



FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

GUIDE FOR FORMING OR REFORMING AN OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATION

This guideline is in two sections:

1. Requirements for forming or re-forming an Old Choristers' Association

2. Generic Guidelines for a Constitution

It is important that Associations can exist in various forms although if the Association wishes to be affiliated to the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations the main principle is that its members should have sung or contributed to the musical life in a Cathedral, Chapel Royal, Collegiate Church, College Chapel of Oxford or Cambridge, or such other Choral Foundations as may from time to time be recommended by the Executive Committee for affiliation to the Federation

A common issue with Associations nowadays, both new and old is being constrained by unnecessary and excessive bureaucracy and unwieldy definitions and terminology rather than mobilising the potential membership. Keep it simple!

Section 1. Requirements for forming or re-forming an Association

Who will form the Association?

A critical mass of enthusiastic people is essential. They must be able to give time and effort, within a working committee environment, to develop and manage the Association.

What will be the Name of the Association?

The name should represent the host Cathedral (or other choral foundation) and its title e.g. Old, Former, Past, Ex-Choristers Association or Choir Association.

What are the Objectives?

Clear objectives will enable members to identify with their association and participate in its activities which could simply be holding periodic reunions with a Service of Choral Evensong.

Who can be members?

A clear definition of who may become members should be agreed, e.g. former choristers (trebles and sopranos) lay clerks, musicians and Precentors and who can become an officially recognised "friend" or "associate."

What information will be needed?

A membership register which can be held on paper or electronically (e.g. in a desktop spreadsheet or database) will be required. However, associations must be aware of any security implications or legal constraints about storing, using, sharing personal data (e.g. GDPR, Data protections laws). Suggested data may include:

- names & postal addresses; email and telephone contacts
- dates/years of service (Date of birth optional)
- awards e.g. Head Chorister, Scholarships/Choristerships, Musical qualifications

How will the Association be financed?

A donation or grant could be sought from the host Cathedral (or other choral foundation) or the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations (maximum £100) to establish initial communications with potential members and launch an inaugural event.

Thereafter the association will need to consider financing from members' subscriptions, Cathedral or choir school, donations or fund-raising activities.

It is likely that a bank account will be needed with an online banking facility.

How will we communicate with members?

In order to maintain and promote interest there should be regular communications with members (email, postal, social media). An Internet website for the Association will be a useful aid.

An Association may wish to issue periodic newsletters to members, and pass on information provided by The Federation.

Section 2. Generic Guideline for a Constitution

Introduction

This generic guideline for a working constitution is based on the Constitution of the Guildford Cathedral Choir Association 2012. It was written specifically to comply with the requirements of the HM Revenue & Customs to enable "Gift Aid" to be claimed and deposit interest to be paid gross although the Association is not a registered charity. There are two key clauses in this respect - the objects and alterations clauses.

Whilst this guideline is generic all the following areas should be discussed and either included or specifically excluded from the Constitution. They are not absolute but are given here as a simple check list for consideration.

Associations must be aware of any security implications or legal constraints about storing, using, sharing personal data (e.g. GDPR, Data protections laws). Most associations are primarily involved in "social interactions"

A Constitution must clearly specify the clauses that are obligatory (shall) and advisory (may) and should be formally adopted by the members at a general meeting. Copies must be made available to members on request and/or be published on the Association's website.

Title

The Association shall be called, for example "The <host choral foundation> Former Choristers' Association. Many associations prefer not to use the words "Old"!

Objects (Objectives)

The primary aims and objectives of the Association shall be:

To provide a point of contact for former choristers, lay clerks and musicians of the Cathedral with a view to developing or renewing and maintaining friendships rooted in their musical experiences with the Cathedral.

To advance the education of the public in the art and science of English Cathedral music by supporting and furthering the provision of this music by organists, lay clerks, the Cathedral Choir, thus helping to ensure that its tradition is maintained and developed as part of the Cathedral's worship and heritage. (*HMRC requirement for Gift Aid and gross interest*)

Organisation

Patron: The Patron of the Association may be the Bishop of the Diocese or the Dean (or equivalent).

