

Songbirds Newsletter - August 2020

Hello Everyone,

Here is a Newsletter from your Songbirds Committee to give you a 'State of the Nation' style update on how the Committee sees the situation currently, and to bring you all up to date with developments in the light of some easing of government guidelines.

Current Guidelines (as of August 25th).

Your Songbirds Committee has met recently to discuss the latest information and guidelines for singing in choirs. There will be a link at the bottom of this Newsletter to a very informative video and also some written information which has informed our discussion about the current situation and also how we go forward. The Committee has a responsibility to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that our members are not exposed to risks and that their health and safety remains paramount. The Committee has collective responsibility for the Choir, Faye and Jane and in particular, members over 70 years of age. On a lighter note we would also be responsible for cleaning the building before and after each rehearsal!

As it stands currently (and of course there are changes and u-turns all the time!) it appears that non-professional groups such as ours are allowed to meet in a Covid-19 secure environment, if we can satisfy certain considerations of safety with regard to all our members.

Those Considerations include:

- Meeting in a Covid-19 secure building for which there is a full risk assessment we feel able to adhere to.
- Temperature checks of all members on arrival.
- Hand sanitising on arrival, hand sanitiser available in the hall and toilet
- Track and trace details required for each attendee at each rehearsal
- Members behaving responsibly at all times with social distancing of a minimum of two metres being observed.
- Singing 'quietly'
- Wearing a mask and having at least two others ready for when the previous one becomes wet through singing (disposing of the wet one safely).
- Windows and doors must be kept open at all times for fresh air circulation. (This may require members to wear warm clothes, hats gloves etc in colder months),
- The rehearsal room and any other rooms used must be cleaned both before and after rehearsal - including seats, doors, windows latches, light switches, toilets; any other items touched or used, like the lectern and piano. (It is possible this will be the responsibility of members).
- Other vital steps to maintain safety include preventing those who are unwell from attending choir, implementing a Track and Trace system, possibly introducing shorter rehearsal times.

Having spent time reading and discussing the guidelines the Committee feels that the demands made by these current Health and Safety guidelines make it impractical for the choir to restart rehearsals before January 2021 - or it may even be Easter 2021!

The Methodist Church is undertaking a Risk Assessment at the moment to ensure they are Covid-19 secure and that may place even more demands on how Songbirds operate when we use the building - to the extent that the decision may be made that we are, anyway, too big a group to meet there safely. We should know more later in September.

The Financial Situation

Since the onset of the Covid-19 lockdown in March called a halt to much of 'normal' life, our choir has, for the most part, been on hold, maintained through the existing funds it had accrued prior to lockdown day.

None of us knew what was really ahead (indeed, we still don't) but Songbirds Committee has continued to do its best to keep things going, with your support and involvement.

For Example:

- Newsletters designed to keep everyone in touch.
- Regular contact through WhatsApp, Zoom and Outdoor Meet-ups between members of different choir sections.
- Newly introduced 'Songbirds Zoom-along' with Faye.

Even though we are unable to meet, the choir still has certain overheads that it can't ignore if Songbirds is to remain a viable entity. Top among these are the retention of a rehearsal venue, a conductor and an accompanist. (Please see below for a full breakdown of current overheads.)

Regular payments from choir members plus a boost from our two annual concerts are, under normal circumstances, sufficient to keep the choir financially solvent, to cover its costs and to purchase some new pieces of music, (when required), as well as contributing some of our concert takings and fundraising activities to local charities. Without this income for the last six months, however, we have now arrived at a point where our finances are in a critical position. If the choir is to remain a viable entity when further easing of restrictions eventually comes along, the Committee believes it needs to ask for a contribution from each of our members to cover our overheads into next year.

Treasurer's Report:

SONGBIRDS PROJECTED COSTS AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2020

Balance at end of financial year August 2019 to July 2020	£1,422
Insurance - November	£137
Storage – 22 weeks Aug to Dec x £5	£110
National Assoc. of Choirs Membership – November	£53
Retainers – Jane and Faye £50 each per month Aug-Nov	£400
Zoom sessions @ £25 – 2 in Aug (1 to Committee), Sept, Oct, Nov	£200
Total	£900
Balance	£522

Possible Income?

Our autumn session would normally run from August 13th to November 26th – 16 weeks, with £65 in fees usually paid by each choir member.

Since March the Songbirds Committee has used our cash reserves to pay any necessary expenditure and also pay Faye and Jane a small retainer each month when the choir would have been running, while also being aware of upcoming expenditure as outlined above. Our reserves are now low with an opening balance of £1,422, and we have obviously lost the income normally derived from our summer concert, as we shall from our Christmas concert.

As shown above, we have projected costs of £900 up until the end of December, although it is likely we may also have to pay a retainer to the Church for our Thursday evening hall rental.

We are therefore asking each member considers making a voluntary one-off payment by bank transfer of £30 for this autumn session

- to help offset our projected running costs
- to help keep us viable as the Songbirds Ladies Choir with the ability to restart
- and which will include two Zoom Songbirds Singalongs each month Sept-Nov.

It would be appreciated if payment could be made by the end of September so the Committee can continue with their forward planning.

Our bank details are:

Songbirds Ladies Choir
Sort Code 30-95-47
Account number 1568666

The Committee hopes you understand both our current financial position and our decision to delay restarting rehearsals. We have thought long and hard about both

and feel that the options outlined in this Newsletter give us the best opportunity to ensure the successful future of our choir. Songbirds Ladies Choir has been singing for over ten years and we really want it to continue. We all share a love of singing, and singing with others is a real delight that we are missing out on for now - the Committee will continue to monitor the situation carefully so that we are ready to restart our choir as soon as is safely possible.

Link to video mentioned earlier:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=-N7QwN-CvOY>

There is also a website with information from 14th August:

www.abcd.org.uk 'Revised Guidelines allow non-professional singing again'