

## WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VOCAL ENSEMBLE?

The Vocal Ensemble at the Manhattan Church of Christ is an important and powerful part of our corporate life. The Ensemble serves several purposes: enhancing our corporate experience of significant moments in the life of Jesus at Christmas, Good Friday and Easter; creating opportunities for outreach in the form of evenings of special music; bringing a special message to the community in morning worship; and providing a forum in which special gifts may be used in direct praise to the Creator and edification of His body.

Most importantly, the work of the vocal ensemble is an act of worship. Whether it be a Latin text in chant form, a Russian carol, a contemporary worship song, or a lighter celebrative piece, we are worshipping more than performing. Jesus' description of worship "in spirit in truth" applies in nearly every situation in which we sing. These words in the Gospel of John had nothing to do with adhering to rules and everything to do with being honest and sincere in our praise. Going through the motions or simply singing the charts is not desirable in any person, but particularly so in those who pursue this special ministry. While a good deal of time must be spent on the mechanics of music – notes, rhythmns, dynamics – the message and heart of the text we sing is our primary concern as God uses us to communicate with, encourage, and edify those He chooses to hear us.

We have found great enjoyment and meaning as a body in gathering at special times of the year in celebration and observance of the birth of Christ and the final week of his life, known in most denominations as Holy Week. The chorus is a significant part of these events as we take the time to examine and experience more closely these moments. Holy Week begins this year on April 4 with Palm Sunday. Our Good Friday observance follows on April 9, with Easter on April 11. Preparations for these events begin this week. Our celebration of Christmas, in partnership with Kid Connection, will take place on December 17.

These special events, including our lighter "Valentine's Friday Night Light," not only provide encouragement to the family of the Manhattan Church, but create opportunities for outreach to friends and neighbors who may feel more comfortable coming to a musical event than a worship service. Such evenings are an excellent point of "first contact."

In addition to preparing pieces for these events, the chorus shares encouraging special music in corporate worship services on occasion. It's a great chance to

convey the message of a special text in a way impossible to experience with congregational singing. See “On Special Music” for a fuller discussion of this aspect of our ministry.

Many in this family are passionate lovers of music and singing, and they also gifted with musical abilities. The vocal ensemble provides an arena for those with these particular gifts to use them in special service to the Lord and His people here. Serving together in this capacity also fosters strong relationships between Christians who have a strong passion for Jesus Christ and His beautiful creation, music.

Finally, the extended nature of our rehearsal times (2:00 to 4:00 on Sunday afternoons) allows us to broaden our musical vocabulary as a congregation through the work of the Vocal Ensemble. Pieces that are inaccessible to the congregation or Worship Team (which often has only a single rehearsal on its material) are available to the Vocal Ensemble by virtue of its longer relationship with material. In addition, close relationships are fostered in our extended time together!

Serving in the Vocal Ensemble requires commitment, discipline and sacrifice, making for late Sunday afternoons, homework, and a special rehearsal before most events. A heart for worship – a deep desire to lift praises to the Creator and Redeemer – is the most important requirement for being part of this ministry. Different levels of musical experience and skill are welcome (you don’t have to read music), although it is important that you be able to match pitch! Of course, it is also important that each member of the Vocal Ensemble be present for each special event, and for rehearsals to be missed as little as possible.

This ministry is not to be entered into lightly, and I urge you to prayerfully consider your participation in this wonderful work. God’s blessing and guidance be yours as you choose your place in this family.

*1 Chronicles 6:31-32 Now these are those whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark rested there. They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they served in their office according to their order.*