

Minutes

Kent United Church of Christ Special Council Meeting

November 21, 2021

Present: Jaime Baughman (past moderator), Karen Carmany, Becky Dunlap, Glenn Hanniford, Barb Hanniford, Sue Otterson (vice moderator), Jackie Peck, Jeff Roeger (moderator), Sally Saltzman, Julie Wallace, Barb Wertsler (via speaker phone), Heather Lohman (COVID task force member), and Corey Fowler (Director of Music)

Jeff opened the meeting at 11:15 a.m. with prayer. The purpose of the special meeting was to consider Corey's proposal for return to choral singing at Kent UCC.

Corey distributed a proposal (appended) that was more detailed than the one we had previously received via email. He briefly reviewed the proposal, including the survey that he had conducted of members of the Facebook group, "Church Musicians of NE Ohio." He also shared his own experience with choral music at Roosevelt High School this year. He noted in the proposal, "The choral world has shown that we CAN rehearse and perform safely." The proposal outlined safety protocols, including requiring singers to be vaccinated, practicing social distancing in seating and performing, limiting rehearsal and performance time, and wearing masks.

Julie asked about obtaining singers' masks. Corey said that there are some that are about \$30; they've used these at the high school. Jaime also said that she has modified a regular mask, which could be another option.

At this point, a motion was made to accept Corey's proposal (Jackie, Jaime).

Points raised in the discussion included the following:

- Becky: She appreciated Corey's research. Music is important, and nothing is 100% safe at this point.
- Karen: The results shown at the high school demonstrate how choral music can be done safely.
- Heather: She spoke as a nurse, not as a representative of the COVID team. She does insurance reviews and has seen that the hospitalized cases are almost entirely from the unvaccinated. COVID is not going away. Music is important to her own spirituality; she fully supports bringing the choir back with COVID protocols.
- Our consensus was that proof of vaccination should be shown.
- Jeff shared an email from another COVID team member who felt that rising numbers locally argue against approving the policy.
- It was pointed out that air flow is up and away from the congregation.
- Jeff noted that these are difficult decisions and they do have consequences, no matter what we decide.
- Glenn reminded us that when we began worshipping indoors two months ago, we agreed to start cautiously and make modifications as we gained experience.
- Jackie: We should communicate our decision to the congregation.
- We briefly discussed air flow and air cleaning systems. Jaime shared that Dave Hansford has said that the air exchange is every 20 minutes, which is a good rate, per Corey.

The motion to accept Corey's proposal passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barb Hanniford, Clerk

Kent UCC

Proposal for return-to-choral singing

November 21, 2021

Prepared by Director of Music, Corey Fowler

I am proposing that the Chancel Choir returns to normal rehearsal and performance on January 13, 2022 with a first service on January 23, 2022. In addition, there would be a small choral offering at the Christmas Eve service. Below is further detail to the plan.

- **Only vaccinated Chancel Choir members will be allowed to return.**
 - Singing/choral organizations all agree that the safest option for choirs is to only have vaccinated singers rehearsing and performing.
- **All singers will wear masks**
 - Much like our current quartet of Chancel Choir section leaders, all singers must wear a mask while rehearsing and singing during a service.
- **Chancel Choir will start singing on Christmas Eve**
 - What a perfect time to come together as a choir again! The choir will sit in the pews and then walk up to the chancel steps to sing an anthem. Then, they will go back to their seats. The choir loft will NOT be used.
 - This extremely short amount of time on the chancel steps – 4-6 minutes – does NOT require any increase in ventilation or air filtration. Most organizations are recommending choirs not sing longer than 60 minutes because potential buildup of particles only becomes an issue after that time.
 - We can have two short rehearsals (as well as online learning tracks) to get prepared for Dec. 24th. Rehearsals will only be 45 mins in length to avoid buildup of particles in air. We will rehearse spaced out 3-6 feet in the sanctuary, not the choir room.
- **Chancel Choir will return to normal rehearsal and service-singing in January 2022**
 - The Chancel Choir will return to Thursday night rehearsals on January 13. They will start singing at our worship service on Sunday, January 23 and will continue to only come up to the chancel area for the anthem. They will support the congregational song from the pews.

TURN OVER

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- **What are other churches doing?**

- In an informal poll that I conducted on the Facebook group “Church Musicians of NE Ohio,” the following results were recorded:
 - 31 votes - *Full choir IS rehearsing/performing with appropriate COVID protocols*
 - 9 votes - *Full choir is NOT rehearsing/performing, but small ensemble IS.*
 - 3 votes - *Full choir is NOT rehearsing/performing and there is NO small ensemble*
- The Methodist Church across the street is having their Sanctuary Choir sing at one service every Sunday morning. All members are expected to be vaccinated and masks are optional.

- **What are the schools doing?**

- I understand that there is a large disparity between age and health status in Chancel Choir members and high school aged children, but the COVID protocols we have been using at TRHS have been working wonderfully.
 - All choirs are spaced out 3 feet and everyone wears a mask.
 - Rehearsals are 51 minutes in length, 5 days a week.
 - No COVID cases have been spread in a choir class.

I truly believe that it is time to bring back the Chancel Choir. We have been back in-person since September and have been doing very well with our COVID protocols. The choral world has shown that we CAN rehearse and perform safely. Our Chancel Choir members understand that safety is important, but they also know the incredible spiritual and mental health benefits of using their time and talents for our church.