

GREATER MANASSAS CHILDREN'S CHOIR

# Raise YOUR VOICE



PARENT HANDBOOK  
2024-2025

## GMCC Concert Dates

Winter Concert

Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.  
Manassas Baptist Church

Spring Concert

Sunday, May 4, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.  
Manassas Baptist Church

Manassas Chorale

Friday, May 30, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.  
"Princesses and Pirates" Spring Concert  
Hylton Performing Arts Center  
(Ticket Purchase Required, Children Free)

## **Our GMCC History**

The Manassas Chorale, who will be celebrating their 31st Concert Season this year, had a vision to create a children's choir to give children the opportunity to sing. This vision became a reality when in the Fall of 2015, the Manassas Chorale established the Greater Manassas Children's Choir (GMCC). The GMCC has had six successful concert seasons to date and this upcoming year (2024-2025) will be a celebration of our 9th Concert Season! We offer children as young as Kindergarten through 8th grade the opportunity to sing with professional musicians who want to share their love of music with the younger generations. Many of our children sing in school choirs and/or church choirs, in addition to the GMCC. Our choir is not meant to replace other academic or religious singing opportunities. Instead we hope to enhance and provide further educational and performance opportunities for children who love to sing. Two of our 8th grade graduates joined the Manassas Chorale and we hope more graduates continue this legacy. Our weekly rehearsals and performances are held at Manassas Baptist Church, which is the same location where the Manassas Chorale rehearses. We are happy to have you join us and be a part of our 2024-2025 Concert Season celebrating nine amazing years!

**Manassas Baptist Church  
(corner of Stonewall and Sudley Roads, across from Post Office)  
8800 Sudley Road, Manassas, VA 20110**

## **Keep In Touch With Us**

**Greater Manassas Children's Choir  
P. O. Box 101  
Manassas, VA 20108**

**E-mail Address: [gmccsings@gmail.com](mailto:gmccsings@gmail.com)**

**Like us on Facebook!  
[www.facebook.com/GMCCSings](http://www.facebook.com/GMCCSings)**

**<https://greatermanassaschildrenschoir.org>**



## GMCC Committee Members

Artistic Director (Younger Choir).....Susan Dommer  
Artistic Director (Older Choir).....Becky Verner  
Artistic Director (Kinder Choir).....Nicole Golder  
Accompanist (Older Choir).....Kimberley Hill  
Accompanist (KinderChoir).....Dorothy French  
Director of Operations.....Tamara Halstead  
President/Secretary.....Kathryn Moore  
Treasurer.....Position Open

Additional Committee Members:

Karen Borozinski, Eileen Daniels, Cathy Drummond, Angie Easley, Sarah Gilbert, Deb James, Lynn Maletick, Daisy Reynolds, and Susie Theobald



## Professional Musician Biographies

### **Susan Dommer, Artistic Director (Younger Choir)**

Susan Dommer is the recently retired Choral Director at Unity Braxton Middle School and the Music Director for the Manassas Church of the Brethren. Susan has degrees from James Madison University (BMEd) and Shenandoah University (MME) and is a National Board Certified Teacher. Professional memberships include: American Choral Directors Association (VA ACDA Summer Conference Committee Member) and National Association for Music Education (District 9 Choral Representative and District Chair). Mrs. Dommer is grateful to her GMCC singers for the opportunity to make music with them!

Manassas Baptist Church and offers freelance work as a pianist and accompanist. She has sung with the Manassas Chorale for many years. Ms. Hill enjoys composing and has had four choral anthems published in the last several years.

### **Nicole Golder, Artistic Director (KinderChoir)**

Nicole Golder is a dedicated music educator with a degree in music education from George Mason University. She has 8 years of experience teaching middle school chorus and elementary general music in Prince William and Fairfax County Public Schools. Currently, Nicole is a stay-at-home mom who continues to share her passion for music by teaching at GMCC. She enjoys using creative and engaging teaching methods to inspire students to discover the joy of music and develop their musical abilities.

### **Becky Verner, Artistic Director (Older Choir)**

Rebecca (Becky) Verner has served as the Artistic Director of the Manassas Chorale since 1997. She is also Director of Music at Manassas Baptist Church, where she directs the Sanctuary Choir and Evensong Bells. Past Dean and Auditor of the Northern Virginia chapter of the American Guild of Organists and past President of the Osbourn Alumni Association, Mrs. Verner is also a member of the American Choral Directors Association and serves on a state committee for her denomination.

