new service music?” It’s the same old thing – we like what we know and we know what we like. It’s like saying I only want to read the books I’ve read before…how ridiculous is that? You want to read a new book and, yes, it’s going to stretch you, but that’s what we’re here to do. Not to make you comfortable, but to stretch you.

Andy: Well, right, because every new piece you sing or you hear or you experience is going to open a new way of looking at things, open up new channels to speak to God. I think that’s the beauty of it.

Mr. Webster: Exactly, and at one point every hymn was a new hymn.

Andy: True, but nobody wants to hear that! Talking about your piece on “The Church Floor,” even that opens your mind up to say the floor, itself, has purpose. We’re in this space and we utilize it and we don’t think about it, but it’s a part of our being here and worshiping.

Mr. Webster: And it’s sacramental, in a sense.
Andy: Yeah, it’s holy ground. Oh, that’s really interesting. I agree wholeheartedly with you. Now, I don’t have as easy a time introducing new hymns here as I would like to.

Mr. Webster: Yep. I know.

Andy: I get resistance from my organist, too. They say, “Why would you want to do this?” But I do it, and they complain, but it’s good.

Mr. Webster: Well, I love pushing people and, generally, in the end, they’re kind of glad they got pushed. I mean, aren’t we all?

Andy: Right! One of the things you brought up about your own music, I mean, I certainly have experienced composers that are difficult, and you sing through it the first time and you’re like, “oh, this is awful,” or “this doesn’t make any sense,” or “I’m never going to be able to do this,” and by the time you get to the end of it you’re so attached to it. Once you realize how it fits together it never leaves you.

Mr. Webster: Exactly.

Andy: I was talking to another person I interviewed about how certain pieces were, at least in the tenor line – and I know it’s all parts that will do this – but for me, personally in the tenor line, there’s no way I could pick that note up out of the air, or out of the chord, but once I learn it I’ll never miss it again. It is so much a part of you. We internalize that, and that allows us to contribute in a way and make it special for everybody else. When you hit that note right on, the person listening to it is going to hear that confidence in it and is going to appreciate it.

Mr. Webster: Exactly, and I would love to have a little word of prayer with several very popular church composers who write music that is “acceptable.” And some of it is so damned accessible that it’s kind of worthless. All it does is keep people in a stupor, and that makes me crazy. I’m not going to cite any specific example or specific composers, but there are those who write in a way that just let people sort of wallow in this cheap emotionalism. They think they’re feeling the Spirit but, in my opinion, they’re really not. They’re just feeling a nice, quick, cheap emotional moment, and I don’t think that is synonymous with experiencing the face of Jesus. I really don’t. Sam [the rector] and I had all kinds of discussions about this because he’s of that school of thought that if you give people the sweet come-to-Jesus hymns it’s going to form them, and I disagree with him to this day. You need to make people sit up and work, and if you coddle them it’s not going to make mature Christians. It’s going to keep them sort of at the Kindergarten level. He and I went around this tree many a
time and never came to an agreement, and that’s fine. It was great that we had the discussion.

Andy: Sure, I think you’re absolutely right, and I would say this about those accessible tunes that put you in a good emotional state for the moment. I don’t think the next time you hear it or sing it you’ll necessarily feel the same emotion. But, once you’ve wrestled with something more difficult, it’s going to pull that emotion out of you every time you hear it.

Mr. Webster: Right. The point is for people to leave church being different from when they came in. If that doesn’t happen then we’re not doing our jobs. If we’ve just soothed them and comforted them, I mean, there’s nothing wrong with comforting people and it’s appropriate, but you’ve got to give them something that makes them somewhat uncomfortable. That’s what every sermon ought to do. I think music is exactly the same way, it has the same function. We need to make people get out of their comfort zone because that’s what discipleship is all about. Jesus never said this would be easy, he never did. He said take up your cross and follow me.

Andy: Absolutely, and if you think about it in our own circumstances in life, I’m sure many people can tell you there were times when somebody spoke something or said something to where they were thinking “I can’t even listen to that, I can’t even hear that, I’m not going to commit to that,” but eventually come around to it. What’s hard to hear at first – you say there’s no way I’ll accept that – tends to be the thing you most fiercely defend later on.

Mr. Webster: Exactly, what a good point. We have four clergy on staff now that Sam has retired. Rita Powell, I don’t know if you’ve run into her yet, she’s our associate rector for worship, and therefore my immediate boss, and – man – the sermons she can preach and the things that she says make a lot of people uncomfortable. People have actually got up and walked out during her sermons. She’s basically telling the truth and people are not prepared to hear certain truths. She preached a sermon once about the fact that it is wrong for police to kill black men. The way it’s going, it’s just wrong, and it’s indefensible and we as Christians cannot stand idly by and say it’s OK. Boy, did that rankle some people, even in blue Massachusetts. Being a Christian is not easy, and it shouldn’t be.

Andy: Right, if we do what we’re actually called to do as Christians. For a lot of people it’s the emotional feel-good thought that I’m a Christian, therefore I don’t have to do anything. I can just sit back and reap the rewards.

Mr. Webster: Right.
Andy: That’s never what Jesus said. I say all the time that the Gospel is uncomfortable. It should make you feel uncomfortable because it compels us to do something.

Mr. Webster: Exactly.

Andy: And that’s not what they want to hear.

Mr. Webster: Well, that’s their job.

Andy: Right. Let me ask you this, you say you especially like to work with children, so tell me how you go about implementing programs with the children that might lead to spiritual formation.

Mr. Webster: Well, it’s just basically the choir. We have this program called the Trinity Choristers and once you’re eight years old, or in the third grade, you can audition for the group. And the audition is basically a euphemism – are you potty trained? Do you have a pulse? I don’t want to be selective because I can’t afford to be. These kids come in at age eight not knowing anything about music and not really knowing a lot about the faith or church, and we start right away. OK, this is it, and we sing every Sunday at the nine o’clock service and we have an eight o’clock rehearsal and then you’re to be here two afternoons a week, so it’s a huge commitment. Number one, when you ask for that kind of commitment from families, they either look at you like you’re nuts or they say, “oh, all right, we can do this, and that means rearranging our priorities,” and then they do it. That’s lesson number one: how to make a commitment and how to honor it. The discipline of getting yourself up and getting to church so that you’re ready to start singing, in your vestments, at rehearsal at eight o’clock on Sunday morning, that’s huge! Now, that’s not necessarily a Christian virtue but it does lay the groundwork. It gives a child, and everybody else in the choir, a structure for the content to fill. We have a structure and it’s called our routine, and then you fill that content with excellent music. I will preach this sermon until I’m blue in the face that it’s wrong to give kid’s children’s music. It’s wrong, wrong, wrong. Children’s minds are like sponges. They can learn a foreign language much quicker than we can as adults. They’re ready to absorb anything you can give them. So why give them something that’s pablum or childish when you can give them the real stuff? Give them the music of Herbert Howells, give them Bach, give them Mozart, give them William Byrd, give them Benjamin Britten. They don’t know that this music gets hard, they don’t care. The harder it is the more they love it. Now, an eight year old is not ready to tackle all that, but it’s a process. They stand next to ten year olds and twelve year olds and fourteen year olds who have been doing this for a while who can mentor them and teach them the ropes. It’s
just so gratifying to watch an eight year old, nine year old, ten year old open their minds and hearts to this music and just learn to love it. It’s just the most wonderful thing. These composers that I mentioned, they are the greats of our corpus of sacred music, and they have so much to offer for sinking your teeth into it and for getting the music right but, in doing so, it’s a spiritual discipline. And these kids don’t understand all that sort of language, but it’s real. It’s real in their little hearts and minds. So that’s what we do.

Andy: I think that’s beautiful, and I have to admit that when I was in the choir at six years old we were not getting the adult music, but we did sing with the adult choir once a month. So, I guess we did, in some circumstances, get it, but we also did some of that awful kid’s stuff.

Mr. Webster: Yeah, well, I think what makes a program for kid’s choir successful is that you set the bar really high. When I came here – the reason I came to Trinity is Michael Kleinschmidt brought me here to start this program for kids because they didn’t have one, and it’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done, oh my God! But to say, all right, we’re going to sing every Sunday…you are it. You are the centerpiece of this choir, you are the treble line. Without you there won’t be a treble line. So to give them that kind of expectation to know that they have a job to do that matters, and that they’re being taken seriously by adults. This is not like going to your child’s soccer game. These kids are at the heart of worship and they’re leading it, and they lead it as well as any clergy person I’ve ever seen. They know what they’re doing and they love it and they’re great…and they’re ten years old! I think we underestimate kids, so we need to raise the bar and keep raising the bar, while at the same time give them the proper tools and encouragement and support to make it happen. It’s a magical combination, and it’s what I love to do most.

Andy: Well, to see them take ownership of it and be proud for being a part of it.

Mr. Webster: Right.

Andy: And, if you’ll allow me, granted, I was much older at this point, but being with the University Choir at Sewanee…it was a huge commitment. I think we rehearsed three days a week and then Sunday.

Mr. Webster: Yeah.

Andy: I think to some who weren’t accustomed to it, they were saying, “are you kidding me? That’s a whole lot of work!” But after doing it for a while, if somebody said we’re going to take one of those days away, you’re going to say, “No, you can’t! You can’t take one away because we have to have it.” And I think, at that point, you could almost say, well, even if we added
one more day we’d be OK with it because you enjoy it so much and enjoy what you learn from it.

Mr. Webster: Exactly, exactly. The difference between church and sports in our culture, I think, is rather astonishing because you can take a ten year old and say, all right, she’s going to join the soccer team and they practice four times a week, no questions asked, or swim team, or whatever it is. But…you say you’re coming to choir twice a week and every Sunday morning, they look at you like you’re from Mars because sports rule this culture that we live in. There’s no question about it, sports is far more important than religion in America. That’s true even in the South.

Andy: Yes, although I will say the South is much more protective of some of that than I found in Chicago. Although, Sunday morning is starting to fade because all these travel leagues play over the weekends. I’ll tell you what, Wednesday night, which is not something I ever grew up with in the Midwest…”who’s going to church on Wednesday night, I mean, what is that?”…but down here, it’s like nobody does anything on Wednesday because church rules.

Mr. Webster: Yeah.

Andy: Which is kind of nice for the kids because they get a bit of a break, I mean, the kids who are doing sports and whatnot…it’s crazy, but anyway, you were talking and I interrupted you.

