

RCS Membership Guidelines 2017-18

Welcome to the Reading Choral Society! You are a part of a long and proud tradition of singing that began with the Society's founding in April 1875. RCS is one of the oldest choral groups in the nation.

Our mission is to perform, foster and advance choral music in the Reading and Berks County community. We fulfill our mission by preparing and performing a varied repertoire of choral music in fall, winter and spring. Rehearsals run from late August through May with other community engagement activities from May to September. We emphasize educating and encouraging young singers through artistic collaborations with parochial and private schools in Gloria Singers, as well as working with area high school and college choirs. RCS also performs on occasion with other music organizations, such as the Reading Symphony Orchestra, Ringgold Band, and Reading Pops Orchestra. Through these activities, we fulfill our mission and benefit our community.

In this handbook, you will find information about our organization, concerts, and membership responsibilities. We are pleased that you are singing with us! If you have any questions, please feel free to ask your section head, a Board member or the Executive Director.

MEMBER'S COMMITMENT

Any person wishing to join RCS will be auditioned by the Music Director and if accepted, placed in the appropriate vocal section. There are three requisites to singing in our concerts: you must be a paid member (see MEMBERSHIP DUES), you must meet attendance requirements (see ATTENDANCE), and you must be able to perform your music. Members are expected to attend all rehearsals, sing in all scheduled concerts and participate in other scheduled activities. RCS also requests that you sell tickets and help us raise the funds needed to produce our concerts (see RAISING REVENUE).

AUDITION POLICY

The Board has adopted a two-part policy for returning members of RCS. All returning members will be asked to have an individual vocal review with the Music Director every four years. You will be asked to vocalize, match pitches, and sing a passage from recent repertoire. The second part of the policy is that any member who misses singing in two sequential concerts will need to re-audition if they wish to continue singing with RCS.

Prospective members will be asked to participate in a rehearsal and audition at the end of the rehearsal. Auditions will be similar to the vocal review for returning RCS members. All new members will be required to perform a vocal review at the end of their first year, and then every four years.

REHEARSAL POLICY

Rehearsals of the Reading Choral Society are held at Christ Episcopal Church, 5th and Court St., Reading, PA, on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 P.M. until 9:00 P.M. late August through early May. Enter through the Court Street entrance and check in at the front desk. Please be IN YOUR ASSIGNED SEAT ready to rehearse a few minutes BEFORE 7 P.M. Weekly announcements will be given at 6:45 P.M. prior to the rehearsal. Sectional rehearsals will take place as needed during and/or possibly following regular rehearsal time. Dress rehearsals will be held as announced prior to each concert. Rehearsals recess as announced during holidays. Check the membership brochure for these dates.

Inclement weather – your section heads will notify you of any cancellations of rehearsals either by e-mail or telephone. There will also be an email from the RCS office to section heads & members.

SECTION HEADS:	Soprano	Ruth Moore	(610) 775-0591	mooreruth206@gmail.com
	Alto	Nancy Kennedy	(610) 777-5769	nancy52@juno.com
	Tenor	Fred Schwerdt	(610) 374-0173	schwerdtand@verizon.net
	Bass	Richard Laedlein	(610) 589-6953	RBLML@comcast.net
	RCS OFFICE	Susie Coughlin	(610) 898-1939	scoughlin@readingchoral.org

RCS Membership Guidelines 2017-18

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership dues are \$135 for all members for the season. Dues for full-time students are \$25 with a valid student ID from high school or college. Dues must be paid before the first rehearsal or 30 days following the acceptance into the membership of RCS. A member who has not paid dues will not be given music, nor be permitted to sing or be listed in the concert program. This year a payment plan is available. Membership dues help to fund the following expenses: music purchases; rehearsal space; and salary for music director, accompanist and security person. Members are expected to participate in all of the season's concerts. Financial aid (partial or full) is available on a limited basis. Contact the RCS office for more information.

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK CHILD ABUSE CLEARANCE

In order to comply with Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law, because we sing with children under the age of 18 and because we are an RMF funded organization, all members must consent to, submit to, and satisfactorily complete a Criminal Record Check, Child Abuse Clearance and FBI check. If you already have these clearances and they are less than 5 years old, please submit copies to the office.

Listed are the corrected websites for clearances:

Criminal background: <http://epatch.state.pa.us>

Child abuse background check: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>

The **FBI check** will be handled at a rehearsal – we have a form to be signed if you have lived within the state for the last 10 years.

