

The Liturgical Music Minister

Role Descriptions + Remuneration Guidelines + Recruitment

By Paul Mason, CEO, Liturgical Song

In this article I hope to provide an overview of the principle foundations for understanding the nature of *The Liturgical Music Minister*, including role descriptions, methods of recruitment and guidelines regarding remuneration of key personnel. At the conclusion of the article I have set out some further references to help parishes and schools support their liturgical music ministry teams.

Who is The Liturgical Music Minister?

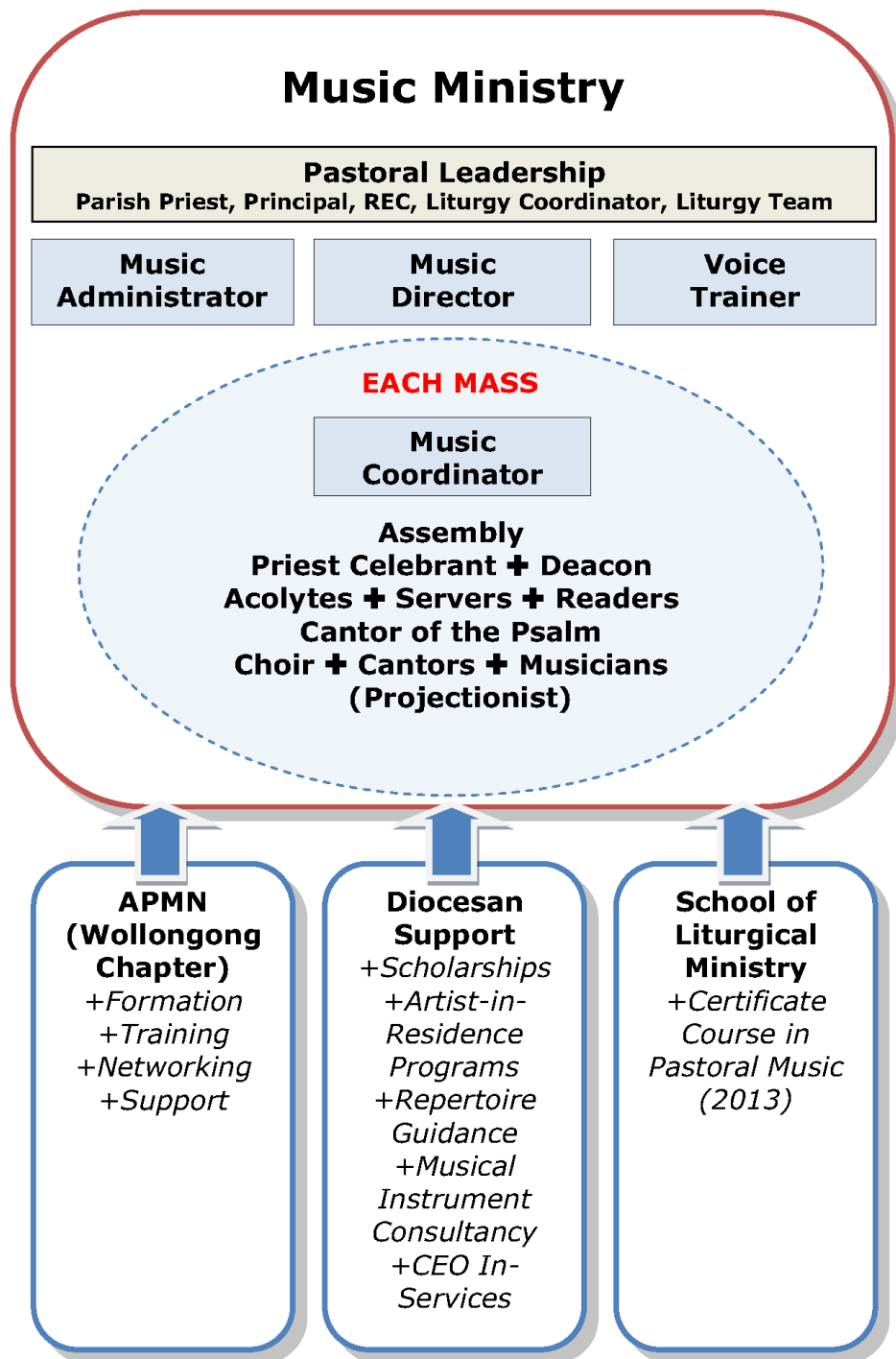
The Liturgical Music Minister plays a critical part in encouraging communities to actively participate in liturgy through singing the principal parts meant to be sung at Mass (c.f. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 112; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 40). In paragraph 8 of his *Chirograph on Sacred Music* Pope John Paul II spells out his vision for liturgical music ministry:

