

## **A Reflection from Scott Hayes**

### **September 4, 2024**

As you know, September marks the start of many activities in the church. Various groups are planning their year, and the diverse ministries are coming to life! It's inspiring to witness these new beginnings as each one adapts and evolves with the changes in society and the engagement of our community.

The same is true for All Saints' cherished choir program, now celebrating its remarkable 125th year. Established in 1899 as the Choir of Men & Boys, the program was created in anticipation of a new church building, which stood from 1901 to 1960. The choir spent nearly two years in rehearsal before making its debut at the first service in the new building in 1901. This founding marked a significant evolution in All Saints' music ministry, transitioning from a professional quartet to a Men & Boys choir—a popular trend in the late 19th century and a first for Richmond at the time.

All Saints looks very different today compared to its earlier days, whether in 1899, in 1957 when the River Road building was constructed, or even just 10 years ago. The music ministry has also evolved, and it's time to officially align the program with the current reality of our choirs. If you're sitting in the pew, you might not notice much of a difference—most of these changes were already in place as the choirs returned after the pandemic. However, the names and some of the internal structures will be updated.

The first major change is that the Boys Choir and the Girls Choir will officially merge into a single group called the All Saints Choristers Choir. We've been operating this way since 2021, and it's been wonderful to see each choir's traditions continue in a unified and distinctive way. The Choristers will be supported by an auditioned schola, which will be adjusted based on the number of trebles in any given year.

The second change is that the Men's Choir and the Parish Choir will merge into a single mixed ensemble called the All Saints Choir. This decision reflects the reality that the choirs shared most of their singers, making it impractical to continue holding separate rehearsals for two distinct groups.

This change marks the end of an important era—the Men & Boys Choir will no longer exist. In many ways, it had already ceased to function as such before I joined All Saints in 2016. This shift mirrors changes happening in other Men & Boys Choirs around the world, from St. Paul's Cathedral in London to Trinity Church in New Haven, CT. In these places, the tradition continues through combined Boys & Girls choirs, and these ensembles are beginning to flourish. I pray the same will happen at All Saints. This next chapter is exciting and positions our choirs for numerical strength as we move into the future.

For more details, please refer to the Q & A [available here](#). As we make this transition, we invite you to join us in a spirit of prayer and open dialogue. We're all in this together, and Ben and I are here to listen to your concerns and answer any questions you may have.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Scott Hayes  
Director of Music