Please submit copies of these clearances to the RCS office no later than September 30, 2017. All three are necessary. (Copies will be kept on file in the RCS office and renewals will be requested every 5 years.)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance at all RCS rehearsals is very important for us to learn to sing together. In order to develop our skills as an ensemble we must rehearse together every week. A member who misses more than 20% of the rehearsals for a concert must get permission from the Music Director in order to sing that concert. All singers should make every effort to attend every rehearsal. Please do not miss any rehearsal unless it is truly unavoidable. If you must miss, please be sure to contact both your section head and the office. Be sure to contact a member who was present to get any music notations given by the Director that week. Attendance is recorded at every rehearsal. At each rehearsal, sign in at the attendance desk. Church doors are locked at rehearsal at 7:15 P.M. We can listen for you to let you in if we know you are going to be late. If you will be away on vacation and miss several rehearsals, we ask that you notify the office and music director in writing of your absence and dates you will be away.

Please be reminded that REHEARSALS START PROMPTLY at 7:00 P.M. Announcements will be at 6:45 each week. Arrive in plenty of time to be ready to sing at 7:00 P.M. Chronic lateness by an individual member of the group affects everyone. Check schedules for surrounding venues, such as the Santander Center, as there is frequently backed up traffic on the Penn St. bridge trying to get into town at the same time as you will be.

The concert dates for the season are communicated to all the members at the beginning of the season. Dress rehearsals are usually either the Tuesday or Saturday before the concert unless otherwise stated. You will be notified well in advance of the dress rehearsal dates and times. You must attend the dress rehearsal in order to be allowed to sing in the concert. Please mark your calendars in advance.

PARKING

Parking is available at the M&T Bank lot above ground ONLY – do not park in the lower level. Approach from 5th Street, turn west onto Washington Street, then make the first left turn into the alley. Parking is also available weekly at the Madison Lot located directly behind Christ Church – enter from Court Street. A Security person will be at the lot each week from 6 to 7:15 P.M., as well as at the end of rehearsal. There is on-street parking on Court Street and 5th Street. Parking meters are in operation until 6pm & are closely monitored. Parking in any other lot is hazardous as it can result in your car being towed. You will be notified if there is a change in parking locations.

RCS Membership Guidelines 2017-18

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE

A pencil and eraser are required items for rehearsals to note any instructions or changes dictated by the Music Director. See the Music Policy below for care of printed music. You may also want to bring water to drink throughout the rehearsal.

We ask you to extend the courtesy to others of not using perfumes or other scents such as hair products prior to rehearsals as they can induce asthma attacks for some of the members. This is particularly important at dress rehearsals and concerts as we are standing very close together at those times.

We rehearse in a professional atmosphere. Unnecessary talking during rehearsals is discouraged - it is distracting to other members who are trying to listen to the director. Please do not talk while the director is speaking or another section is being rehearsed. There is time for socialization, just not while we are rehearsing!

In addition to regular rehearsal attendance, it is necessary to do homework. The programs we perform are often challenging music, each piece having its own particular challenge of language, timing, etc. It is vital that we spend time each week outside of rehearsal reviewing the direction we received and working on specific problems. We can also do some advance work for the following week. Each member is RESPONSIBLE FOR KNOWING THEIR MUSIC.

MUSIC POLICY

Music will be handed out at the first rehearsal and throughout the year. It should be returned as directed by the music librarian and office. You do not need to erase markings from music that is owned by RCS. Please do not use a highlighter on your music. When returning your music, put your voice part and name on it for future use.

Borrowed Music: Use a pencil, not a pen, to make markings in borrowed music. Do not punch holes or damage the music in any way. Erase markings from borrowed music. If music is damaged or lost, a replacement charge may be applied. Please see Kaye Fox, the music librarian, if you have any questions about your music.

Black folders: Each member is responsible for obtaining their own black folder for concerts. A three ring binder works well or you may order a black choral folder through the RCS office. Music/magazine holders are available through the music librarian or the RCS office.

Rehearsals: Members are responsible for bringing their music to rehearsals and to practice between rehearsals.

COMMUNICATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Emails are sent from Susie Coughlin, RCS Executive Director, on a weekly basis during our rehearsal season. Schedules, updates and current happenings are included in the emails. If you have information about an upcoming concert or event that you would like members to know more details about, please send the information to Susie for her weekly email. We ask that you do not take rehearsal/announcement time to make such announcements. All announcements will be made prior to the beginning of the rehearsal by the music director. Please let the office know in advance if you have an announcement to be made.

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

Men: Concert attire is a black tuxedo, white shirt, black bow tie, black shoes and cummerbund.