Mr. Webster: No, I’ve made my point. I get so frustrated that living here in New England everybody knows who Tom Brady is…everybody, but who knows who the conductor of the Boston Symphony is, even though he is world class and every bit as distinguished in his field as Tom Brady. But, it’s just the way our society works, and it’s frustrating and I think that has implications for church.

Andy: You’re absolutely right. One of the common remarks I’ve had when I’ve talked to the musicians in these interviews is that, specifically with children’s choir, they’ve found that what the choir provides is something that the communities are not providing. In other words, it gives the kids a safe place to go and to be a part of a community that supports them and upholds them and teaches them something of value…in that being music, in that being their spiritual life with Christ.

Mr. Webster: I couldn’t agree more, and it doesn’t involve a ball.

Andy: [laughing] Unless you’ve got to follow that ball on the screen to sing, right? No, no. Right, it’s a totally other worldly experience that you don’t get anywhere else, and to the point where some of these programs, they
said, they have kids that want to be in it because they crave that sense of community that they don’t get anywhere else.

Mr. Webster: It’s very real, and it’s an important and vital part of the mission of the church.

Andy: I think you’ve already answered this to some extent, but how many years have you been doing this children’s choir at Trinity?

Mr. Webster: We started it in 2005, so it’s twelve years old.

Andy: OK, so you probably have some statistics or some data that shows that some of these kids who went through that are still involved, at least, in church or even in music in church.

Mr. Webster: Oh, definitely. The ones who have gone off to college continue with music and the ones…I got a whole class, I’ve got nine seniors who are graduating this year and they started when they were eight years old. They continued to sing all the way through high school, and the boys whose voices changed become tenors and basses, and they’re all going to be involved in music in one form or fashion when they go off to college. I think three of them are actually going to be music majors. Yeah, and in the church they may, like many college students do, may go away from the church for a while, but I know they’ll come back. They just do because it’s a part of who they are.

Andy: I had a classmate at Sewanee who sang in the choir with us – she lives in Oregon now – and she’s totally disassociated from the church. She claims she never really felt she was a religious person anyway, and she has had somewhat of a midlife crisis. One thing she said that was interesting was that she realized what grounded her most was the choir, was what we sang. Though she said she had trouble confessing that belief, or professing that belief in God, she could sing those songs, sing those pieces, and realized that was missing in her life right now, and that she wasn’t whole unless she was involved in a choir somewhere making that music. I think that speaks very powerfully to what that means. Even in college I used to talk to her and say you’re much more spiritual than you’re allowing yourself to be, and I think you believe a lot more than you’ll admit to, but if this is what it takes. To me, that’s the power of what that does and what you’ve learned through it.

Mr. Webster: Indeed.

Andy: And I know you’re not going to disagree with that, but it just strikes me every once in a while…how do other people not see this? Or, like you just said, how is it that somebody doesn’t know William Byrd, or how do you not know Charles Stanford? You obviously aren’t living the right kind of
life. I can’t say that, of course, out loud. Well…good, thank you. I think you’ve given me some very helpful material. One of the things I will do is when I get this into a somewhat final form, I will allow you to see it, just to make sure you’re OK with how I use your name and the material that we have here. I don’t want to do anything without anybody’s knowledge.

Mr. Webster: I’d love that.

Andy: I have one final question that I’ve asked everybody, which is not so much a part of the paper, though it may come into it, but it’s just kind of a fun question and one that’s been hard for everyone to answer. At the end of the day when all the stress and trials and everything else you can, sort of, try to leave behind, and you just want to escape, who’s your go-to composer?

Mr. Webster: Bach, without question.

Andy: I’m right with you on that. What’s been interesting is that there have been, for those who play organ, who also are choir directors, Bach has been pretty clearly their choice. For the ones I’ve talked to who are much more, though they may play, but tend to be more on the conducting side than the playing side, go to someone like Howells.

Mr. Webster: OK.

Andy: It’s just been interesting. I’m just curious, it’s just a fun question I had. I think Bach fulfills all of that. I had one organist/choirmaster say he doesn’t trust an organist who doesn’t play Bach.

Mr. Webster: [Laughing] I have to remember that, that’s a good line.

Andy: And I’ll even tell you who that was if you’re interested.

Mr. Webster: Who?

Andy: That was Robert McCormick.

Mr. Webster: Oh, I know Robert.

Andy: From St. Mark’s in Philadelphia.

Mr. Webster: Yeah, he’s wonderful.

Andy: Bach is certainly one of mine. Bach and my other one, as a chorister, outside of Bach, is Stanford.

Mr. Webster: I love him, too.

Andy: I wrote on Stanford, so I’m really close to him. Well, Richard, thank you very much. Let’s not wait another 23 or 24 years to be in touch.
Mr. Webster: OK.

Andy: You will see this when I get it put in some printable form and we’ll go from there.

Mr. Webster: I look forward to it.

Andy: Thank you. All right. Bye-bye.

Mr. Webster: Good to talk to you. Bye-bye.
Interview with Bishop Andrew Waldo – January 9, 2018

Andy: Well, thank you, I’m glad we were able to work this out. I’m in the liturgy track for my D.Min. at Sewanee. Music has always been a special part of my life, and I wanted to write something having to do with music. When I graduated seminary at Sewanee, I did an honors paper on Charles Stanford.

Bp. Waldo: OK

Andy: I had the idea that this time I wanted to do something with music and liturgy. My background, which I think I may have explained to you a little bit…when I was a child I sang in the Junior Choir at church.

Bp. Waldo: Where was that?

Andy: That was in Berea, Ohio. Suburban Cleveland.

Bp. Waldo: OK

Andy: My father was the rector of the parish. I was six years old and I joined the Junior Choir, and I can remember very vividly this anthem that we did for the Feast of the Ascension. It was the seventies and it was a really folksy kind of kid’s song – it actually came out of a Roman Catholic publication – but it stuck with me. I don’t know many six year olds who had some sort of an understanding of the Ascension, but I did. I credit that particular anthem with forming me in a way, and since that time music has always been a big part of my involvement in the church. Yes, I grew up being an acolyte, but I’ve always been in the choir. All through High School, in college at Sewanee, and after graduation. My wife and I were married a couple years out of college, living in Atlanta, and we decided where to go to church based on the choir. We ended up singing with choir at the Cathedral of St. Philip.

Bp. Waldo: OK

Andy: So now, being a priest, I obviously got pulled away from some of that. That’s my starting point, my jumping off point in this paper, and my subject is music as a tool for spiritual formation. It worked that way for me. I think it very much is, and can be, a tool for spiritual formation. In the course of the paper I’m looking at what others write about that. Using books that people have written on the topic, looking at psychological development, childhood development in music as a tool in that development, and looking at pedagogical aspects. Then I’m doing these
interviews – musicians and clergy – to see what their experience has been with music in their lives and the church, and how they see music as a tool for spiritual formation. Your name was given to me by Neil Alexander and I’m sure you and I may have met at one time. I came into the Diocese (of Alabama) in 2007 and I think you were still here.

Bp. Waldo: No, I was actually never in the diocese. I was in the (2008) election for Suffragan.

Andy: That’s what it was. Right.

Bp. Waldo: Right, but I’ve never…my father and my brother (are in the diocese)…

Andy: Right, I know Mark very well,

Bp. Waldo: OK

Andy: And I do know your father, I mean, I have spoken to both your mother and father many times at conventions and what not, but it’s really Mark I know the best.

Bp. Waldo: OK

Andy: So, anyhow, here you are. With that in mind…if you wouldn’t mind telling me your background in music and your experience with music.

Bp. Waldo: Well, it starts from the very beginning in that my mother’s family, in particular, has been a musical family and an Episcopalian family for a lot of generations. My great grandmother started the Tatnall School outside of Wilmington, Delaware, and in her doing that has always made sure that music was a big piece of that curriculum. It still it to this day.

Andy: Is that a Parochial school?

Bp. Waldo: It’s a prep school right outside Wilmington, just sort of on the edge, Greenville, I think, technically. But, at any rate, one of my favorite pictures, family photographs, is of my mother at the piano. I was about two and I’m sitting on her lap, and my older brother is standing next to me and my grandmother, the daughter of the one who started the school, and we’re all singing from the Fireside Book of Folk Songs.

Andy: Wow.

Bp. Waldo: I have five siblings, so all through growing up mom would get us around the piano and we’d sing. We had piano lessons. I had flute lessons when I was in Junior High with a former flute player in the John Philip Sousa Marching Band, and I would sing in the children’s choirs until I was 14. I went to Indian Springs School (Private boarding school in Birmingham). When I went there I kind of fell out of going to church for about ten years,
from about age 15, and, I mean, seriously out...so far out that not only did I not believe in God, I could not even imagine God. I was way, way out, and I wasn’t doing anything. I wasn’t living a life of drugs and alcohol and all that or anything like that. I think it was more of a young person’s hubris.

Andy: A drifting away.

Bp. Waldo: Yes, a drifting away, but I did sing in the Indian Springs Glee Club all four years. I went to college in Southern California at Whittier College and was thinking about teaching or something. I played varsity soccer, did all this stuff, and the recorder, as an instrument, had come into my orbit slightly. The previous spring, when I was in my last year at Indian Springs, a production of Benjamin Britten’s “Noah’s Flood” was done at the Church of the Ascension in Montgomery and I just knew about it (the recorder) and kind of liked it. I had a couple of recordings of Renaissance music, concert music, and loved them. I got to Whittier and heard a recording of Frans Brüggen who is a Dutch...was, he’s deceased now...a Dutch recorder player, and then I heard that instrument played virtuosically and I said, “I want to play that instrument. That is the instrument I want to play.” I went home and I bought the best recorder money could buy in Montgomery, Alabama, which is a five dollar half plastic, half wooden Hohner.

Andy: Like the variety that the fourth grade students play for their Christmas concert?

Bp. Waldo: I think those are more expensive.

Andy: I think I paid seven dollars for those.

Bp. Waldo: Yes, at any rate, I began learning and really began listening to a lot of early music, and really fell in love with it. I’ve been married twice. I was married very briefly to a Japanese violinist who took us to Boston where she finished her Bachelors and I waited my turn to go to graduate school at the Conservatory. That fell apart very unexpectedly, for me, and the crisis that followed it, the spiritual crisis that followed, is what brought me back to church. I entered the church at the mission church of SSJE (Society of St. John the Evangelist), the Cowley Fathers, on the backside of Beacon Hill. In fact, that congregation is closed altogether now, but in the late 70s and through the 1980s it was the mission church for them in downtown Boston. It was where I encountered...I remember my first liturgy that I went to there, as a person who was in crisis and recognizing that I didn’t have as much control over my life as I thought I had, it was an Easter Vigil. And at that Easter Vigil I heard chanting for the first time. I
discovered that there were monks and nuns in the Episcopal Church for the first time. I experienced incense for the first time.