Membership: The membership structure of the Association may comprise:

- President, who may be an Honorary or Life Member and ex-officio
- Vice Presidents who may be current and former Directors of Music and other Senior Clergy and may be ex-officio.
- Honorary and Honorary Life Memberships conferred for exemplary service by the Management Committee at its sole discretion. They may or may not have a vote.
- Members - any person who has been a former chorister, lay clerk, organist, organ scholar, or Precentor.
- Associate Members or "Individual Members" including members of the Cathedral Music Staff and current adult members of the Cathedral Choirs, people closely connected with the Cathedral Choirs and old choristers from other choral foundations. Associate Members or "Individual Members" shall be entitled to attend the meetings and functions of the Association but shall not be eligible to serve on the Management Committee or have voting rights at the Annual General Meeting or at any other meeting.

An Association may decide that the roles of President and Vice-President may be conferred at the discretion of the Management Committee if they are honorary and/or ex-officio, but should be elected at the Annual General Meeting if they are to be part of the Management Committee.

Management Committee

The Management Committee shall comprise the Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer together with a specified number of General Committee Members (Minimum number), one of whom may be elected as the Federation representative

The Management Committee shall meet at least once a year in addition to the Annual General Meeting. For any meeting a quorum may be agreed.

The Management Committee shall have the power to:

- Elect its own Vice-Chairman who may also preside at General Meetings of the Association (in the absence of the Chairman)
- Confer ex-officio Honorary Life Memberships and Honorary Memberships
- Manage and administer the business of the Association according to the constitution and shall in all things act for and in the name of the Association.
- Co-opt members to assist them in the administration of special functions where necessary.
- Deny membership to, or expel any members whose conduct, either within or outside the Association shall in the opinion of the Committee render them unfit for membership
- Deal with any matter not covered by this Constitution

Every issue shall be decided by a majority of votes and if the votes are equal the Chairman, or in his absence the Vice-Chairman, shall have the casting vote.

Elections of Officers

Elections of Officers shall be made at the Annual General Meeting of the Association.

The Chairman, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer shall retire from office each year but shall be eligible for re-election.

Alterations of the Constitution

The Constitution of the Association shall not be altered or added to except at an Annual General Meeting or at an Extraordinary General Meeting called for that purpose, for which the Honorary Secretary shall give at least twenty one days notice. No Amendments to the constitution can be made that would alter in any way the objects of the Association or its charitable purposes.

General Meetings

An Annual General Meeting shall be held each year. Extraordinary General Meetings may be called at any time for any specific purpose and members shall receive at least 21 days clear notice of such a meeting and the agenda. On the written demand of at least seven members the Honorary Secretary shall call such a General Meeting. No matters other than those for which the Meeting has been called shall be discussed at an Extraordinary General Meeting. For any general meeting four persons shall form a quorum.

Finance and Accounting

Subscriptions may be levied at the discretion of the Committee and shall be paid annually, at a rate which shall be agreed at each AGM.

Where subscriptions have been levied, members whose subscriptions have been in arrears for a period of two years shall be notified by the Honorary Secretary, in writing, that their membership has lapsed and that their names shall be deleted from the list of members.

A Bank Account shall be kept in the name of the Association.

The Honorary Treasurer shall be required to keep a Receipts and Payments Account, together with supporting documentation and, together with a balance sheet for a specified financial period shall be presented with a report at the Annual General Meeting.

The accounts and balance sheet shall be examined by an Honorary Auditor to be appointed each year at the Annual General Meeting

Payments and withdrawals of money shall be authorised by two of the following: Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer.

Reunions (Optional)

Periodic reunions of the Association may be held and may consist of the AGM and a Service of Choral Evensong in the Cathedral and such other activities as may be considered appropriate