

Alpharetta First
United Methodist Church

CHILDREN'S CHOIRS

Parent Handbook



HELPING CHILDREN DISCOVER THE
JOY OF PRAISE & WORSHIP
THROUGH MUSIC

Revised September 2010

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WELCOME TO CHILDREN'S CHOIR!

My name is Ann Hudson, and I am the *Director of Children and Youth Music*. I want to welcome you and your children to our **AFUMC Children's Choir Program**. We offer a comprehensive, graded choir program for children age 2 years - 5th grade that includes 11 different choirs and a 5th grade instrumental ensemble.

We believe that children who participate in choir will strengthen their faith and develop self-confidence as they learn new musical and social skills, sing in worship and participate in church wide programs like the *Children's Nativity* and *Children's All Music Sundays*. Our older choirs prepare musicals and other programs for Wednesday Night Suppers and the Children's Sunday School.

We hope that this handbook will give you an overview of our Choir Program and answer many of the questions you might have. Please feel free to call me at 770-475-5576 or email at ahudson@afumc.org if you need more information.

I still remember the songs I learned as a child - their message of love and faith continues to strengthen me today. **"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."** What better gift can we give our children? I look forward to seeing you and your children each week in choir!

Ann Hudson
Director of Children & Youth Music

Choir Names and Colors

Creation Choir - White

2 Year Olds

Cherub Choirs - Light Blue

3 Year Olds

Sonshine Choirs - Yellow

4 Year Olds

Melody Choirs - Green

Kindergarten

Carol Choir - Orange

1st Grade

Rise 'n Shine - Red

2nd Grade

Celebration Choir - Blue

3rd Grade

All God's Children - Purple

4th and 5th Grade

The Alpha Players - Teal

5th Grade Instrumental Ensemble



"Jesus loves the little children, All the children of the world."

Who Can Join Choir?

Any child, age 2 years - 5th grade can join a children's choir - you do not have to be a church member. **Choir is a great way to help friends and neighbors become involved in the church.**

How Do I Register My Children?

Children can register any Wednesday before choir on the 2nd floor of the Trinity Hall building. There will be someone at the Children's Choir Table who can help you. Every August we have a Children's Choir Registration Party with food, face painting and balloons. Registration is usually the last Wednesday in August.



When Do the Choirs Practice?



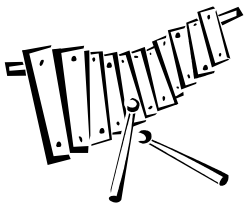
All of our Children's Choirs practice on Wednesday afternoons before the church supper. The 2 year olds - Kindergarten choirs practice from 5:30 - 6:00. The 1st - 5th grade choirs practice from 5:30 - 6:15. All rehearsals are in the Trinity Hall Building. The Children's Choir year is September through April.

How Do I Drop Off and Pick Up My Child?

All children 2 years - 1st grade must be dropped off and picked up in their choir room. Children who are in the 2nd - 5th grades can be dismissed to meet their parents. Parents of these older children need to let their directors know what your children should do.

The Children's Choir Table

The **Children's Choir Table** is located on the 2nd floor of the Trinity Hall building. Someone will be at the desk every Wednesday before and during choir rehearsals. If you need to order t-shirts or crosses, register children, get a copy of a schedule or have any other questions, please stop by the table and see Claudia Lewis or Cindy Poelking.



What Will My Child Do in Choir?



We offer a comprehensive, graded choir program at AFUMC.

Singing provides the foundation for all of our Children's Choirs. A large part of every rehearsal will be spent learning new songs, reviewing favorite songs and, in the younger choirs, playing singing games. Our goal is to help every child find their own special and unique voice. We believe the ability to "**sing your praise**" helps children express their faith and share in the joy of worship.

The younger Children's Choirs work on pitch matching, echo clapping, beat and rhythm. They also use lots of songs and activities involving movement. The older choirs learn how to follow the notes on a sheet of music or in a hymnal. By the time they reach the 4th and 5th grades most children can identify common music markings and sing from a piece of choral music. The older choirs also learn how to sing in 2 parts.

All of our choirs use **rhythm instruments**. The children learn to play hand drums, sticks, maracas, egg shakers, wood and tone blocks, guiro's, triangles and tambourines. Our 2nd grade choir children will learn how to play **Orff instruments**. These include high quality bass and alto xylophones, glockenspiels and hand drums. We also have resonator bells and autoharps.