Andy: You got it all at once!

Bp. Waldo: And the Baptismal Covenant, all at once. I remember when the Baptismal Covenant started I looked at it and said, “Is this The Book of Common Prayer?”

Andy: Oh, because you were also hearing the ’79 book for the first time.

Bp. Waldo: That’s exactly right.

Andy: Right, OK.

Bp. Waldo: And the chanting…and they chanted everything. Oh man, I mean, they chanted the Gospel, they chanted…everything that could be chanted got chanted. I had studied…I was actually in the New England Conservatory graduate program at that point…and I had studied choral conducting, as well as recorder, and I was performing a lot with singers and other instrumentalists in Boston. I played in the Boston Camerata, played in a group called the Greenwood Concert, a lot of groups. And I heard in the chant, the chant being ancient in spirit…I think David Hurd ultimately pointed all that stuff…but the spirit of it was ancient, and the chanting there was magnificent. Not just the solo chanting, but the psalm chanting, and, of course, there was a lot of music. There was a lot of Stanford, too. The musician there was very much one to play a lot of classic 19th century English choral repertory. I did not sing in the choir because I couldn’t be there for rehearsals due to my Conservatory schedule, but chant became for me a vehicle of formation and it hit me at a time of great spiritual need and openness to God’s coming into my life through music. When I got out of the New England Conservatory, I got on the faculty as a recorder instructor and ensemble coach at the Longy School of music in Cambridge, Harvard Square, a small conservatory. There I started the Longy course for early music. We did a little Baroque music, but probably 75% of what we did was Renaissance.

Andy: You helped start that?

Bp. Waldo: I started it. It was my brain child, and it still exists, though not…a couple of years after I went off to Sewanee for seminary the school decided it didn’t have the driver anymore, which was me, for that group, and the school cast it adrift. But, the group stayed together and became a semi-professional group that, just this year, is celebrating the 30th anniversary as a semi-professional group.

Andy: Oh, wow.
Bp. Waldo: And I’m on their alumni list.

Andy: I hope you would be!

Bp. Waldo: We sang a lot of obscure and very extraordinarily beautiful music. We did two programs of English 16th Century music, we did poly choral music, Venetian poly choral stuff, with shawms and sackbuts, violins, recorders, recorder consorts. We ventured into the Baroque and did some Bach motets, cantatas, and things like that. There was a period, about three years into my time doing that work and, this was probably the best way to describe what was happening to me, but every private student, every public ensemble, every school ensemble, and my choir…in one Fall semester, I believe the Fall of ’83, was spent doing nothing but music from between 1550 and 1600. It just happened that those things all converged and what it meant was that I was immersed in the musical language of that era. It was like a language immersion such that every nuance was…and I’d already done enough of it that I was finally beginning to hear details, figures of speech, to use the language metaphor, true figures of speech in music that were, on a daily basis, revelatory for me. Then, of course, most of the music we were singing was sacred. Most of it was in Latin or medieval French or German, except the English concert music, but even a lot of that was in Latin. One semester, that Fall semester, the choral program was Spanish and Mexican Colonial music from the late 16th century, and within that time the Mexicans were making harpsichords and viola da gambas in Mexico. Native crafts people, some of the native singers, in Mexico were so renowned in their skill that they were sending them back to Spain so the King of Spain could hear them sing. We did a program of music from that era and from those places, and one of them was a Mexican Magnificat. Composed around 1560 by Hernando Franco, it was truly…it was one of those pieces…it’s sort of like when we do psalms responsively. Half of the verse would be sung as a chant and the second half of the verse would be sung in polyphony with the choir. It was as if God had said, “I’m not going to be able to get through to you about what I really am calling you to do unless I speak this language that you are obviously called to love and understand.”

Andy: So you heard the call through music?

Bp. Waldo: I heard the Magnificat. And, you know, I grew up in Montgomery in the early 60s when reversals were happening all around. We moved to Montgomery in ’61, three weeks after the Freedom Riders got beat up. I had worked as a carpenter’s apprentice some in Montgomery in the summer, and even a semester off during college, and worked with salt of the earth people in Alabama, and found it to be one of the most important formational experiences in its own way in my life. What happened to me
in that preparation and performance at that concert was that I knew that
God wanted me to be someplace where people’s lives were in the middle
of upheaval. I can’t imagine anything more formational. It basically
opened my ears and my heart to hear God’s word in a way that I didn’t
know. What I heard in there was something with God saying, “I need you
to be in a place where reversals are going on,” but I didn’t hear ordination
right then. So I really began to think a lot about - what does that mean -
where I’ve been kind of in this stratosphere of music doing stuff that
nobody ever heard of, and picking up stuff out of the Harvard Music
Library that nobody ever listened to. Nowadays, you hear a lot more of it,
but in 1982 or ’83 there wasn’t much of that music being sung, except the
English stuff, and even some of that we did was really obscure. We were
doing pre-Reformation English music out of a collection that had just been
published by composers that no one had ever heard of.

Andy: It was your job to bring it to light, see?

Bp. Waldo: That’s exactly right, and I would say that all that musical formation I had
at home, and in the choirs I sang in, was…no, I got into early music…I
didn’t go in as an antiquarian who wanted merely to recreate music of an
earlier age. I went into early music because I absolutely loved it and I
wanted other people to love it, and to hear the message…no, to experience
the life that I felt doing it. It’s like my family, you know Mark, so you
know we’re all…I don’t know that you’ve ever seen us all together...

Andy: No.

Bp. Waldo: …but it’s pretty wild.

Andy: I can imagine.

Bp. Waldo: And when the cousins and aunts and uncles get in, it just multiplies. It’s
mostly from my mother’s side, and there’s just a sense that being
alive…and, of course, the Irenaeus quotation, “Gloria Dei vivens homo,” The glory of God is humanity fully alive, is kind of the guiding principle.

Andy: Take it to heart.

Bp. Waldo: Right, so I think it was the Fall of ’83, and by that point I thought maybe
it’s ordination, it must be ordination, and I went to the Commission on
Ministry of New Hampshire, which was where we lived. I was two weeks
out from playing with the Boston Camarata at Carnegie Hall, and one of
the things we were doing was a really cool sort of jazzy improve thing on
Greensleeves. The Commission on Ministry asked me to tell them about
my music. I got so excited telling them about all these cool things we’re
going to be doing that they came back to me and said, “you know, we’re
not sure you’re ready to leave music. Come back next year.” And I was like, “Ahhhhhh.”

Andy: Commissions on Ministry are good at doing these things.

Bp. Waldo: That’s right, so it ended up being, probably, the best thing that ever happened because it did really give me cause to go very deeply into things. My father, at one point, when I was very confused about what God was calling me to do, just said, “Well, just go read the last verse of Isaiah 40,” which is “Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” It just made me stop and go quiet, and that’s exactly what I needed. A lot more clarity came several months into that turn.

Andy: So you started Sewanee in the Fall of ’85?

Bp. Waldo: Fall of ’85, right. I went back to the Commission on Ministry in the Fall of ’84, still conducting that choir, and yet, now, in fact, conducting with a much deeper sense of purposefulness because now I was reading and listening to scripture in new ways. And reading…wonder if you’ve ever read any of Urban Holmes’ stuff, “Ministry and Imagination,” “Spirituality for Ministry,” things like that. But they really spoke to me, brought that Magnificat and the work of the priesthood into my kin in a way. I had only been on the outside of it, when I was growing up and watching my dad, and it brought me inside. So the purposefulness with which my music was lived was even greater, but I’ve talked more about the choral stuff, but the recorder itself…I used to commission new works for the recorder, and also play very wild, weird contemporary music on the recorder. I still play. My wife and I play together. We perform with our son who is a cellist and getting his Doctorate, getting a DMA in cello at the University of Wisconsin. His wife is a concert pianist and they have a piano/cello duo, and they’re phenomenal. He also plays Baroque cello and viola da gamba so when we play concerts, he plays the bass.

Andy: He is the walking bass.

Bp. Waldo: Right. We now have, probably, 50 recorders, some costing more than $5, and many, many handmade instruments. And even as I look into the…I’m 64 now, so old enough to be at least seeing a horizon in which I will do other things than this, down the road a few years. We know these really fun, handmade recorder consorts for doing Renaissance music. The best ones have three to four year waiting periods, and so we are to get a matched consort, but the really big guns, the biggest ones, are like ten feet tall. Already we begin thinking of cases we want to look at for making something like that so that we can pull people together to do that music because, in the end, playing that instrument which…the human voice is probably the most direct, most organic of all the instruments because
there’s no embouchure. The business end of the instrument is made by the recorder maker, and so there’s this really direct connection between ones diaphragm and the vibrations of the instrument, which are also extended out to your fingertips when you’re playing. I think it has been in recent years that I have really come to appreciate most deeply that the recorder is my deepest form of prayer.

Andy: It’s an extension of the voice.

Bp. Waldo: It’s an extension of the voice and, yet,..you get to where you know your instruments as individuals and I can, in my mind’s eye, look at every single one of my instruments and know what its quirks are, what its strengths are, what it feels like to play, and how I sometimes have to bend my will to the instrument in order to make it sound the way it’s called to sound. I have to submit. Interestingly, about a year and a half ago, one of my old recorder playing friends from Boston days, back 35 years ago, somebody I’ve stayed in touch with on Facebook and, just on a whim - I sold her in instrument way back then, a Renaissance alto – I said, “Sandy, you don’t by any chance still have that alto I sold you? I was just thinking about, remembering, how it had all these quirks and whatnot.” And she said, “That’s exactly the instrument. I hadn’t played it in 35 years,” and I described it perfectly for her and she says, “you know, I’m not playing it, you can have it back.” So she put it in the mail and sent it to me. I was just playing it two days ago.

Andy: Would you find that the particular instrument you play would dictate the type of prayer you might pray at that time?