### **Dorothy French, Accompanist (Younger and Kinder Choir)**

Dorothy French is a retired PWCS middle school chorus teacher. After getting her music education degree at Marshall University, she taught at Marsteller Middle School before moving on to Gainesville Middle, and later to Beville Middle School. Mrs. French has taught private voice and piano and worked as a church music director and pianist. After 37 years of teaching, currently she is coaching and mentoring new music teachers in PWCS and accompanying for local middle school and community choirs. Mrs. French is delighted and honored to be accompanying for the inaugural year of the GMCC Kinder Choir.

### **Kimberley Hill, Accompanist (Older Choir)**

Kimberley Hill, a local homeschool mom and private piano teacher, is very excited to have the opportunity to play for the Greater Manassas Children's Choir. She also plays keyboard for the worship ministry team at

## **Who We Are**

The Greater Manassas Children's Choir (GMCC) is an educational and performance opportunity for singers in grades 2 - 8 (with unchanged voices). GMCC is a richly diverse group of singers from a variety of backgrounds. Sponsored by the Manassas Chorale, singers are divided into younger and older groups and rehearse from September through May, with concerts in December and May. Rehearsals are held every Thursday from 6:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. (Kinder Choir rehearses until 7:00 p.m.) at Manassas Baptist Church. Directors and accompanists are professional musicians.

### **GMCC's Performance Opportunities** **Past and Present**

- Annual Winter Concerts, Manassas Church of the Brethren and Manassas Baptist Church
- Annual Spring Concerts, Manassas Church of the Brethren and Manassas Baptist Church
- Annual Manassas Chorale Spring Concerts, Hylton Performing Arts Center
- Empty Bowls Fundraiser to benefit SERVE/Northern Virginia Family Service, Manassas Church of the Brethren
- Holiday Performances at Local Nursing Facilities, Arbor Terrace Sudley Manor and Caton Merchant House, Manassas
- Sunday Services, Manassas Baptist Church
- National Night Out hosted by the City of Manassas, Manassas Museum, Historic Old Town Manassas
- Opening Ceremony for Veterans Day Parade, Historic Old Town Manassas
- Nathan's Dairy Bar, Mathis Avenue, Manassas
- In April 2017, the GMCC sang with the Grand Cities Children's Choir from Grand Forks, ND in The American Choral Tour Concert conducted by Composer Greg Gilpin, Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC.
- Our choir children are talented singers...and artists! In the Spring of 2017, each singer from both choirs was invited to draw a picture of a riverscape to be included in a slide show presentation that accompanied a song for the Spring Concerts at the Manassas Church of the Brethren and at the Hylton Performing Arts Center.
- Optional opportunity: GMCC singers can audition and participate in the ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) Voices United Children's Honor Chorus (annually in August at George Mason University, Fairfax Campus).
- GMCC graduates may successfully audition and join the Manassas Chorale.

## Joining the GMCC

### Voice Checks for NEW Singers:

Interested families may request a voice check for their child/children prior to the start of the concert season by emailing us at [gmccsings@gmail.com](mailto:gmccsings@gmail.com). The voice check consists of a vocal range check by singing up the scale, and then singing "Happy Birthday". Prior musical training is not necessary for a voice check, nor is it required to be a member of our choirs. Since our professional musicians will teach your child to sing, we are just looking for a willingness to learn and a joy of singing. Voice checks are scheduled throughout the Summer and as necessary at the start of a new concert season. **The \$25 non-refundable new singer registration fee is required at the time of the voice check.** The first three rehearsals of a new concert season are considered "open rehearsals". We invite prospective children to attend one or more of our open rehearsals, with the hopes that they stay for a voice check and join us for the concert season. Voice checks can also be scheduled as needed between the Fall and Spring segments as new music is learned after the Winter Concert for the following Spring Concert. Voice checks are only required one time when a child is NEW to our choirs.

### Registration Fee:

Parents are notified via email of their child's acceptance into the choir following the voice check. Parents then receive an email link to register their child online for the upcoming season. **There is a one-time \$25 registration fee for all NEW singers.** *This fee only applies the first year that your child sings with the GMCC.*

### Length of Season:

The GMCC concert season lasts from September until May and the membership fee schedule is based on this 9-month membership commitment to our program. The first rehearsal of the Fall segment is scheduled in September after Labor Day, with a Winter Concert in December. The choirs celebrate the holiday season with additional performance opportunities within the community. After a Winter Break, the Spring segment begins in January, with a Spring Concert in May. Rehearsals continue after the Spring Concert to prepare the children for their performance with the Manassas Chorale at the Hylton Performing Arts Center at the end of May. The concert season officially ends with an end-of-the-year performance at Nathan's Dairy Bar in June. **All three dress rehearsals and all three concert performances are mandatory, so please be sure you are available for all before committing to our concert season.** As a member, there are responsibilities of membership. Attendance at dress rehearsals and concerts is one of our member responsibilities.



