

2022 - Annual Parish Assembly Choir Report

Matushka Katherine Arthur

The Archangel Gabriel Choir has made it through (for the most part) to the other side of a world-wide pandemic- with the Lord's help! In the Spring of 2021, we stopped having a choir rotation schedule. Being that our group size was already small and to avoid unnecessary burn-out, the choir was open once more for all members to sing for all services. It was a joy to return together again and to experience our collaborative, full sound.

Prior to the 2021 Lenten season, I was able to participate in a series of webinars put on by Dr. Vladimir Morosan (Founder and President of Musica Russica and renowned conductor and composer) focused on preparation for Great Lent, Holy Week and Pascha. I took copious notes and learned a great deal about the *what* and the *when* and the *why* of the rich hymnography called for during this liturgical cycle of our church. Father Chrysostom helped me create sets of four binders for all services of Holy Week, Holy Friday, Holy Saturday and Pascha. This was a long process and a huge feat for a new mission to create service binders from nothing, and I'm so thankful for his music expertise and behind-the-scenes support.

Our choir team gained a bass in 2021. We are so thankful for Pete Drauden's contributions to our sound and for his steadfast love and respect for Orthodox services and music (and his music software skills.) We also added to our soprano section with the addition of Heather Irene Marrick. She offers a humble and servant-spirit. Thank you Pete and Irene, for giving your gifts and talents. To Melinda Bowman, thank you for being a strong support, always eager to learn and for your always positive attitude. Thank you to Jamie Stepich for stepping up to different roles and voice parts whenever needed. Thank you to Lydia Marinello and Andrea Rovny for playing accompaniment, sharing your music knowledge and being versatile and flexible on voice parts. Also, a huge thank you to Andrea who has stepped up and led weekday morning and evening services. I'm so impressed with her willingness and bravery! I could not do this job without this incredible team!

To amplify our sound once the wall between the nave and the hall was removed, we added three microphones in the kliros. It was important that the hymns be heard in the back of the church but not at the expense of singers yelling or straining their voices. We hope the microphones have carried the sound for an optimal worship experience for all. A special thank you to Scott Hunt for being the church "sound guy." We appreciate your expertise!

Our choir has continued to have evening rehearsals twenty minutes prior to the Daily Vespers and Great Vespers and forty minutes prior to Divine Liturgy with extra rehearsals as needed for special services and feast days. In October, we had an extra Saturday rehearsal to look at new versions of hymns sung during the Divine Liturgy—specifically, new settings of "Third Antiphon/The Beatitudes," "Holy God" and "Cherubic Hymn." It's exciting for us to have new settings to choose from during services, and I look forward to adding to our repertoire more and more over time.

In November, in honor of the Feast of the Holy Archangels, Archangel Gabriel held its first Hierarchical Liturgy with Bishop Gerasim presiding. This was my first Hierarchical service to lead and the first for our choir to sing. With the Lord's help, the service was beautiful and felt like a "little Pascha." Glory to God.

My goal in leading the choir of Archangel Gabriel has been and will continue to be to join our voices with the angels.