Children in choir also learn how to lead and participate in worship. They are able to share their faith with many people in our church and community. Children gain self confidence as they participate in special programs like the Children's Nativity and choir musicals. All of our choirs will be learning scripture songs. Because music involves both sides of the brain, the scripture that a child learns to sing will never be forgotten.



Our AFUMC Children's Choirs are
**HELPING CHILDREN DISCOVER THE JOY OF PRAISE & WORSHIP
THROUGH MUSIC**



Who are the Directors and Choir Parents

All of our Children's Choir directors, accompanists and choir parents are volunteers. Ann Hudson, the Director of Children & Youth Music, is a full-time paid staff member of AFUMC. All of our volunteers participate in training workshops and have completed all the requirements of our AFUMC Child and Youth Protection Policy. AFUMC is part of the United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuary Program.

Alpharetta First United Methodist Church Child & Youth Protection Policy and Safe Sanctuary Program

All volunteers who work with children or youth, and all AFUMC church staff are required to pass a criminal background check. They must also complete a Child and Youth Protection training class. All volunteers and staff are required to renew their training every year. The safety and well-being of your children is our highest priority.

Every Child's a Winner in Choir!!!



Choir T-Shirts

All of our children's choirs have t-shirts. Each age level has a different color. The 2's wear white, the 3's wear light blue, the 4's wear yellow, the kindergarten choirs wear green, 1st graders wear orange, 2nd graders wear red, 3rd graders wear royal blue and the 4th and 5th graders wear purple.

We have a "T-Shirt Day" each October when everyone wears their shirts to choir. Some of the choirs wear their shirts when they sing in church, and everyone wears them for the fall and spring All Music Sundays.



Do I have to buy a new Choir Shirt each year?

Choir shirts can be purchased each year at the Children's Choir Registration in August. They can also be purchased at the Children's Choir Table before choir on Wednesdays.

Every year we have a different design for the choir shirts. You can purchase a new shirt for your child each year if you wish. The cost is \$8. You can also purchase new shirts from previous years for \$4 and used shirts for \$2.

It will make no difference which shirt you choose to purchase. Many families pass the shirts down through all of their children, so we always have a mix of designs. The colors do not change.

Choir Crosses

Every child, age 3 years - 5th grades, has a choir cross with their name on the back. The crosses are worn when the children sing in worship. The wooden cross has ribbons added for each year they are in choir. The ribbons match the color of each choir. (See the list of choir names and colors.)

Choir crosses are ordered when a child registers for choir the first time - the cost is \$5. The crosses are stored at the church. When a child goes into the 6th grade, or if they move, they take their cross with them.



How We Keep in Touch



You will receive cards in the mail and email reminders about choir events and special services. Most choirs will send an email reminder when your child's choir is scheduled to sing in worship. Please let us know if your home address or e-mail address changes.



Using the Church Web Site

You can always find the **Children's Choir Schedule** on the church web site. Go to afumc.org and click on **CHILDREN**. Then click on **CHILDREN'S MUSIC** and select **SCHEDULES**. You will also be able to find information rehearsals, (when and where to meet, what to wear) about the fall and spring All Music Sundays, the Children's Nativity and Christmas Eve.



Schedule Information

At registration, you will receive copies of the following schedules:

Children's Choir Fall Schedule (Includes singing for worship Oct.-Dec.)

Fall Children's Music Sunday (Warm-up times and locations)

December Schedule (Includes Children's Nativity and Christmas Eve)

You will receive a **Singing for Worship January - April** schedule in January.





Singing for Traditional Worship

All of our Children's Choirs sing for worship. When your child is scheduled to sing, you will receive a reminder that will tell you what your child should wear, what time and where they will meet.

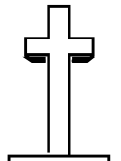
When choirs are singing in the traditional worship service, they usually warm up in the Old Fellowship Hall. The Old Fellowship Hall is located under the Chapel in the older building facing Main Street. Most choirs meet 20 - 30 minutes before they sing. Children who are in Sunday School will be picked up by the choir parents.