### Choir Goals

- ◆ Rehearsal Skills
- ◆ Performance Skills
- ◆ Vocal Skills
- ◆ Interval and Rhythmic Reading
- ◆ Lifelong Love of Choral Music

## Membership Expectations

### Rehearsals:

Weekly rehearsals are held on Thursday evenings from 6:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at Manassas Baptist Church. Kinder Choir rehearses from 6:15 p.m.—7:00 p.m. The full annual schedule is provided to parents at the Parent Meeting (which is held the third week of each segment). The Younger Choir rehearses in Room 305, the Older Choir rehearses in the Choir Room and Kinder Choir rehearses in Room 306. All rooms are located on the 3rd floor of the building. As renters of the building, we respect the other occupants and property of the Manassas Baptist Church. Families are to arrive no more than 15 minutes prior to the start of the rehearsal, and parents are asked to be on time when picking up their child/children at the end of rehearsal.

### Sign In and Sign Out Procedures:

For rehearsal, children are to be walked to their designated choir rehearsal rooms on the third floor, signed in by their parent (or parent's pre-approved designate) and signed out at the end of rehearsal at 7:30 p.m. (7:00 p.m. for Kinder Choir). This procedure will also help with the distribution of any important information, which can be given directly to parents at sign in and/or sign out. For safety reasons, children will not be released to meet their parents outside of the building.

### Specific Rehearsal Procedures:

- Arrive between 6:00 p.m. and 6:10 p.m. to sign in your child to their specific choir rehearsal room. Children are to pick up their assigned music folder and put on their name tag.
- Masks are **NOT** required for all entering the building, children and adults.
- Parents can give paperwork/membership fee payments to the Director of Operations, the GMCC Treasurer (if present at rehearsals), or place in the envelope provided at each sign in location. Separate cash payment envelopes will also be available at each sign in location. Child's name should be printed on the memo line of all check payments. Please do not give any paperwork or money to the Artistic Directors.
- Children are encouraged to bring a water bottle to rehearsal. Please label water bottle with child's name.
- Please do not send electronic devices to rehearsals with your children. If completely necessary, the device must be turned off or muted between 6:15 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- Gum, candy, and/or other food items are not permitted in the rehearsal rooms or at performances. Never share any food item with another child, as they may have food allergies. Occasionally, on special occasions, the GMCC will provide food snacks for the children, and special attention will be given to those with allergies. Please update allergy information throughout the year should anything change.
- Children are encouraged to use the restrooms before rehearsals and performances to avoid having to leave during instructional or performance time.
- Children are to be in assigned seat by 6:15 p.m., ready to warm-up and sing.
- **Parents are welcome to stay at Manassas Baptist Church during rehearsals, but NOT ON THE 3RD FLOOR. Parents are welcome to sit in the Welcome Center (2nd floor), or in the area outside the Sanctuary.**
- Parents are asked to make every effort to pick up their children by 7:30 p.m. Parents are to sign out their children at the end of rehearsal from their specific choir rehearsal room. If a child is picked up later than 7:45 p.m. on more than three (3) occasions, a late fee of \$10 may be charged.

## **Membership Expectations Continued**

### **Music Selections and “Homework”:**

The GMCC purchases music selections at the start of each concert season for the children to use. The GMCC owns all the music selections. Each child is issued a music folder at the first rehearsal and the music selections for that segment are kept inside the folder for each child to use at rehearsals. Folders are collected at the end of each rehearsal. The folders and all music are to be left and stored at Manassas Baptist Church from week to week. If a folder is accidentally taken home, please return it the following week. After each concert segment, the music is cataloged and stored in our music library. Midway into each segment, the Artistic Directors provide word booklets and a CD of song recordings to each child in both choirs. Hint: some parents use drive time to listen to the GMCC music and encourage their child/children to sing along while riding in their family vehicle.

### **Behavior:**

Each child is to take responsibility for being a productive member of the GMCC. We only have a limited time each week and each month to prepare the children for the upcoming concerts. Disruptive behavior such as talking during rehearsals, texting, disrupting the teaching or the learning process - all are not acceptable. We expect the children to be polite and kind to everyone involved in the choirs and to demonstrate good listening skills. The Artistic Directors will contact parents if a child continues to disrupt the rehearsals. Please talk to your child so he/she understands our expectations.