Bp. Waldo: I would say it’s more likely the particular music group that I’m going to play would dictate…well, no, I don’t know, because…I have one alto that I got from Holland, in ’81 or something like that, and it’s an instrument that’s in modern pitch instead of Baroque pitch. I don’t know if you know about modern pitch and Baroque pitch, but Baroque pitch tended to be a half step lower (than modern pitch),

Andy: OK

Bp. Waldo: and in the 16th century about a half step higher than modern pitch. At any rate it’s an instrument that I would describe as having a kind of thin sound, but it also is one that if you’re playing contemporary music will play all the multphonics and I can do contemporary music in a way that I can’t do on a Baroque instrument – but, that I don’t like as much, let me put it that way – on a Baroque instrument. So it might be if I’m in a place, a dark place, and I want to play a piece that, say, starts on a note that sounds like a scream, I’ll get that instrument out.
Andy: That’s your go to.

Bp. Waldo: Because I can feel the scream.

Andy: Right.

Bp. Waldo: And also know that contemporary stuff is so technically challenging that it requires a kind of focus. I really have to submit to the instrument, and to the music. If I am in a more contemplative place, I will probably…one instrument that’s kind of a go to instrument for me is a Renaissance soprano that I have and which I will play. There was a blind Dutch carillon and recorder player, and organist, in 17th century Holland who would take either psalm tones or popular tunes of the day and write divisions on them, and he published them. Many of them are very contemplative sounding, and the instrument (my Renaissance soprano), even though it was instrument number one, built by an amateur builder—it was a beginner’s luck deal that people all through my career would say, “where’d you get that instrument? I want one like that.” Just an amazing instrument. If I want to play something joyful I might pop out some Baroque music and get a low pitched Baroque soprano out and do that, or an alto, or whatever. I really just depends on what I want to do, or else Mary and I will play some Renaissance duets or trios. We have a friend here who plays with us sometimes. And so we do all those things and they bring great life to me. When I would do my silent retreat every year at the monastery in Cambridge, or at Emory House out in the country, their other house, if I can, if they have a place where I can go to play recorder without disturbing everybody else’s silence, I take them and go and do that. I don’t always have the space to do it. Depends what’s going on.

Andy: One of the questions I had was about what programs have you implemented deal with music, and you told me about the choir, the choral group you started. Another question that comes to mind as I’m listening to you, and you tell me, would it be fair to say that your going into music and graduate school and the starting of this choral group…the impetus was not so much the spiritual formation but it became formational later?

Bp. Waldo: I would say that’s probably true about the recorder playing.

Andy: OK.

Bp. Waldo: The choral stuff…by the time I started that choir I was back in the faith.

Andy: OK, so it very much had a formational feel.

Bp. Waldo: Yeah, I think at that point it was partly a way for me to express my new found faith, but it also simultaneously shaped my new found faith. It pushed me in directions. Here’s kind of an interesting example: There is a
medieval piece that we sang called “Three Good Friends,” and it’s a three
part medieval piece, very cheerful, and as in many medieval motets the
lowest line was what they call the tenor, and it’s in slower notes and it’s
usually based on some known chant, as was the case with this one, some
 sacred piece. The top voice of the piece was talking about all the
wonderful bishops and prelates and all this glorification of the church.
Well, the piece was a satire because the middle line, the text was all about
how corrupt the church is so a person listening to it might be deceived
about what actually was going on.

Andy: The middle line is Dante speaking.

Bp. Waldo: Right? And, for me, it was formational in the sense that…it was just
another example of how the holy and the unholy mingle in ways that are
sometimes hard to tell, and require some real close listening to do a proper
discernment.

Andy: I like that, that’s good.

Bp. Waldo: You said something a minute ago when you first started…you were going
to ask me about…

Andy: Oh, programs you have implemented that deal with music and formation.

Bp. Waldo: Yeah, yeah. I just want to say something about that because, as a priest, I
did…we actually implemented a parish orchestra, and the only condition
was that you had to be able to sight read the hymns, whatever part you got.
You had to know your instrument well enough to do that. The only
rehearsal was the morning of the liturgy. Therefore you show up for the
rehearsal – and you could get out of Sunday School early to do that – and
you’d learn the parts that day and it really depended on who showed up is
what we got. So we’d sometimes get a set of drums and a trumpet, or
we’d get a viola and a saxophone or something, but it was a way…you’d
be amazed at how many kids who otherwise were not involved in liturgy
wanted to do that.

Andy: That brought them in.

Bp. Waldo: And it was every single Sunday. It wasn’t just a performance, it was their
way of participating in the liturgy. After about three years that group, and
some of the kids who had been doing it for a while, got a little older and
there were some other ones who played plucked strings like guitar or
banjo or mandolin who wanted to do something, and they didn’t want to
do the hymns. So it moved from that into a Celtic band and they were
doing Irish fiddle tunes and things during communion.

Andy: Where was this, what parish?
Bp. Waldo: This was Trinity Episcopal Church in Excelsior, Minnesota. I served there as Rector for 15 and a half years. You know that contemporary piece I was talking about, that starts on a scream?

Andy: Yes.

Bp. Waldo: So it happened that there were about four years in there when we had a woman who was experienced in liturgical dance - as a choreographer, and had a couple of daughters who liked to do it – and a composer in residence. The composer wasn’t on staff, she was just a member who wrote stuff, wrote the Excelsior Communion setting which we used for many years, and one of the key elements of it was a descant for the kids to sing. I’ll tell you about the recorder piece in just a minute, but the Excelsior Communion setting we did for ages. Oh, and we also had Sunday school music. That’s right, oh gosh, we did a ton of stuff there. We had our musician, whose name was Tim Frazier, who has at least one of these… in the four hundreds in the Service music (in the hymnal), in the supplemental thing, he’s got a couple of psalm tone settings. He had been a Catholic seminarian who became a musician and he had a rector who was a musician and became a priest, and we worked really well together. A lot of great theological stuff happening. We started a Sunday school music program where the kids learned how to do Sunday school songs. So we did some of the old-timey ones, we did some newer ones, but they learned the hymns. With the Excelsior Communion setting we had a descant that they learned. We did not have the kids sing up front, except every now and then, but we had them sing out in the pews where they were with their families, separated from each other. I will never forget the Sunday when I first heard a hymn that we were singing and I heard the children’s voices louder than the adults. My jaw just dropped. It was so beautiful, coming up from the congregation. We used to train children cantors and, again, we wouldn’t have them come up front and cantor, we had them do it from wherever they were. So every now and again the fraction anthem, if it were a chanted fraction anthem, might come from the torchbearer who was standing on the side of the altar next to me, but I never knew where it was going to come from. It might have been a 14 or 15 year old boy at the back of the room who would sing it, or occasionally there was a couple in their eighties who loved to do it, and they’d do it together. The whole experience of making that music part of the community was incredibly formational for everybody. At least one of those kids is now still singing and I think she starts seminary in the fall.

Andy: So the tool in this sense really became inclusion.

Bp. Waldo: That’s right.
Andy: Just by inclusion you’re experiencing the service in a way you didn’t before and now it’s beginning to shape you.

Bp. Waldo: Well, look at it this way: we had about four years into my time at Trinity, Excelsior…When I got there we had two sanctuaries. The old 1862 chapel that maxed out at 110 people. Then there’s the main sanctuary that maxed out about 330, but 75 people would come to church on Sunday. They had had just all kinds of bad stuff happen in the years before I got there, it was just decimated, and we had to pull it back together. One of the first things we did was to make sure the children stayed in worship through the whole thing, we didn’t march them out. I started there in 1994 and by the time I got to, I think, 2001, we had 120 kids in the congregation. Four years in, however, parents were coming in and saying, “we need more contemporary music or our kids are going to leave.” Jim and I…Jim, who’s an expert in 19th century French organ music, and I, an expert in 16th century instrumental and choral music…looked at each other and said, “Oh, crap!” We didn’t even know what it sounds like.

Andy: Yeah, what’s contemporary?

Bp. Waldo: You say contemporary and I think about the screaming (as in the recorder piece), you know, I don’t think of guitars and all that, at least in terms or repertory that I know. So that was when he and I began to say…all right, let’s figure out how to do this so that the kids that we have are included. That was when the orchestra started. That was when the Sunday school music started. That was also when a liturgical dance group started. Such that when we did…I’ll never forget this…We did a Palm Sunday procession. We went into the parish hall and blessed the palms and started the procession, and in the procession were all the Sunday school kids. The liturgical dancers were up front, about seven of them, with palm fronds in their hands, and all the children in the Sunday school put on their Christmas pageant outfits and carried palms, but they also carried extra bundles of clothes with them. They lead us into the main sanctuary and as the children went up the aisle they dropped their palms and garments on the ground. So by the time the adults came in the ground was covered in palm fronds and garments, and the dancers were going around the outside of the pews dancing, and it was just magical. Then in the Sunday school music, Jim would…OK, everybody cries when they sing “Jesus loves me this I know,” right? Jim, not wanting to do it straight…do you know what aleatoric music is?

Andy: No.

Bp. Waldo: Aleatoric music is when you have one person who starts playing a phrase. Let’s say this phrase has ten notes in it and their particular version of these
ten notes are spread out over five bars. OK? With their own rhythm and all that kind of stuff. Another person has the same sequence of notes but, in their case, they repeat it every two bars. The five bar one repeats every five bars and the other one repeats every two bars. Somebody else has the same thing over three bars, but with different rhythms. It creates a very sort of random sound, but there’s a real structure to it. So he got kids with Orff instruments and percussion – little kids, like ages 6 or 7 – and spread them out around the room. In these days, the sanctuary there, before we redesigned it, was standard pews with the center aisle and aisles on the sides, and a raised front – very 1970s, dark. He put the kids around the edge of the room with these instruments – a xylophone or shakers or block. There was aleatoric rhythms in there and the rhythms would also happen over different intervals. He got them starting off and you begin to hear those sounds and everybody in the room is looking around. One little girl looked up at her mom and said, “I hear angels.” Then the other children doing Sunday school music came in singing “Jesus loves me this I know” to aleatoric…it was just magical. It’s very dependent on people who want to put in the kind of time and have the skill to make it work.

Andy: Right, but in the same sense the children’s reaction and, I would assume some of the parents’ reaction, or other congregants’ reaction…

Bp. Waldo: I didn’t hear a word about contemporary music for ten years.

Andy: Well, they were formed by that themselves.

Bp. Waldo: Right. It was not at all about what kind of music, it was about how their kids were engaged.

Andy: We didn’t want to lose the kids.