Women: Concert attire is a floor length solid black outfit. This year it is requested that you wear either a concert dress (purchased through Southeastern through the office), or skirt/palazzo pants (which should have the look of a full skirt.) and top. The top should not be sleeveless, but may be short sleeve, ¾ length sleeve or long sleeve. The goal is to appear as uniform in dress as possible while allowing singers to have a few options. Dress pants are not allowed. Black stockings and solid black shoes – no sandals, open toed shoes or knit socks. To complement the women's concert attire the women will wear a 16" or 18" mock pearl necklace and mock pearl earrings (stud or clip), which are ordered through the RCS office for a very modest price. If you have any questions concerning dress code, please contact the office. It is not necessary to wear concert performance attire for dress rehearsals.

For less formal performances such as Gloria Singers, members are asked to wear white tops/shirts and black pants/skirts.

RCS monogrammed polo shirts are available through McGinn School Apparel. T-shirts with logo are available through the RCS office.

RCS Membership Guidelines 2017-18

RAISING REVENUE

Member Gifts: In addition to their membership dues, members are strongly encouraged to make a monetary donation, within their financial means, to RCS. Our goal is 100% participation of our members as patrons. A high percentage of member, board and staff patronage is extremely important as this is a primary consideration for a positive response when we apply for grants.

Ticket Sales: Each singer is asked to help promote our concerts by selling a minimum of five (5) tickets. As a singer, there is nothing more satisfying than giving a sterling performance to a packed house. Over our long history we have found that the most effective marketing tool for selling tickets is an enthusiastic member. If you are excited about the performance, you'll want people to hear it. Talk it up! You will be surprised at how many of your friends and acquaintances like what we are doing and want to attend. They just don't know about it, so it is our job to let them know. This year we will keep you updated about ticket sales since our concerts will be held at new locations. More information will be on the website & given to members this fall for sales of all concerts.

Soliciting Patron Gifts: Members are highly encouraged to request donations from their family and friends, and from the business organizations that you patronize. Donation envelopes are available before each rehearsal as you're checking in. Each year, returning members will be given a printed history of patrons that they have solicited in previous years. RCS will have sent out the request letters, taking the first hard step in requesting funds. All the member has to do is follow up. RCS sends out a thank you to each patron, but please take the time to thank each of your patrons as well, either in person, by phone or in a written thank you. As with any arts organization, ticket sales do not begin to cover all of our expenses. They usually do not even cover the cost of producing the concert. We depend upon business and individual patrons for support and RCS is dependent upon you, the member, to help find those patrons and ask them to be part of our vision by requesting their financial support. Our goal is 100% member participation in soliciting a minimum of two (2) business patrons. (If you are uncomfortable making the ask, please get in touch with any member of the Development Committee; they are available to provide training or to make visits with you. You can also share your contact information with them.) This is OUR organization and it is up to us to make it a thriving, vibrant organization, but to do so, requires every member's participation in soliciting patron gifts. The annual patron drive is conducted at the start of each fiscal year beginning July 1 and running through June 30th.

Fundraising: RCS holds several large fundraisers during the year. This year we are trying to keep the number of events down to the following: Boscov's \$5 coupons; Applebees Flapjack Fundraiser; a GALA with auctions; golf tournament and candy sales.

There is an ongoing AMAZON fundraiser through the RCS website. SUPPORT RCS - Do your AMAZON Shopping Thru Our Site: RCS Is A Member Of The Amazon.com Associates Program & Amazon Smile. Please shop on Amazon using the link on the website to help us raise funds. (Share this information with your friends). We need the full support of each member to help in promoting these fundraising projects. This not only helps in getting the RCS name into the community, but also helps to keep down the cost of membership with the more income generated by each of these sales.

MEMBER PHOTO DIRECTORY

A photo directory is created each fall for members to use to get to know each other. Photos will be taken on Tuesdays in September. If you are unable to make the dates, please contact the office. Updates will be sent to members throughout the year when we receive changes from members. Please do not use or share this directory information with other organizations.

SOCIALS

Membership in the RCS offers a unique opportunity to meet with other people who enjoy choral music. Since our ten minute break will not be enough time for you to get to know each other, sections will have socials throughout the year. Members will be asked to sign up when it is their sections turn to host the social to provide snacks and beverages. At the end of each season, a covered dish supper is held for members and their families.

GOVERNANCE

The Reading Choral Society has a dedicated Board of Directors. Our Nominating/Governance Committee is always looking for individuals from within the organization or from the greater Berks County community to serve on the board. If you are interested or you would like to recommend a potential candidate for the board, please talk to a member of the Nominating/Governance Committee. Board terms are three years in length.

RCS depends upon its singing members to serve on committees. Please give thoughtful consideration to which committee you can be involved with and share your time, talents and skills to promote our organization.