

Report of the Music Committee
September 13, 2023

We are writing to follow up on the work that the Music Committee has undertaken beginning last spring and continuing through the summer. We are excited to share with you the vision that emerged from this process. It was articulated consistently across our various conversations, and is focused on developing a holistic, intergenerational music ministry at CCBNY.

We look forward to discussing this work with you after the 10 a.m. service on September 17, 2023.

At its June meeting, the Vestry unanimously endorsed this vision statement for music at CCBNY:

Music is integral to the worship, liturgy, spiritual development, and common life of the parish at Christ Church Bronxville.

Grounded in the Episcopal choral tradition, our music ministry seeks to offer opportunities for all ages – children, youth, and adults—to become involved in the life of our parish through music, to grow in faith, to develop musical skills, and to serve in worship.

Through our music ministry, we aspire to be known by our neighbors as a welcoming and inclusive community that nurtures and fosters music and spirituality through concerts and outreach both by our musicians and musical ensembles, and others.

The Vestry charged the committee (Carol Bartold, Stephen Cubbellotti, Cristle Collins Judd, Karly Redpath, and Evelyn Wadkins) *to craft and articulate a forward-looking vision for the music program at CCBNY that reflects the mission, goals, and aspirations of our parish.* (The full charge to the committee was shared with the parish in the spring and is appended to this report.)

The Committee met regularly in April and May and reported on its work in progress at the May Vestry meeting. In an effort to hear from as many constituents as possible, the Committee introduced itself to the parish via email and in worship services, created an email address for feedback, and launched a parish survey on May 8, 2023 from which 74 responses were received. Following the close of the survey the committee convened to discuss results and facilitated a listening session after the service on June 11. Over the summer the committee analyzed the responses and synthesized what we heard from the parish. We met virtually and reported back to the Vestry at its June and August meetings.

Regarding our present music program, above all we heard and want to affirm:

- Gratitude and affirmation for the central role that music holds in our worship and liturgy
- Appreciation for those who make music at CCBNY, for the talent, dedication, and commitment of the members of the choir, for the bell ringers and Debbie's leadership, and especially for Vaughn's interim leadership of organ and choral music
- Recognition that our choral tradition and a wonderful organ are features that contribute to the special character of worship at CCBNY

Regarding the aspirations and opportunities for music at CCBNY, we heard this key theme emerge:

We currently have a limited music program comprising *an excellent adult choir and excellent organ music*. What we aspire to develop is a more comprehensive and intergenerational music *ministry*.

Key observations, questions, and desires that were shared with us:

- Overwhelmingly, we heard a strong desire for an integrated music program for children, youth, and adults that is interwoven throughout the life of the parish: in Christian formation, worship, fellowship, and outreach.
- The choir can give the impression of being an intimidating group to join. Can we make it more welcoming by
 - Offering an invitation to join at times other than only at the start of the program year, and publishing a rehearsal and special service schedule.
 - Clearly stating how to join the choir and specify what skills are expected (e.g. music reading and choral experience). If an audition is required, indicate how it is arranged.
 - Offering a more regular and integrated approach to the Parish Choir by scheduling dates well in advance and making the music available in advance.
 - Occasionally having more varied congregational singing/ saying of parts of the service, e.g. the Psalm
- Interest was expressed in programs that not only involve *making* music, but that are educational *about* music in our worship and our musical tradition – e.g. history of hymnody, a session on how to chant the psalms – as a regular part of our Christian formation, but that could also be available to those outside the parish
- Can we become a place that our neighbors know as a welcoming place that nurtures and fosters music through concerts (both by CCBNY musicians and others)?
- Integrate instrumental music (e.g. handbells, but also other instruments) and ensure that it has a place in our worship, not just with visiting professional musicians supporting the choir at special services (which is important, but should not be the only opportunity for instrumental music)

Next Steps: Realizing this vision

This vision we have shared describes a holistic music *ministry* for CCBNY, something that is both more and also more fully integrated in the life of our parish than our present program of adult choir and organ music. We understand and underscore that the choir and organ will be critical components of any present or future music ministry.

This vision will require changes to our present approach to staffing and budgeting for music at CCBNY.

Presently the parish has a .6 FTE (3/5ths time) organist-choir director position. Additionally, there is a budget line for staff singers, as well as the occasional musicians who join services. To activate the vision articulated by the parish and proposed above, at its August meeting, **the vestry committed to increasing the music budget in order to convert the current 0.6 position to a full-time position** while maintaining the other music allocations in the budget at their present level. We anticipate this will be an approximate increase of \$30,000 to the existing budget. We believe that this is a critical investment for the parish to make and the Vestry committed to this goal as part of the budget process and authorized moving forward with a search.

At its August meeting, the Vestry also charged the committee with sharing this vision back to the parish, crafting a position description, and launching a search for a full-time Director of Music Ministries at CCBNY. The goal is to appoint someone to begin in January, 2024 or as soon thereafter as possible, until the position is filled.

We anticipate that in addition to deep knowledge of the Episcopal musical tradition and excellent musical competency in one or more areas (e.g. choral conducting / organist / building children's programs / concert organization) the director of music will:

1. Implement a vision for a holistic intergenerational music ministry
2. Draw together, lead, and oversee the requisite team of paid staff and/or volunteers to enact such a ministry, and develop and manage the associated budget
3. Have demonstrated organizational skills in selecting music, supporting liturgy, etc.
4. Have demonstrated ability in program building
5. Have the ability to work collaboratively with the Rector and other members of the leadership team
6. Explore new ways in which the music ministry at Christ Church can grow and draw those in Bronxville and the surrounding area into our community.

As we launch this search, the committee now hands off to Fr Kurt to appoint a search committee. While we are advertising for a full-time person, we believe the parish should also be open to the possibility of two (or more) people sharing this work. The nature and timing of the appointment will depend on the pool of candidates that we attract.

We are excited to enter this next phase of deepening the role of music in the life of CCBNY and we give thanks for all of those who presently enrich our lives and our worship with their gift of music.

We thank the members of the parish for your faithful participation in our surveys and conversations as we have discerned and drafted this vision for music in our parish.

We ask for your prayers and your prayerful consideration of the ways you might contribute to support this vision for our music ministry as we step out in faith to begin this search.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Bartold
Stephen Cubbellotti
Cristle Collins Judd (chair)
Karly Redpath
Evelyn Wadkins

Appendix: *Music Committee Charge*

The Music Committee is charged with helping craft and articulate a vision for the music program at CCBNY that reflects the mission, goals, and aspirations of our parish as we look forward at this time in our life as a congregation. The committee will deliver its recommendations to the rector and vestry by mid-Summer, 2023.

While respecting both the storied history and the centrality of music in the life of our parish, the committee will gather feedback as widely and openly as possible from all constituencies in the parish, from youngest to oldest, newest parishioners to those of many years standing. To do this, the committee will undertake a parish survey accompanied by focus group conversations and listening sessions. The committee will also explore the opportunities through which the music ministry may best serve to share the love of God in outreach to the broader community.

In articulating a vision for the music ministry at CCBNY, the committee will also provide preliminary recommendations regarding a staffing and budgeting plan to achieve that vision along with a position description for a director of music / choir director / organist / other (in whatever individual or collective form that takes in support of the vision) and the role of that position(s) to lead and staff our music program as critical member of Fr Kurt's ministry team.