Bp. Waldo: They didn’t want to lose the kids. Chant…as a bishop, when I have clergy conferences, I’ve always said when you chant, it’s not the same as singing a British anthem. You don’t have to roll your Rs, you don’t have to screw up your mouth. I know how to do all that…I’ve done all that. What you do is you make sound that is as transparent as it can be. I teach a chant workshop for clergy about this at clergy conferences. I just get them to think about what’s being said, and then to let what’s being said come out as naturally as possible with little artifice because you don’t want people in the congregation thinking, “is he going to make it,” or, “listen to that wobble,” or, “what a raspy voice,” or whatever or, “I don’t think he practiced this enough,” kind of thing. It’s important if you’re going to chant to learn it and be able to do it. Or just do a monotone chant otherwise, but learn to do it in such a way that it’s as if you are speaking with notes.
Andy: But not even everybody can do that.

Bp. Waldo: Not everybody can do that. The workshops inspired one of my clergy, who is meeting with me tomorrow, or early next week, about a chant workshop...have you ever heard of the group Anonymous 4?

Andy: Yes,

Bp. Waldo: One of those singers...they just recently finally disbanded after 20 or 30 years...and one of those singers was a Conservatory classmate of mine and Mary’s, and she’s coming down here and we’re going to have a Diocesan chant workshop with an Anonymous 4 singer helping to lead it. When my son, the cellist, was in New York City, before he moved out to Madison, the two of them...she sometimes does chant improvisation...so we’re going to bring him down and they’re going to do one of their old improvisations. I say old, but it’ll be new because that’s the way they do it. They’re going to be a part of it in that way, but she’s going to be teaching about chant and that stuff. So part of my ongoing thing is to get us away from thinking of chant as something we do because the church does that and, instead, to do it because we are praying it, and that is a natural way for us to pray. A way that gets us, as clergy especially, out of the way. Thomas Morely, have you ever heard the name Thomas Morely?

Andy: Oh yeah, yeah.

Bp. Waldo: I don’t mean the Caribbean guy. Thomas Morely was one of the copyists, music copyists, to Queen Elizabeth I.

Andy: Right.

Bp. Waldo: And he wrote a book called, in 1596 or 1597, I forget which, called “A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music.” In that book he says, “The ditty should draw the hearer, as it were, in chains of gold by the ears to the consideration of holy things.” That’s what we need to do, draw the hearers in chains of gold by the ears to the consideration of holy things.

Andy: You make a good point, too, just liturgically speaking, overall the priest needs to get out of the way a lot of the time.

Bp. Waldo: Well, I teach that once you start a congregational prayer you don’t need to be shouting anymore.

Andy: Right.

Bp. Waldo: It’s a great moment for you to listen to the voices of your parishioners and listening as a metaphor.

Andy: You would have had Marion when you were at Sewanee, I’m assuming.
Bp. Waldo: I did. In fact, when I was at Sewanee Marion had a really strong grip on the program. I’m really thankful for it. I had six semesters of liturgical theology, history and theology, six semesters of liturgics practicum, and I was a sacristan.

Andy: And you were in the Pit. You were one of the first groups over there, if you can call that liturgical space.

Bp. Waldo: Right. So that was a really, obviously, a very important time for me to take all those things that I brought with me from being a conservatory teacher and performing musician into that environment.

Andy: Working on the D.Min. program now, one of the classes I took was with Louis Weil, and Louis was famous for saying we need to get out of the way. We need to do our job, but we need to get out of the way of ourselves.


Andy: And he talked a lot about what he called liturgical hangover.

Bp. Waldo: By which he meant what?

Andy: Carrying things over from ancient times that has no use anymore, it doesn’t mean anything. Why do we do this when it doesn’t mean anything anymore? Don’t do it.

Bp. Waldo: Right.

Andy: All you’re doing is getting people to look at you or you want them to see this crazy action you’re doing which doesn’t add to the liturgy, in fact it takes away from it.


Andy: Priests are really good at doing those things.

Bp. Waldo: Our family heritage is a little bit Low Church. Francis Whittle, who was bishop of Virginia in the late 19th century, is Mark’s and my great-great-great uncle, and he was the guy responsible for Virginia’s Low Church reputation. Peter Lee tells me that on his deathbed, Bishop Whittle said, “My only regret in life is that I was unable to rid the earth of the scourge of Anglo-Catholicism.” But, of course, I don’t feel that way. I chant, obviously. I’m not in the same place as he was, but his simpler approach to the liturgy was consonant with what Marion taught at some level, I mean, at least in its deeper principles if not in its particular actions.

Andy: I grew up in the Midwest, in what we called the Biretta Belt.

Bp. Waldo: OK.
Andy: My leanings were always a little more on the higher side because that’s what everybody did.

Bp. Waldo: Right.

Andy: That’s what I grew up with, my father was that way and I was very formed by that.

Bp. Waldo: Right, well, of course. I was at SSJE.

Andy: But I also know where it can be ridiculous to the point that it doesn’t help anything.

Bp. Waldo: Well, that’s Louis Weil’s point. I do appreciate the reverence that comes with Anglo-Catholicism.

Andy: I have to ask you one last question, that I’ve been asking everyone, who is your go-to composer?

Bp. Waldo: It’s kind of a toss-up between Claudio Monteverdi and J.S. Bach. I’d say if push really came to shove it would be Monteverdi.

Andy: Monteverdi would fit in with the recorder for sure.

Bp. Waldo: Well, even Bach would. He used some recorders really wonderfully in several of his cantatas and a couple of his Brandenburgs and what not.

Andy: Thank you very much for your time.


Andy: Bye.

Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#1

Collector: Web Link 2
(Web Link)

Started: Sunday, August 06, 2017 7:39:32 PM
Last Modified: Sunday, August 06, 2017 7:41:00 PM
Time Spent: 00:01:27
IP Address: 174.223.11.229

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,
At what age(s)?: 6

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes,
Please describe why or why not: :
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?  
Yes, 
Please describe why or why not. :

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?  
Greatly

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  
Yes
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Ggg

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Gff
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#2

Collector: Web Link 2 (Web Link)

Started: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:47:19 AM

Last Modified: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:50:26 AM

Time Spent: 00:03:06

IP Address: 162.226.49.139

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,

At what age(s)?

As an adult

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Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Yes

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Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

5

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Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes

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Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Respondent skipped this question
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Music can transport people in ways mere words cannot.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? No

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Vital.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Respondent skipped this question
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#3

Collector: Web Link 2 (Web Link)

Started: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:46:45 AM
Last Modified: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:51:23 AM

Time Spent: 00:04:37
IP Address: 24.73.186.202

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? Respondent skipped this question

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? No, Please describe why or why not: Choristers are not members of the parish and seem more committed to "performance" than ministry.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, Please describe why or why
Congregation seems to enjoy most offerings but will frequently state the anthem was too formal or missed because it was sung in Latin. When there is an explanation from the choir, it seems to have more of an impact on the congregation.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?
For us, it ties the readings and the prayers together.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?
Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
To support the act of worship.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
I think this could be developed more than it has traditionally been understood in the parish. The music of the parish seems to be a stand alone of the overall parish life.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#4

Collector: Web Link 2 (Web Link)
Started: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:46:37 AM
Last Modified: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:55:10 AM
Time Spent: 00:08:32
IP Address: 99.0.62.103

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? Respondent skipped this question

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not: I think binds them together in a close fellowship.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, Please describe why or why not: 
It is definitely an inspiring part of our worship. However our congregation prefers that the choir not vest or process in or out.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?  

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?  

For a large parish to be successful there must be many small groups. The choir is definitely one of these. Our choir is an aid to congregational singing as well as providing some special music.
Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

The choir as a small parish group is inspiring to others and the music they provide is deeply appreciated. It is important to us also that it not overpower congregational singing. Because congregational singing is important to us, we have never considered having an organ.

A piano seems to us much more helpful to congregational singing than an organ.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#5

Collector: Web Link 2 (Web Link)

Started: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:51:08 AM
Last Modified: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:57:08 AM
Time Spent: 00:06:00
IP Address: 164.111.99.105

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,
At what age(s)?:
6-16 years old

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
Yes

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?
5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?
Yes,
Please describe why or why not. :
Yes I believe this is a way to participate in worship, to
experience joy in life, and a way to learn to work together with others.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not:

Music touches the soul in ways mere words cannot.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

It helps us to be present, to experience God’s presence, even if for a moment.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

They are a part of the worship leadership and inspiration.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Music provides a way for our hearts to be touched as well as a way to learn good theology.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation  
SurveyMonkey

#6

Collector: Web Link 2 (Web Link)

Started: Monday, September 25, 2017 10:56:11 AM

Last Modified: Monday, September 25, 2017 11:04:08 AM

Time Spent: 00:07:57

IP Address: 45.21.52.62

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

study, scripture, but more than anything an experience of longing for God in my life

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes, Please describe why or why not.:

I believe choristers delve more deeply into the words of the music and can, and do, learn a lot from what they sing. Also, since choristers are, generally, musically inclined people, the
ability to worship and help lead worship in song speaks to their souls in a way that worship without music could/would not.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not. :

I believe that people often learn more of their personal theology from the songs that they sing (and especially those they know by heart) than they often do from reading or preaching (sadly). Even some of those parishioners that left the Baptist church decades ago have a difficult time letting go of "questionable" theology because it is part of some long-beloved hymn from their childhood.
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

It helps to engage the heart and mind in a way impossible without music. There is something that speaks directly to the soul, bypassing the mind in some ways, when we sing or listen to music.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

I can't imagine this parish without a choir. I consider my choir director my colleague in ministry to the parish and we work closely in planning worship.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

I believe that properly chosen music teaches the faith to all ages.
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

**SurveyMonkey**

**#7**

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

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Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

I did learn some about the church and the importance of worship.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

2

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes, Please describe why or why not: If we pay attention to the theology that is in the 82 Hymnal, all can have their faith enhanced.
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes,
Please describe why or why not.:
Since most of the words cannot be understood in any choral setting (unless printed) the effect comes across at an emotional level.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? Icing on the cake.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

On the positive side: Choirs often enjoy the challenge of learning music and enjoy belonging to a group within the church

On the negative side: Choirs are often dens of parish gossip, and can at times try to control the church and clergy

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Sets a mood
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

**SurveyMonkey**

#8

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**Last Modified:** Monday, September 25, 2017 11:11:04 AM

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### Page 1: Survey Questions

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**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Yes- music was and is crucial to my ongoing spiritual formation

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

3

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes, Please describe why or why not: Proper preparation means learning not only individual pieces of music, but the ins and outs of liturgy. And rehearsal of
liturgical music is itself a spiritual practice - deepening the life of prayer, deepening appreciation of beauty, etc.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes,

