

2026 FACULTY



Heather Potter
Heather is an experienced, dedicated educator and choral director, leading young singers of all levels and teaching undergraduate courses. She frequently presents workshops and directs honor and festival choirs nationwide. Most recently, Heather was director of traditional music at Covenant Presbyterian in Charlotte, NC, and was artistic director of the Charlotte Children's Choir. She served on the faculty of the Choristers Guild Institute 2009-2018, and has published resources for children's choirs, including the current CG curriculum, A Year of Beautiful Singing. Heather holds music education and choral conducting degrees from Furman University, Arizona State University, and UNC Greensboro. She is past-president of the Choristers Guild Board and has held leadership roles with ACDA.



Vincent Oakes
Vincent is an accomplished choral conductor and educator, serving as artistic director of the Chattanooga Boys Choir since 2004 and as director of choral music at The Baylor School, Chattanooga, TN, since 2006. Vic served ACDA as president of the Southern Region and the Tennessee chapter and participated in its inaugural International Conductor Exchange in Cuba. He holds degrees from the University of Florida and Emory University, has received multiple awards for teaching and arts leadership, and is a passionate advocate for music in worship and community engagement.



Katie Houts, Choristers Guild Sacred Choral & Curriculum Editor
Katie is a composer, arranger, accompanist, teacher, editor and conductor, serving as the sacred choral and curriculum editor for Choristers Guild where she curates and edits a wide range of sacred music resources. Based in Salt Lake City, Katie leads multiple choral ensembles including Rise Up Children's Choir, teaches at Wasatch Charter School and is national chair for ACDA's National Committee for Composition Initiatives. Katie holds degrees in church music and religion from Wartburg College and brings extensive experience as a worship curator in various denominational settings.



Emily Floyd, Choristers Guild Institute Co-Director
Emily is the pastor of music and worship and directs choirs of all ages at First Baptist Church, Asheville, NC, and is artistic director of the Asheville Youth Choirs. Emily is the current president of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians, coordinator for Music in Worship for ACDA's Southern Region, and is active as a choral director for honor, festival, and church music camp choirs. She has served Presbyterian and Methodist congregations and taught high school and middle school choral music in public schools. Emily holds a degree in music education from Florida State.



Karol Kimmell, Choristers Guild Institute Co-Director
Karol recently retired from full-time church work, serving the last 26 years at All Saints' Episcopal, Atlanta, GA, with a graded choir program, PreK-12th, of choral and handbell ensembles. She presents at conferences, directs honor and festival choirs nationwide, and is co-director and faculty member for Lutheridge Music Week in Arden, NC. She has taught pre-school music and elementary chorus and sung in professional choirs. Karol holds a degree in music education (organ) from Lenoir-Rhyne University in NC, and has certification in Kindermusic and Orff.



James Wells, Choristers Guild Institute Host
James is the director of worship + arts at Brentwood United Methodist Church near Nashville, TN, where he has led music ministries and directed choirs of all ages for over 27 years. James is also the artistic director of the Nashville Children's Choir of Belmont University, nurturing young voices from grades 3-12. James holds degrees in vocal performance and music education from Middle Tennessee State University and Belmont University.



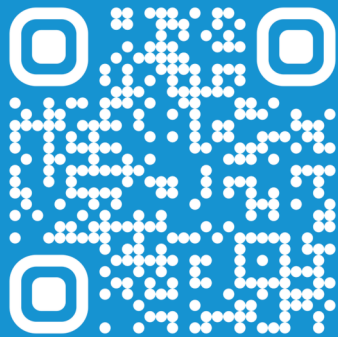
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Conference Site
Brentwood UMC
309 Franklin Rd
Brentwood, TN 37027

Conference Hotel
Comfort Inn & Suites
111 Penn Warren Dr
Brentwood, TN 37027

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Institute

Connect, Grow, Inspire

July 13-16, 2026
Brentwood, TN
(Near Nashville)





The Choristers Guild Institute is a three-year training program for leaders of children's and youth choirs (K-8) in churches and church schools. Each summer, participants receive four days of intensive instruction and mentoring from a faculty composed of outstanding teachers and clinicians. Alumni sessions are also available for those who wish to continue expanding their skills.

The training process is designed to strengthen directors' musical and instructional skills and to equip them to effectively integrate children in worship. Graduates of the program become part of a close and supportive nationwide network of Institute alumni.

The foundation of the Institute program is a belief that:

- All children are artistic, creative, musical, and worshipful beings
- Successful children's choir leaders recognize a unique calling to lead children toward a more meaningful and effective participation in worship through music

Core Classes

- Choral Methods
- Pedagogy
- Conducting (Beginning-Advanced Levels)

Special Topics

- Recruiting and Retention
- Visuals for Teaching
- Alexander Technique
- Solfège
- Rules of Music
- Seasons of the Church Year
- Hymnody with Children
- Classroom Management
- Teaching Children to React to Conducting Gestures
- The Changing Voice

Repertoire

- Reading Sessions
- Repertoire-Based Classes

Worship

Experience daily worship services with children and youth in mind, using creative ideas for child/youth-led worship, including, yet moving beyond the anthem.

In their own words

"The Choristers Guild Institute is so much more than a music conference. Along with music-focused classes like vocal pedagogy and conducting, participants explore the other key pieces of a vibrant music ministry – worship and rehearsal planning, effective leadership, program-building, and more. Whether you're a volunteer director or someone with an advanced degree, everyone finds a warm welcome at the Choristers Guild Institute.

We return to our unique ministries feeling called, capable, and connected to a community of lifelong Choristers Guild Institute friends."

Katie Houts
Choristers Guild Sacred Choral and Curriculum Editor

"My time at the CG Institute has transformed the way I direct children's and youth choirs. I know of no other program that explores pedagogy, choral methods, conducting, voice, and worship in such a practical and insightful way. The faculty is top-notch in each of their areas, and they care about making each student better teachers and leaders in their ministry settings."

Choristers Guild Institute Year Three Participant

"I came back on fire with ideas and empowered with tools that I can use to make my choir rehearsals so much better."

Choristers Guild Institute Year Two Participant

"The Choristers Guild Institute is a transformative and uplifting program for children's choir leaders. Whether you are a beginning children's choir director or quite advanced, the Choristers Guild Institute provides education, spiritual nourishment, and fellowship for you."

Choristers Guild Institute Participant

Ideas and skills you will take home from the Institute:

- Creative, purposeful integration of children into worship through song, spoken word, prayer, and movement
- Choosing appropriate anthems
- Plan engaging and effective rehearsals
- Fine-tune conducting skills
- Ways to develop a beautiful choral tone
- Strategies for effective recruitment and retention
- Gentle, effective approach for challenging behaviors
- Awareness of vocal modeling
- Props and visual aids for teaching
- Songs and activities for marking seasons of the church year
- Working effectively with volunteers and colleagues
- Teaching music literacy: note and rhythmic training
- Establishing traditions and milestones in your choir program
- Reinforcing organizational skills for planning
- Developing and communicating a vision for your children's music program
- A supportive nationwide network of Institute alumni

Connections made during the CG Institute prove invaluable to participants. You'll make friends across the country - colleagues - who can answer your questions, share advice, suggest repertoire, understand your disappointments, and rejoice in your successes. Our alumni stay connected, and many return after completing the original three-year program for a refresher. Each attendee brings their unique experience and gifts to the week; we all learn together and contribute to each other's success. Our youth and children's choirs in schools and churches are the beneficiaries of this wonderful continuing education program. Join us!

**REGISTER
TODAY**