### **Child Protection Policy:**

The GMCC has a Child Protection Policy in place. If you have questions about the policy or would like to receive a copy, please send an email to the Director of Operations at [gmccsings@gmail.com](mailto:gmccsings@gmail.com).

### **Keeping Your Contact Information Current:**

At the start of each concert season, parent contact information is updated. This information is used to create and update an Emergency Contact List that is kept in each rehearsal room in case of an emergency. If there is an emergency during rehearsal, we will make every effort to contact the emergency contact listed. If your information changes or needs to be updated throughout the year, please send an email to [gmccsings@gmail.com](mailto:gmccsings@gmail.com).

### **Communication:**

The GMCC uses email as our primary form of communication. The Director of Operations writes weekly newsletters that are distributed to parents via email. Notifications, reminders, and membership fee correspondence, etc. are all communicated via email. Email addresses are updated at the start of each concert season. If there is a change to your email address throughout the year, please send us an email as soon as possible.

### **Inclement Weather Policy:**

The GMCC follows the Prince William County Public Schools notification system for closures, emergencies and inclement weather. If conditions improve during the day, permission may be requested and granted for the GMCC to rehearse. Please check your email late in the afternoon for up-to-date information.

# ATTENDANCE

## **Attendance:**

- Regular attendance is essential to maintain the quality of our music. Attendance is taken at each rehearsal and members are either marked as present, absent, sick, or tardy. The weekly rehearsals are necessary to prepare the children for the concerts. If the children do not attend the rehearsals, they will not be prepared for the concerts. We ask that each parent and child make every effort to come to every rehearsal, per the schedule. Maintaining regular attendance is a membership responsibility.
- Our concert season is divided into a Fall/Winter segment and a Spring segment, each with their own concert. Two (2) absences are permitted in the months September-December (Fall/Winter segment), and two (2) absences are permitted in the months January-May (Spring segment). Three (3) tardies count as one absence. If your child exceeds the allowable absences per segment, they may be asked to sing the music for the Artistic Director and to demonstrate any choreography, prior to the concert performance.
- If a child is sick, parents are to send an email to [gmccsings@gmail.com](mailto:gmccsings@gmail.com) in advance of rehearsal to notify the Artistic Director of the child's absence. We don't want to expose our choir members and staff to any sicknesses, so if your child is sick, please do not bring him/her to rehearsal. If your child stayed home from school on a rehearsal day due to sickness, please do not bring them to rehearsal. The GMCC follows school policies which state that a child is to be free of vomiting or a fever for 24 hours before returning to rehearsal after a sickness. This includes being on an antibiotic for at least 24 hours before returning to rehearsal. Thank you for understanding and complying with these policies.
- Singers who miss a rehearsal are expected to spend extra time at home practicing their music using the word booklet and CDs provided by the Artistic Directors.
- Attendance at dress rehearsals and concerts is mandatory, unless pre-arranged with the Artistic Director. Only circumstances such as family emergencies, illness, or other unavoidable circumstances will be considered by the Artistic Director as excusable absences. Failure to attend the dress rehearsal may result in the member being ineligible to perform in the concert. Our concert uniform is not required at dress rehearsals. Comfortable clothes and shoes are encouraged at all rehearsals (including dress rehearsals).



## **Membership Fee for 2024-2025 Concert Season**

The **annual membership fee** for being a member of the Greater Manassas Children's Choir (GMCC) is **\$270.00 per child (cash/check discount cost—credit/debit cost is \$280.00 per child)**. We offer discounts for pre-paying the annual membership fee by the due date (\$20 savings per child) and discounts for multiple singers in the same family (see chart below).

This is a membership program where we rely on singers to fund our program. When a singer becomes a member and parents sign the payment contract, we are counting on your full membership fee, regardless of the payment schedule you chose to pay (annually, quarterly, or monthly). At the start of the concert season, we incur charges based on our membership numbers (purchase of music and supplies, staff compensation, facility rental, etc.), so we count on the collection of the full membership fee from each choir member. Please review the payment schedule distributed to all singer families at the time of registration to determine the best option for your family.

The payment schedule dates are based on your child remaining in the choir for the entire concert season from September through May (9-months). **Because this is a membership program, please understand that when you make a commitment to the GMCC, we expect you to follow through.** Paying the membership fee is a responsibility of being a member. Please check the concert schedule prior to committing to our program because the three dress rehearsal dates and the three concert performances are all mandatory. **Attendance at mandatory dress rehearsals and performances is a membership responsibility.**

If a situation outside of your control occurs and you must consider leaving our program mid-season, we ask that you notify the Director of Operations verbally or in writing via email at [gmccsings@gmail.com](mailto:gmccsings@gmail.com) (as soon as possible). If your family experiences a financial hardship, please communicate with us. We can work out a plan so that your child can continue singing with us.