Please describe why or why not.:

Good choral music allows us to pray with our ears. Of course, ill-prepared or understaffed choral music can be a serious distraction as well.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

We know that music takes material into a different part of our brains. If we only say our prayers, we are not using our whole brain in the worship of God.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

The choir’s principal role is to lead and support the congregation in singing hymns and service music. They also sing an anthem, which provides an opportunity for auricular prayer.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Music is a key part of what we do in liturgy. It allows us to proclaim the Gospel in yet another way. It sometimes stretches us to pray in new ways. At its best, it transports us out of ourselves and grounds us in ourselves at the same time. It provides a tool for ongoing education.
Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

I didn’t sing, but played piano and instruments. My spiritual formation was accentuated by masses when I stumbled into an anglo-catholic service.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes, Please describe why or why not.:
The greatest music ever composed was written for the praise of Almighty God. To sing this regularly changes one to greater reverence and awe.
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?
Yes,
Please describe why or why not:
As above. Stumbling into a church where the mass was by Palestrina and the motet by Vittoria changed my life and I didn't miss a Sunday service after that day.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?
Respondent skipped this question

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?
Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

critical. I subsidize it to have a few lead singers

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Respondent skipped this question
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**  
*SurveyMonkey*

**#10**

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

**Q1** Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  
**Answer:** No

**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?  
**Answer:** Respondent skipped this question

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?  
**Answer:** 5

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  
**Answer:** Yes,  
**Please describe why or why not.**  
The choristers have told me that they often feel closest to God when they are singing and that the words they sing are meaningful prayers to them.

**Q5** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on...  
**Answer:** Yes,
the congregation? Please describe why or why not.:

It adds a different dimension to the service. The beauty of the human voice raised in song to God can be uplifting, moving, touching, sad--sometimes all at the same time!

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

For someone like me who is not a talented singer, the opportunity to join others in singing hymns and liturgical music is a real gift to me and my soul. I don’t have to be good at it--just faithful and joyful.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

The choir is a focal point of the congregation at the church where I serve. It is a source of worship, beauty, and pride. I think every member feels that the choir enhances our worship.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Music (and lyrics) can sometimes speak to people in ways that merely spoken words do not. The mood of a choral piece can contribute to the power of a day’s reading or sermon. Using music to help people worship with joy and enthusiasm can loosen them up a little bit to share in the delight of praising God. More somber pieces can aid in reflection and deep emotional response (like on Good Friday).

All of that helps the scripture and the worship teach people to find God in their midst. The community of a choir is important to the group.

The discipline and commitment of choir members can be great tools for teaching discipleship. One wonderful outcome of a talented choir is that more church leaders are formed there.
### Page 1: Survey Questions

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<td>Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?</td>
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<td>Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?</td>
<td>Yes,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please describe why or why not:</td>
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<tr>
<td>When we engage our minds, bodies, and attentions with worship through preparation, repetition, and performance,</td>
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we open ourselves up to a greater, stronger, or more significant connection with God and worship.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, please describe why or why not. Although not true for every worshipper, the performance of sacred music can evoke emotions, an experience of beauty, and a sense of awe in the congregation.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

By reiterating the biblical text, by enhancing our experience of the message by reiterating it, by creating a sense of sacred and invitation.
Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish? Primarily to facilitate congregational singing and secondarily to help congregation connect with worship during anthems

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish? Primarily in Sunday-morning worship or in the lives of those who practice in preparation for Sunday-morning worship
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#12

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES, At what age(s)? Age 10 and up

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Music has been a big part of my spiritual formation and my spiritual practice.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not.:

Music adds to the expression of and feelings associated with
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, Please describe why or why not. I only have to look at their faces to know the impact of choral music during worship.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? Music enhances the message

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

The choir enhances worship of those in the pew and strengthens a choristers own personal worship.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Music is as much of a learning tool as anything else. We try to broaden the congregation's knowledge by informing them about what they hear.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#13

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Attending chapel services on a regular basis, graduating from seminary and moving back home to Alabama.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not:

I believe music gives choristers a sense of belonging to a special community within the church. Choir members look out for each other. My youngest son started singing in the
choir when he was 9 or 10. He was welcomed in, even though he was young. Now he has “choir grandparents.” It is another way to express their faith, rather than simply showing up for worship. It takes practice -- extra work, to sound good.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not. :

I think they have some impact, although it is certainly true that not everybody likes music. Some people like music, but they don’t really want to sing all verses of long hymns. It is nice to have a choir who can “lead” congregational singing.

I think it is also good to have them perform more challenging pieces that the rest of the congregation would find too difficult. Occasionally, we will have someone play along with another instrument (other than the pipe organ) such as a flute, and people seem to enjoy that.
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

I’ve always said that the best liturgy appeals to all of our senses. We "see" the stained glass windows, we "taste" communion, we "touch" the prayer book, we "smell" the incense (well, maybe not this one!) and we "hear" the music/people’s voices. It's important, like other aspects of worship.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

The choir leads music in the congregation.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

I am only slightly more trained in music than the rest of the congregation. Other than trying to point out the ways I know music to be important, I usually leave music up to the choir director and choir.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#14

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Spiritual direction, Christian formation, Holy Eucharist

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes, Please describe why or why not.

Everything has an impact on everyone—both as a spiritual and transformative impact, I would lean toward no. Most of our choristers are paid and not members of the church. I'm
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes,

I think the congregation likes a particular style of liturgy that is reinforced by the music. At times, the congregation is frustrated with the level of difficulty or lack of familiarity in the hymn selection and feels the choir gets too much attention. At other times, the congregation finds particular anthems or chant to be moving and inspiring.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? The music at our church is carefully selected to create a certain mood or vibe. That mood contributes to the energy of the liturgy and sets a particular theme that can either encourage and motivate a congregation or leave them flat.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

The choir is a valuable part of the movement and feel of the liturgy. However, they are window dressing--they pretty things up but it is the liturgy, esp the communion, that is the most powerful part of the experience.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

We have offered programs dealing with the history of music in ecclesiastical settings that were quite popular, but other than that music is ancillary.
Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,

At what age(s)?: 3-18

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Yes

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not: It forms them in the traditions of our Anglican worship and I believe that "those who sing pray twice!" If they are
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not:

It draws them into the liturgy, and helps them be inspired by beauty. If texts and music chosen wisely, then it strengthens the focus of worship and supports the congregations formation and learning through the propers, the seasonal influence, and our call to discipleship.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

See above! I can’t imagine Sunday morning and the festival days without choral music offerings!
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<th>How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?</th>
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<td>Critical to our worship life and to spiritual formation and growth of both the choristers and the congregation.</td>
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<th>How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?</th>
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<td>It can draw us into God's divine presence of beauty and truth; it teaches through the text; it provides diversity helps us pray.</td>
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Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?
   YES,
   At what age(s)?: 10 years and up

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
   Yes, in part. It was mostly about using a talent and being active in the local church. The primary source of my spiritual formation was my engaging with the Bible.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?
   3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?
   Yes, please describe why or why not.
More often than not, a negative effect. There is a latent arrogance about the western choral tradition. That is, it’s the only way to go and anything else, as one chorister said to me, would grieve the heart of God.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, Please describe why or why not.

It can easily become a performance, so the proclamation of the person and work of Jesus Christ must be the aim. An anthem might be pretty, but espouse unbiblical teaching. (Singing an Ave Maria would be just one example.)

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

When the hymns are singable and have solid content, they’re great.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish? To help the congregation engage in corporate singing. This is number one. Performance/sound is a faraway priority, but insofar as it doesn't engage the congregation.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish? Music helps ideas stick in the mind. We want our folks, however, to not only know biblical truth, but for it to be upon their hearts.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#17

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,
At what age(s)? 13 +

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
Very much so

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?
4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?
Yes,
Please describe why or why not: Community, music as a spiritual metaphor
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, Please describe why or why not. As spiritual metaphor

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? Spiritual metaphor

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

As liturgical support

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

As a spiritual metaphor
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

**SurveyMonkey**

#18

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  **NO**

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Teaching Sunday school

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

2

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  **Yes,**

Please describe why or why not:  

Choirs form a community of faith that has a vibrant way of expressing their commonality through music.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?  **Yes,**

Please describe why or why
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

They allow us to worship through more than one means, not just a spoken or read word.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  
Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

In our current parish they help a congregation that is still learning Episcopal worship to find their way through the hymnal and additional resources.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

I personally think its essential.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#19

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,
At what age(s)?: Child and then again age 30-35

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Very much. As the son of a Southern Baptist minister, I was very familiar with the music of the SB Hymnal. Becoming Episcopalian in my early 20s allowed me to experience the comparison between the two and to appreciate the richness of Anglican theology in music.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not: 

In addition to the added sense of “ownership” a choir member has to their parish, I’ve also found choir members often more involved in educational opportunities. Having the theology of the lyrics often committed to memory with the music seems to encourage an even greater desire to ask questions and explore.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not.

Because music impacts people at a completely different level and in very different ways than preaching, Bible Study, or even the liturgy, I think choral music is an equally important transformational tool with the others listed above. Each plays a key part in congregational transformation and development.
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Music can reach into our souls, often I think, at a deeper level than conscious thought or reason. Music opens us spiritually to be able to receive information in ways other formats cannot. In many ways I think music may be one of the most effective communication tools between God and people.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

I view the role of the choir primarily as the music leaders and encouragers of the congregation. I also view their role as part of the “aspect of beauty” that is so important in our tradition.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Because of the power of music, I believe it is very important that the language of hymns or pieces of music strengthen the theme of the day. It’s easy to plug in a familiar hymn without really thinking through and praying through the words of the accompanying music. I always tried to carefully ensure the words of the music support the lessons and sermon.
Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
Acolyting and Lay Reading

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not: Hopefully it directly involves each in corporate worship

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, Please describe why or why
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

If good and godly music it feeds the soul

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Very important
Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Very important when mixed with holy silence and enthusiastic participation from true worshippers
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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

**Q1** Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  
YES, At what age(s)?: 8

**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?  
Respondent skipped this

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?  
Respondent skipped this

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  
Respondent skipped this

**Q5** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?  
Respondent skipped this
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#22

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? At what age(s)?

Deacon. Did not go to seminary.

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Yes. Also gets you used to being up front in front of people.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not.