After the children sing they will exit the Sanctuary to remove their choir crosses. You can pick up your child in the Narthex if you would like them to sit with you in church. If you would like your child to go to God's Garden in the Old Fellowship Hall (3's and 4's at 8:30 & 11:00) or to Children's Church in the Chapel (K - 3rd at 11:00) you do not have to leave the Sanctuary. The choir parents will take all of the children not picked up to these locations. You can pick them up after worship. The 4th and 5th grade choir kids will return to the Sanctuary to sit with their families.

Singing for Vinebranch Contemporary Worship

If your child's choir is scheduled to sing in Vinebranch, our contemporary service, they will meet in the Chapel. They will warm up and remain on the risers until they sing. Most choirs meet 20 - 30 minutes before they sing. Children who are in Sunday School will be picked up by the choir parents.

After they sing, the choir will exit to the hallway behind the Chapel and remove their choir crosses. You can pick up your child in the hallway if you would like them to sit with you in Vinebranch. If you would like your child to go to God's Garden (3's and 4's at 8:30 & 11:00) or to Children's Church (K - 3rd at 11:00) you do not have to leave the Vinebranch Service. The choir parents will take all of the children not picked up to these activities and you can pick them up after worship. The 4th and 5th grade choir kids will return to the Chapel to sit with their families.



Special Sundays and Programs

During the choir year our Children's Choirs participate in several special services and programs. These are real highlights of the choir year for the children. They work very hard learning and preparing their music.

We talk with the children about the role they have in leading worship. The songs that they prepare make a real difference to many of the people in our church and community. We hope that you will always make these times a priority for your family.

Fall Children's Music Sunday



Each fall our 3 year old - 5th grade choirs provide all of the music for an 11:00 traditional service. The service is usually the last Sunday in October. The 3 and 4 year old choirs sing the Call-to-Worship and then go to God's Garden. The K - 5th grade choirs sing the offertory and anthem from the choir loft. All of the children wear their choir shirts.

After they sing, the K - 1st grade choirs are taken to the Children's Church. All of the 3 year old - 1st grade children can be picked up after the service is over. The 2nd - 5th grade choirs will remain in the Sanctuary.



Spring All Music Sunday

Every spring the 2 year old - 5th grade choirs provide all of the music for an 11:00 traditional service. The service is normally the 3rd Sunday in April. The spring **All Music Sunday** is almost all music. Each of our choirs sing their own song. There are also several combined numbers. All of the children wear their choir shirts and crosses.

The 2 year old - kindergarten choirs sing during the first part of the service. After they sing the 2 year olds will go to the 2 year old Sunday School class and the 3 and 4 year olds will go to God's Garden.. The kindergarten kids will go to Trinity Hall. The 1st - 5th grade choirs will sit in the choir loft during the service. This is a wonderful time to invite your friends and family to attend church.

Children's Nativity

One of the best loved traditions in our church is the annual Children's Nativity. Every December the 3 year old - 3rd grade choirs present a wonderful retelling of the traditional nativity story. All of the choirs wear costumes, including halos, angel wings, lambs ears and royal robes. The children wear shorts and light colored shirts under their costumes. The Nativity is the first Sunday in December.

The 2nd and 3rd grade choirs are angels, the 1st graders are shepherds, the kindergarten choirs are the children of Bethlehem, the 4 year olds are cherubs and animals and the 3 year olds are the woolly lambs. There is also the wonderful procession of the three kings. This special service reminds us of the real meaning of Christmas.



Children's Nativity Rehearsal

There is always a rehearsal for the Children's Nativity on the Saturday before the Children's Nativity. The choirs arrive at different times during the morning to rehearse their own songs. There is a complete run through around 11:00. The rehearsal is usually over by 11:30. You will receive a December Schedule at registration and in the mail that will tell you what time your child's choir will rehearse.



Christmas Eve

All of our choir children, age 3 years - 5th grade, are invited to sing for the 3:30 or 4:30 Christmas Eve Service. These candlelight services are designed for families with young children. There is a live nativity, lots of familiar carols, the reading of the Christmas story and a candle light service. Dr. Martin also preaches a short sermon.

The children meet in the Adult Choir Room on the 2nd floor of the Trinity Hall building at 3:00 or 4:00 to warm up. All of the children wear Christmas colors. After the children sing, they sit with their families.

Musicals



The 4th and 5th grade choir will be performing 2 musicals this year. In December they perform for the Children's Sunday School classes and their parents. In March they will perform for the Wednesday Night Supper.

