

MUSIC
Organist/Choirmaster
Assistant for Music & Liturgy
Jessica Nelson

In 2015, the music ministry at All Saints' was budgeted about \$3000 and spent all of that. Our significant expenditures included hiring a guest musician for the Bluegrass Mass and Parish Picnic, annual licensing fees, continuing education, and sheet music.

ABOUT CHILDREN'S CHOIR:

The All Saints' Children's Choir is growing in skill and ability, and is steadily growing in number. We have an average of 7 choristers for rehearsal each week. We have continued to learn about our Anglican liturgical heritage and the role of music in the liturgy, as well as developing music vocabulary and reading skills. I have strived to complement what our children are learning in Catechesis. I hope that this program will see even more growth in 2016 and I suspect that offering Wednesday night programming for adults may increase attendance in this choir. Some highlights from our year: Children's Choir sang an Evensong service, as well as a choral prelude for the 4:30 service on Christmas Eve. We continued our new tradition of ending each rehearsal with a "Clothesline Collect," a short prayer broken into short pieces that we sort and display on the board for everyone to pray together.

ABOUT ADULT CHOIR:

The Adult Choir continues to thrive, especially in quality. In 2015, this group provided music most Sunday mornings, as well as special services, such as the annual Advent Lessons and Carols service, which was particularly well-attended. Our choir is developing facility with more sophisticated works from the Anglican tradition and their repertoire has expanded to include more *a cappella* music and world music. Their level of musicianship continues to exceed my expectations. On Wednesday nights, the adult choir has continued our relatively recent tradition of ending rehearsal with a short Compline. This, I believe, has exposed them to a new (to many of them) form of corporate prayer, and has provided a time for the choir to specifically pray with and for one another. Ending rehearsals with intentional prayer has been an enriching and community building experience.

2014 saw the official addition of the Y'All Saints Choir to our offerings, which we continued in 2015. The idea behind this group is that there is very little commitment – all one needs to do is attend a short rehearsal immediately prior to the service they sing. This choir sang a few times in 2015, most notably for Christmas Lessons and Carols on December 27th – historically a low-attendance Sunday. This choir sings accessible unison anthems and has included members of Children's Choir (and occasionally their parents!), former adult choir members, and other friends of music at All Saints'.

ABOUT YOUR ORGANIST/CHOIRMASTER:

Personally, I found 2015 to be a professionally fulfilling and exciting year.

In the summer, I directed the Mississippi Conference on Church Music and Liturgy for the second time – a nationally recognized and respected conference in its field, now in its 41st year. I felt that the conference was very successful – attendance increased from previous years and the conference received good reviews in professional journals.

In the fall, I was one of thirteen participants from all over the country invited to participate in the first symposium of the new Center for Liturgy and Music at Virginia Theological Seminary. This symposium, “Raising the Song: Creating Communities that Sing,” allowed me to work in intimate settings with Marilyn Haskel, Ysaye Barnwell, and Alice Parker, three internationally-recognized musicians and composers. Funded in part by the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship as well as Virginia Theological Seminary, this symposium will reconvene in 2016, and requires each participant to complete a project dealing with congregational song in their own school or parish.

I was also commissioned to compose a choral work for the Butler Community College Chamber Singers and invited by the school to be present for its premiere in early December 2015. This was tremendously rewarding, and the school has already asked for another commissioned work in 2016.

One of most exciting highlights of my year was being appointed to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music¹ for a 6-year term. This group consists of 20 people representing all corners of the Episcopal Church: 10 lay people, 5 bishops, and 5 priests. I traveled to Baltimore in November for the first meeting of this group. I was appointed to the Calendar Subcommittee as well as the Congregational Song Subcommittee.

In addition to the above, I continued to serve on the music faculty of the University of North Alabama and I also continued to teach piano lessons in my office at All Saints’, both to members of All Saints’ and non-members.

LOOKING AHEAD:

I anticipate the financial need of All Saints’ Music Ministry being greater in 2016. Purchasing well-crafted, recently-written, liturgically appropriate music for all of All Saints’ ensembles is a priority. Also, I would like to seek out more opportunities for continuing education in 2016 to continue to develop my choral conducting and organ playing skills, as well as making professional connections my field. There are also a few occasional purchases that need to be made soon, such as new, more durable choir folders, and an easily portable digital piano to use around the building as needed. I am beginning to consider fundraising ideas for the Music Fund to supplement our budgeted amount.

Also, one of my long-range goals for this parish is to provide consistent, quality arts and music-related programming. My hope is that this would include, but not be limited to, guest artist recitals. All Saints’ is an excellent venue for chamber and solo recitals as well as small choral ensemble performances. Hosting events like these, which appeal to a wide range of people, is one way that All Saints’ can continue to engage the wider community.

¹ The Mandate of the SCLM reads, in part: “It shall be the duty of the Commission to: Discharge such duties as shall be assigned to it by the General Convention as to policies and strategies concerning the common worship of this Church. Collect, collate, and catalogue material bearing upon possible future revisions of the Book of Common Prayer. Cause to be prepared and to present to the General Convention recommendations concerning the Lectionary, Psalter, and offices for special occasions as authorized or directed by the General Convention or Convocation of Bishops. Recommend to the General Convention authorized translations of the Holy Scripture from which the Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer are to be read. Receive and evaluate requests for consideration of individuals or groups to be included in the Calendar of the Church year and make recommendations thereon to the General Convention for acceptance or rejection. Collect, collate, and catalogue material bearing upon possible future revisions of *The Hymnal 1982* and other musical publications regularly in use in this Church, and encourage the composition of new musical materials. Cause to be prepared and present to the General Convention recommendations concerning the musical settings of liturgical texts and rubrics, and norms as to liturgical music and the manner of its rendition.