Don't really understand your question.
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? All music has an impact on the congregation.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? Enjoyable. Sometimes hymn selection can enhance the lectionary.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Essential. Both for the choir themselves as well as the worshipers.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

I don't think we view it as a specific tool for spiritual formation. It is part of an overall package of skills and assets that enhance our ability to enhance the worship experience.
### Page 1: Survey Questions

**Q1** Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  
**NO**

**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?  
Bible study and discipleship

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?  
2

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  
Yes,  
Please describe why or why not.  
An active expression of their faith

**Q5** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?  
Yes,  
Please describe why or why not.
When done well, as is true of any area of ministry, it can help draw people into worship, into a relationship with the Lord and with one another.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Giving voice to faith and worship—engaging the congregation in the praise of God.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
Facilitating worship

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
The music and more so, the words associated with the music, can draw the community of faith into worship and can convey Scriptural and theological truth in a way that engages people.
## Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

SurveyMonkey

### #24

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### Page 1: Survey Questions

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<td></td>
<td>Very much</td>
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<th>On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Please describe why or why not. :</td>
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</table>
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?
Very much

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?
Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
Extremely important
Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

It reiterates the theme, calms or invigorates and accentuates the liturgy
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#25

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Benedictine Spirituality and balance in prayer and sacramental life.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not. :

It is an important part of Anglican sacred music that should be involved in worship. However, the size of a Worshipping community is important. For a small congregation less than
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not.

It has an impact but not always positive if it is all about performance.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Because music is prayer.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

It enhances the sacredness and prayerfulness of worship.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Yes
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

SurveyMonkey

#26

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Page 1: Survey Questions

**Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?**

**YES,**

At what age(s)?

15

**Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?**

Yes.

**Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?**

5

**Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?**

**Yes,**

Please describe why or why not.

Much as reading scripture draws us into a deeper, more thoughtful relationship with God, so singing sacred music...
exposes us to the meaning, theology, and importance of the texts, and through skilled conducting we absorb the dynamics of singing the texts correctly. Exposure to the emotional and psychological dynamics of sacred singing reinforces the “heartfelt-ness” of our faith, helping us to grow spiritually.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, please describe why or why not.

Hymnody is the “theology of the person in the pew.”

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

By appealing to our wider range of senses, giving color and texture to the worship experience and reinforcing its emotional impact.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Foremost, to lead the congregation in singing hymns and other liturgical music. Second, to thematically support the message of the text, season, and sermon.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Good music draws people more deeply into the liturgical experience, awakens their desire to worship actively, and helps in teaching scriptural and/or theological truths.
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

SurveyMonkey

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

**Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?**  
YES,  
At what age(s)?:  
8 - 42

**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?  
Yes, absolutely

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?  
5

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  
Yes,  
Please describe why or why not.:  
We pay a small stipend to some key choir members, which
draws non-church members to our choir. Nearly every year I have choir members show up in our Inquirer’s class wanting to get confirmed. Most are so moved by the kind of church music we do, they want to join us for keeps. (I’d like to think it was the brilliant preaching, but I know better!)

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, Please describe why or why not.

Choral music is part of the numinous, mysterious experience of the holy. In my Cursillo reunion group, almost every week someone says the choir anthem was their moment closest to Christ.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Music moves people emotionally and spiritually, and the words are tied to the lessons, so that our worship services have a consistent theme. Music also helps mark the church seasons.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

For most of the members of the choir, singing together is a significant part of their worship experience ... they share their gifts and offer them to God. For the congregation, the choir helps lead the worship. And culturally, it may be the only time the congregation hears music that is not digitally or electronically enhanced ... it’s pure.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

1) sung words are more easily remembered and internalized than words that are merely heard or read. 2) music promotes participation in worship. 3) singing together is a living symbol of the bond of the Body of Christ and its shared mission 4) familiar hymns and anthems become part of life-long worship, stretching across generations.
Page 1: Survey Questions

| Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? | YES, At what age(s)?: 7-adulthood |
| Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? | Yes, I sang and played the piano. The songs of my childhood are engraved in the tablets of my memory and have served as spiritual guidance through my whole life's spiritual formation, as are the songs of my adulthood. |
| Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? | 5 |
| Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? | Yes, Please describe why or why not: Yes, the music and the lyrics offer a profound message for |
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, please describe why or why not.

As noted above, the music and lyrics send a profound spiritual/theological message. I find it all the more powerful if the liturgical music correlates with the lectionary and of course the liturgical season.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

From my experience, music deepens the worship experience, allowing the message to be felt at a profound level. Music also allows the message to continue in the hearts of the congregation after the worship experience.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
The choir is an essential element of the worship team and worship experience.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
Music is an essential element for Spiritual Formation, spiritual deepening, also for understanding a variety of spiritual experiences. For example, it is meaningful to expose a congregation to Taize, Alleluia III, or Lift Every Voice and Sing... very different music traditions, but powerful additions to the traditional hymnal. It allows discussion and deepening of the individual's and the congregation's Spiritual Formation.
Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
I play an instrument if that is what you mean.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes,
Please describe why or why not.
What? If they had no choral music they would not be choristers. So, I guess the music does have an impact. Weird question as is the spiritual one above.
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, please describe why or why not. Much better question. The congregation loves to sing and the music sets a good spiritual and emotional tone.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? See above.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Partners in the worship experience.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Send many to Cursillo where the music is very important, also, use music to set tone, atmosphere, emotion.
## Pages 1: Survey Questions

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<td>Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation?</td>
<td>Definitely.</td>
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<td>Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?</td>
<td>Yes,</td>
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<td>Please describe why or why not.</td>
<td>The choir here feeds on the presence of the Spirit through</td>
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our music and considers it a ministry to share that sense of the Spirit.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not. :

The music has had a significant role in building up our congregation.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

The music ties in the lectionary themes, but mostly enhances the sense of joy and reverence.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

The choir is considered a core leadership role in our worship.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Music is a tool for nurturing and engaging the people.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#31

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  Yes,

At what age(s)?: 34

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Yes

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not.:

They vest and process and are therefore visibly part of the liturgy.
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, please describe why or why not:

Having a choir encourages people in the nave to sing more loudly.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

1. Music slows down the experience of hearing the word, and is perceived more meditative than the word spoken. 2. Psalms were designed to be sung. 3. The poetic character of prayer is often better conveyed by song or chant than by recitation of prose.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

My parish is too tiny to have a choir.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Of course music is a tool for teaching as well as prayer. I view it as essential.
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

SurveyMonkey

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

**Q1** Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  
YES, At what age(s)?: 20's - 30's

**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?  
Clearly it helped.

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?  
4

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  
Yes, Please describe why or why not.: Varies - some find the impact negatively stressful (especially volunteer choirs) if the music is technically difficult. With a
well-skilled choral director, that is eased a good bit. With well-trained singers, and those with some training, it often elevates their experience - both spiritually and in the singing craft.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, Please describe why or why not. :

However, this is greatly dependent upon the congregation. If the choir takes over too much, and omits too much of the congregational singing, some congregations feel deprived and resent this. Most congregations enjoy this to a degree. Poorly done, however, takes away from the worship experience in a major way.
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Music is always used when words alone cannot describe what people feel. It brings experiences to a more full expression. Music - simple or elaborate - is only an addition when it is sung reasonably well, and within the abilities of the parish choir. Selecting appropriate music for the size and quality of the singers is essential.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

To enhance the worship - not to overtake it. The choir is one part of the worship ministry - not the entirety of it.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

It can be very helpful, often by giving greater meaning to the stories in scripture and theological understanding. It is one of many tools to be used when and how best suited for the parish, the topic, the worship style, etc. It needs to speak to the people and the time we are in - not to say that all 14th Century music is off limits, but if it doesn't connect with the people, it detracts from their worship and spiritual experience.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Even though I didn't sing in a choir I loved singing in church, daily meditations and Bible readings, retreats.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes,

Please describe why or why not:

I believe those who sing in the choir, sing because they love music and love to sing. It is part of their soul.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on... Yes,
the congregation? Please describe why or why not.

God speaks to everyone in different ways, and he uses music as well as the readings. Once again, it touches the soul.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

It gives the worship a deeper feeling and connection.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
As a ministry.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
It goes hand in hand with the readings and sermon.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES, At what age(s)? 5 - 18

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? yes

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not. Music is formative and shapes the heart--as well as conveys
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, please describe why or why not:

Practically, when congregational singing is supported by a choir, members of the parish are emboldened/inspired to sing and can catch on to a tune more easily, esp if they do not read music already. As with the choristers, music forms and shapes the heart and permits worshipers to experience emotions that words alone cannot inspire.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Please see above.
Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?
Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
Members of the worshiping community; artists who are offering special gifts; teachers/leaders who help us praise God with our own voices and preserve/re-introduce us to ways that the church has offered praise throughout its history; ministers of worship.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
Respondent skipped this question

Formation in your parish?
### Page 1: Survey Questions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?</th>
<th>YES,</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At what age(s)?</td>
<td>18-35</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother was choir director and took me to rehearsals from the time I was born - music is my first language for God</td>
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| Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? | 5 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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<tr>
<th>Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Please describe why or why not. :</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;He who sings prays twice&quot;</td>
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</table>
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? 

Yes, please describe why or why not.

Embodied theology beyond spoken word

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Beauty, variety, emotion

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
Essential

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
Essential to learning our heritage
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#36

Collector: Web Link 2

Started: Tuesday, September 26, 2017 10:28:22 AM
Last Modified: Tuesday, September 26, 2017 10:42:44 AM
Time Spent: 00:14:22
IP Address: 71.45.198.220

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,
At what age(s)?
12 - 18, 23 - 30. I've also sung in the choir since ordination on special occasions.

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? Definitely

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes,
Please describe why or why not.
Choir members in the parishes I have served are active in a...
variety of ministries beyond the choir. In the two parishes where we have offered scholarships to college students, many of these young people have been confirmed after joining the choir.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not.:

Music is an important part of our liturgy on equal footing with every other part. Even the person who doesn’t sing appreciates and values the beauty of choral music and the impact it has on our worship and spirituality. A beautiful anthem gives us a glimpse of the Heavenly choirs.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation  
SurveyMonkey

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?</th>
<th>It's one more expression of the Word.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?</td>
<td>As worship leaders who lead us in the music and responses in the liturgy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?</td>
<td>Music is clearly an historical part of the liturgy of the church and so any class should include music history. Hymns help tell the story of so many of the feasts and illustrate the message of the Scripture readings for the day.</td>
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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,

At what age(s)?
22-25

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Yes, it was formative to sing in a choir as a way of entering more fully into a new church community.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes,

Please describe why or why not.