Both musicals will involve extra rehearsal time. All parents of 4th and 5th grade choir kids will receive a detailed schedule in the mail.

Children's Choir Festival

Our 3rd - 5th grade choirs participate in the Atlanta Chapter of Chorister's Guild Children's Choir Festival. The festival is held every other year. The festival is always on a Saturday in February and begins at 8:30 and ends with a concert for parents at 12:30.

During the morning all choirs will rehearse with a guest clinician. They will also have a snack and time to socialize. All of the children will wear their choir shirts. The cost is usually \$3 - \$5 per child.

The last festival had over 300 children participating. Parents of these children will receive detailed information in the mail. This is a great opportunity for our children to sing in a large choir.





Choir Parties

All of our Children's Choir's celebrate special holidays. On the Wednesday closest to Halloween and Valentine's Day all of the choir kids will get "Goody Bags" at the end of choir rehearsal. In December all of the choirs will have a Christmas Party. This will include meal-type food, (pizza, sandwiches, etc) sweet snacks and drinks. If you stay for the church supper, you may not need to make a reservation for your child that night. It will depend on your individual child.

At the end of the choir year, we have a party for all 2 year olds - 2nd grade choir kids in the Sanctuary with some type of entertainment (singer, magician, storyteller) and a "Goody Bag" for each child. All of our 3rd - 5th grade choir kids will have a party in the Adult Choir Room

End-of-the-Year Choir Party

We have two combined parties for the last Children's Choir rehearsal in April. The first one is a combined party for all of the 2 year old - 2nd grade choirs. The party begins at 5:15 and ends at 6:00. The children meet in the Sanctuary for entertainment (singers, magicians, storyteller) and "Goody Bags." All children can be dropped off and picked up in the Sanctuary. The 3rd - 5th grade choirs will have a separate party in the Adult Choir Room.

Halloween Costumes

On the Wednesday closest to Halloween, all of the children are invited to wear their Halloween costumes to choir. **Children cannot wear scary or "horror" type costumes.** If you attend the church supper after choir your child will be able to parade across the stage in their costume. Parents can walk with young children. Mary Ann Gilbert will announce the time.



How Can I Help?

Our AFUMC Children's Choir program involves many parent volunteers. We are always looking for people to work with our program who want to who share their faith and make a difference in the lives of children and youth in our church and community. For more information, or to volunteer, contact Ann Hudson at 770-475-5576 or email at ahudson@afumc.org
Come join our Children and Youth Music family!

Following is a list of volunteer opportunities:

Directors or Assistant Directors - Most of our choirs have a Director and an Assistant Director. The Assistant Director position is great if you are new to directing.

Accompanists - We need people who can play the piano to accompany our choirs. The level of difficulty varies with the age of the choir. We can also use guitarists and other instrumentalists.

Choir Parents - Choir Parents help with rehearsals, take attendance, mail post cards, help with programs and plan social events. We need lots of parents to help in all of our choirs.

Administrative Help - These volunteers do computer or office work and help at the Children's Choir Desk on Wednesday afternoons during rehearsals. They can also help with our choir t-shirts and cross program.

Costumes - We always need people who can sew and mend costumes. Most of our costumes are very simple to make.

Photography - We need people to take pictures of choir events and to video performances.



Fifth Grade Instrumental Ensemble



Crisanne Triplett, our AFUMC Director of Instrumental Music, offers an instrumental ensemble for 5th grade band students. The ensemble rehearses on Wednesday afternoons at 4:45 before Children's Choir. Contact Crisanne at ctriplett@afumc.org for more information

Wednesday Night Church Suppers

Our church has a wonderful family supper on Wednesday evenings. The food is served from 5:45 - 6:30, so there is plenty of time to eat after Children's Choirs. The cost for the supper is \$4 for adults and \$2 for children. Children can eat a smaller portion of the adult menu or have a special kids menu. There is a \$14 limit per family. After the supper there is a program for the adults and activities for the children. You do not have to stay for the program. There are three ways to make a reservation for the Wednesday Night Church Supper.

1. You can fill out a blue card in church on Sunday and drop it in the offering plate.
2. You can call the Church Office at 770-475-5576 before noon on Monday morning.
3. You can fill out the reservation form on the church web site at afumc.org



*Alpharetta First United Methodist Church Children's Choirs
Helping children discover the joy of praise and worship through music!*