### **Payments:**

We accept membership fee payments in the form of cash, check or debit/credit cards. Checks can be made payable to the Greater Manassas Children's Choir or GMCC with your child's name printed on the memo line. Payments can be given to the Director of Operations and/or the GMCC Treasurer at any Thursday evening rehearsal. Electronic payments can be made on the GMCC website. Please refrain from giving payments to the Artistic Directors.

### **Late Fees:**

It is important that parents take responsibility for their on-time payments. There is a one-week grace period for payment due dates/7 days (including weekends). If a payment is not received on the 7th day following the due date specified in the payment schedule, a late fee of \$10 may be applied to the account on the 8th day. The one-week grace period does not apply to the first payment. All bounced checks or checks returned by the bank due to insufficient funds will incur a bank charge fee (currently \$12, rates vary) plus the \$10 late fee. The overdue balance is payable immediately upon notification from the GMCC Treasurer and/or the Director of Operations.

## Membership Fee for 2024-2025 Concert Season Continued

### Additional Financial Obligations:

Additional charges include a one-time registration fee for new singers (\$15), the cost to purchase a choir polo shirt for performances (\$20-\$30), and the cost of concert tickets for your family to enjoy the Manassas Chorale/GMCC performance at the Hylton Performing Arts Center in May 2025 (tickets purchased separately through the Hylton Performing Arts Center Box Office—all children are free).

### Scholarships:

Scholarship funds are available to members who may be in need of financial assistance. To apply for these funds, please speak to the Director of Operations.

### Other Financial Policies:

All outstanding balances from a prior concert season must be paid in full in order to be eligible to continue into the new concert season. Families joining the program mid-year for the Spring segment will be offered a pro-rated tuition.

### GMCC Uniform Appearance at Concert Performances

- GMCC polo shirt. Shirt tucked into black dress pants.
- Black dress pants. If pants have belt loops, wear a black belt. Absolutely NO jeans. Long black skirts are acceptable, but length must be near ankles.
- Shoes – black closed-toe shoes; for girls – black closed-toe flats or heels 1" to 1 ½" are acceptable.
- Socks – black; girls may wear black hose.
- No dangly earrings.
- No necklaces.
- No large headbands and no large bows.
- Clean and neat appearance; no bright lipstick, only natural make-up.
- Absolutely NO perfume, cologne or scented lotions. Other singers and musicians have allergies and/or asthma, and are extremely allergic to all scents.
- **PLEASE NOTE:** GMCC t-shirts are gifted to each new singer. Should a child need a replacement t-shirt, one can be purchased at the per unit price.



### GMCC Choir Shirts:

Every singer must purchase and own a choir shirt to wear for performances. This is another responsibility of being a member of the GMCC. The shirts are only to be worn for GMCC performances and not for daily wear. The collared polo shirts are royal blue with our name/music notes stitched in gold on the shirt. The Manassas Chorale has the same style and color shirts, but with their name, so everyone is coordinated for joint performances. The choir shirts are ordered by the Director of Operations in advance of each concert. Sample shirts are provided to assist with determining shirt sizes prior to order placement. The cost per shirt is between \$20-\$30 (depending on vendor pricing) and the shirt fee is due from parents when the order is placed. Shirts may be worn multiple years provided the shirt continues to fit the child. Occasionally we may have a few used shirts available to sell at a discount.

## Interested in Getting Involved in the GMCC?

### **Become a Patron of the GMCC**

*(Consider making a tax deductible donation to our non-profit organization.)*

### **Become a Member of our GMCC Committee**

*(Most GMCC Committee members are part of the Manassas Chorale, but parents are always welcome and encouraged to join us.)*

### **Help Spread the Word about the GMCC**

*(We advertise for upcoming events and solicit new members via flyers and posters displayed at local businesses; volunteer to assist with advertisements in local publications and/or social media websites.)*

### **Hand out Programs at Performances, Greet Guests and Answer Questions**

### **Promote the GMCC by Seeking Sponsors and/or Patrons, as well as New Members for the Kinder, Younger and Older Choirs**

### **There is Something for Everyone!**

## Choir Keys for Success

- ◇ Use correct posture with hands by side
- ◇ Stay in your space
- ◇ Sing and listen appropriately
- ◇ Pronounce words clearly
- ◇ Stay focused
- ◇ Follow the Director
- ◇ Do your best
- ◇ Memorize, think, apply
- ◇ Practice at home
- ◇ Enjoy yourself and have fun