Choir is ministry, and I speak to choir members as fellow ministers with some specific jobs: they are called to (1)
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? 

Yes, Musical is another way that God speaks to our soul. I guess music appeals to us and speaks to us in a way that scripture and sermons can’t.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

It brings glory to God by offering yet another gift (our voice in song) that we can bring to worship.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
Vital. See answer above on a choir’s ministry.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
We review and reflect on a Hymn text as a part of our Adult Sunday School class (in addition to reviewing the Lectionary readings for that Sunday).
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#38

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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?
YES, At what age(s)?
10 - 66

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
The words of the songs sung, which were scriptural, have helped me in difficult times and happy times.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?
4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?
Yes, Please describe why or why not.
Coming together, as community, helps develop personality,
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not.

Some, but not all. Congregations that have more than one service and one doesn’t have music will attract people who aren’t interested in the enhancement music can and does bring to the worship.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Everyone is not reached/touched in the same way. The minister may preach a great sermon but some will leave humming the hymn.
Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

They sing from September through May and because I know the songs, they bless. I am not sure the words are clear enough for some to receive the message.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

I think it is helpful but some would like to see other forms, i.e., Cursillo used in regular worship.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#39

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? Respondent skipped this question

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?
Music helps open all of us to the Spirit of God...through our emotions, senses, etc...
Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?  
To help lead the worship (not just the music)

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?  
Music is prayer, it helps us learn scripture, like learning the ABC’s by singing a tune
Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  
YES, At what age(s)? 8-22

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?  
the college experience because that was my first experience in liturgical music

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?  
3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  
Yes

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?  
Yes
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

The music underscores the spiritual themes of the day.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

We do not have a choir. If we did, we would have very small congregational participation. The congregation is the choir.
Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Music is important because it is the soft pillow of the worship, making for prayerful participation in the entire liturgy.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#41

Collector: Web Link 2
(Web Link)

Started: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 7:14:06 AM

Last Modified: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 7:18:14 AM

Time Spent: 00:04:08

IP Address: 73.72.232.70

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Youth group, Diocesan youth group, Camp ministries, clergy reaching out to youth.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 5

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not.

"We came for the music, but stayed for the mass." Hear this refrain over and over again from choristers and parishioners.

Have seen many choristers go through confirmation
because they first came to sing, especially coming from traditions that had no idea about the Episcopal church.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes, Please describe why or why not. 
Liturgy is meant to be musical. The soul sings better when the body sings.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?
Something different, often participatory. More about feeling, less about thinking (words.) The frozen chosen need all that they can get ;)

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Always critical, generally underfunded.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Good, but could be more effective and wider-reaching.
Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES, At what age(s)?
Youth through adulthood until I was ordained

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
Especially in seminary when I was a part of the team who chanted evensong daily

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?
2

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Adds a richness to the liturgy. Hymns offer another opportunity to share theology which internalizes.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Unfortunately our parish is so small a choir as such isn't possible.
Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Respondent skipped this question
**Page 1: Survey Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?</td>
<td>NO,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At what age(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third to Small churches it has only been an offering on special day fifth grade maybe?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?</td>
<td>Leading music on my guitar four groups at camp Mcdowell was very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?</td>
<td>Yes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe why or why not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have no clue... Although I would assume it</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes, please describe why or why not. I would think so.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Like Augustine said "he who sings prays twice"

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

No
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Smaller churches it has only been an offering on special occasions... with a regular choir it is very helpful in leading music... In music is very helpful in our liturgy.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Central... but not always in the washer itself.
### Page 1: Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?</td>
<td>YES,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At what age(s)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as an adult beginning in my 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual</td>
<td>Yes, somewhat because music touches our souls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choisters?</td>
<td>Yes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please describe why or why not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know it does because they have told me</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>so</td>
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**Collector:** Web Link 2 (Web Link)

**Started:** Thursday, September 28, 2017 3:10:36 PM

**Last Modified:** Thursday, September 28, 2017 3:14:46 PM

**Time Spent:** 00:04:10

**IP Address:** 75.120.17.74
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?  
Yes,  
Please describe why or why not.  
The congregation talks about how much they love the music and in August when the choir is "on vacation" we hear people talk about how they are missed.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?  
It is another sense touched.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  
Yes

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Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?
they are worship leaders

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?
Respondent skipped this question
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#45

Collector: Web Link 2 (Web Link)
Started: Friday, September 29, 2017 12:10:34 PM
Last Modified: Friday, September 29, 2017 12:28:57 PM
Time Spent: 00:18:23
IP Address: 47.48.166.138

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES,
At what age(s)?: Ages 5-25

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
Definitely

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes,
Please describe why or why not: Choral music exposes singers to texts from Scripture and the
Christian tradition in a powerful way. It involves the mind, heart, body, and spirit and helps to form Christian community.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,

Please describe why or why not.

Choral music has the power to elevate the words of the liturgy and the Bible. It helps teach and inspire the congregation.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Music profoundly enhances the worship experience by creating the right atmosphere, unifying the congregation, stimulating thought; and stirring the heart.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  
Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?  
The choir helps to lead the congregation in singing and enhances the congregation’s ability to worship through its offering of music.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?  
Music has the power to communicate at a higher level than the spoken word. It brings into focus the words of Scripture and tradition in a way that causes them to stick in the memory. When we sing something, we involve more of ourselves in the experience, which is why it is said that “he who sings prays twice.”
# Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

## SurveyMonkey

### #46

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

**Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?**

**YES,**

At what age(s)?:

Middle School

**Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?**

Yes

**Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?**

4

**Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?**

Yes,

Please describe why or why not. :

That often look for connections between Gospel and the music which I believe deepens understanding
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? 
Yes, please describe why or why not: Same reason as above. Plus congregation participation is essential to corporate worship.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? 
Help sets worship apart as a sacred space.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? 
Yes.
Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

To be worship leaders and enhance the overall worship experience for all congregants

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

In many ways theology, spirituality, and community are more tangible through music. We react to music in a very primal way that I believe allies are hearts to be more receptive to the Holy Spirit.
# Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation

SurveyMonkey

**#47**

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

**Q1** Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary?  
**NO**

**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?  
Respondent skipped this question

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?  
**5**

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers?  
Yes,  
Please describe why or why not:  
Transcendence of music and the musical experience comes through when the choir is in touch with the liturgy, words and music and how that contributes to the whole worship experience
Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

Yes,
Please describe why or why not.
Without it, whether they participate or not, worship is flat and one dimensional.

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Respondent skipped this question.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes.

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Respondent skipped this question.

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Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Theological teaching opportunity that clergy don't take advantage of. Too often it is left to Choir director or Music Director.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

#48

Collector: Web Link 2 (Web Link)
Started: Monday, October 02, 2017 4:08:56 PM
Last Modified: Monday, October 02, 2017 4:35:08 PM
Time Spent: 00:26:11
IP Address: 104.61.241.160

Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? YES, At what age(s)?: around 8 onwards through college

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?
I do. It probably helped me be a bit of a "choir boy" in certain situations too though :D

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 3

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not. : I think it helps people feel involved in the liturgy and be
connected with the past. At our parish, small and rural, connecting too much with the past can be a negative though. I’m not sure how the music connects with our people spiritual. Help in this area would be helpful.

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation?

No,

Please describe why or why not:

When we don’t have a choir, I’ve noticed that you can barely hear people, so I have to sing out. I’ve noticed this in many churches in many areas of the world. Part of it has to do with being nervous singing out loud, I believe. Part of it may be that people don’t realize how the music connects to the rest of the service. Perhaps we need more teaching on that, but it is hard because members of our church do not tend to go to classes no matter when in the week we hold them.
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

It helps emphasize the readings and thus the preaching and thus all of The Word of God in the service. Music, when we let it, pierces our soul in a very deep and almost indescribable way.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?

Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

As I said, without them, I feel I'd be the only one singing sometimes. Many of our choir members are also leaders of other aspects of our church life.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

While I feel our parish could connect with the music better, because it is a link to their past, a past which can sometimes be an idol, it can be used as a way to "get one’s foot in the door", so to speak. Often times, music events have been the best way to get people in the door, such as with our joint evensong with another church in the area.
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

SurveyMonkey

**#49**

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### Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? **NO**

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

As a deacon, did not attend seminary. My initial formation was through EfM and subsequently through the School for Deacons.

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? **3**

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? **Yes**

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? **Yes**

Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? **Not sure.**
Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Respondent skipped this question.

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish? Very positive.

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish? Not sure.

95 / 99
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

SurveyMonkey

#50

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

**Q1** Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? **YES,**

At what age(s)?: 6-16

**Q2** If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation?

Yes

**Q3** On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy?

2

**Q4** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? **Yes**

**Q5** Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? **Yes**
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?

Makes for a fuller worship experience.

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?

Worship leaders
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
SurveyMonkey

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

As a way to lift the spirit and allow the words of the Holy Scriptures, prayer book, and sermon to come together as a total experience.
**Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation**

**SurveyMonkey**

#51

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**Page 1: Survey Questions**

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? NO

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? Respondent skipped this question

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? 4

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? Yes, Please describe why or why not: Community, learning the theology of the hymns, opportunity to lead worship, faithfulness

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? Yes
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience?  

Respondent skipped this question

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion?  

Yes

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish?  

worship leaders

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?  

It can be very formative for many people—the opportunity to worship with music, the theology of the hymns.
Music as a Tool for Spiritual Formation
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Page 1: Survey Questions

Q1 Did you sing in a choir prior to seminary? [Respondent skipped this question]

Q2 If yes, do you feel this experience helped your own spiritual formation? If no, what else helped your own spiritual formation? [Respondent skipped this question]

Q3 On a scale of 1-5 (one being lowest and five being highest), how important is having a choir(s) to your style of liturgy? [Respondent skipped this question]

Q4 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the choristers? [Respondent skipped this question]

Q5 Do you consider choral music to have an impact on the congregation? [Respondent skipped this question]
Q6 How does music (hymns, anthems, etc.) help enhance the worship experience? Respondent skipped this question

Q7 Do you use specific hymns or anthems to help highlight a particular Holy Day of occasion? Respondent skipped this question

Q8 How do you view the role of the choir(s) in your parish? Respondent skipped this question

Q9 How do you view music as a tool for Spiritual Formation in your parish?

Simhimh from the music of liturgy and hymns from the various sources available to us, even sometimes without instrumental accompaniment
Bibliography