“From the smooth coordination of all - the priest celebrant and the deacon, the acolytes, the altar servers, the readers, the cantor of the psalm, the choir, the musicians, the cantors and the assembly - flows the proper spiritual atmosphere which makes the liturgical moment truly intense, shared in and fruitful. The musical aspect of liturgical celebrations cannot, therefore, be left to improvisation or to the arbitration of individuals but must be well conducted and rehearsed in accordance with the norms and competencies resulting from a satisfactory liturgical formation.”

EVERYONE at Mass is The Music Minister! The diversity and complexity of music ministry in a parish or school demands increased focus on leadership, formation, support and coordination. The music director, who collaborates with pastoral leadership and oversees the overall development and coordination of music ministry in a parish or school, provides this necessary leadership. The music administrator, who attends to administration of copyright, music resources for musicians and the assembly, rostering and scheduling, provides the necessary support. The voice trainer, who develops the skills and practices of the various liturgical singers, provides the necessary liturgical and musical formation. The music coordinator of each Mass or liturgy provides for the smooth coordination of all participants.

The diagram, role descriptions and remuneration guidelines in this article are drawn from the materials of the *PSALMIST* Liturgical Music Development Program, previously published by the Diocese of Wollongong on their liturgy website in May 2012. This website is in the process of redevelopment and the original articles are currently not available.

I will use the model of liturgical music ministry to visualise the various roles and how they interact – with each other, within the parish or school, and with external support organisations such as the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network (APMN).



What is the Role of The Liturgical Music Minister?

The following descriptions are provided as a help in understanding the scope of *The Liturgical Music Minister*. Often a single person will have responsibility for multiple roles. It should be noted that all these roles require the spiritual gifts of Hospitality and Artistry. Specialised Spiritual Gifts are noted within each role description.

Firstly I describe the many specialised liturgical music ministry roles, which help the *Primary Liturgical Music Ministers* (Assembly, Priest, Deacon, Acolytes, Servers and Readers).

- **Music Coordinator:** This ministry is responsible for the preparation, rehearsal and conduct of music at a given Mass. In a few cases these people will be choir directors. But in many cases these people will be suitably trained and supported cantors of the psalm and accompanists. For some Masses, particularly those with smaller assemblies, the role of music coordinator will be taken by a single unaccompanied cantor, with or without the aid of pre-recorded accompaniment.

Spiritual Gifts: Vocal or Instrumental Music, Administration, Leadership

Ministry Commitment: Rostered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, 3-4 hours per Mass (choir directors 6-7 hours per Mass); ongoing ministry training
- **Voice Trainer:** This ministry underpins the strategy to build up the quantity and quality of cantors of the psalm. The ministry of voice trainer is responsible for the ongoing training and support of cantors of the psalm, developing repertoire and technical vocal skills. Singers will more readily contribute their gifts and time to the ministry of cantor of the psalm if they know they are supported in developing their repertoire and skills in this ministry. Candidates for the ministry of voice trainer are suitably qualified singing teachers, who are committed to the Catholic faith and the ongoing development of music ministry in their parish or school, and who are prepared to integrate the teaching of responsorial psalm repertoire into their singing lessons.

Spiritual Gifts: Vocal and Instrumental Music, Administration

Ministry Commitment: 1 hour per week in psalm repertoire knowledge development; availability to provide 2-6 lessons per week depending on parish needs; ongoing ministry training
- **Music Ministry Director:** This ministry is accountable for the oversight and ongoing development of the overall liturgical music ministry in a parish or school, especially the identification and recruitment of accompanists, cantors of the psalm, music coordinators, voice trainers, choristers and musicians. Responsibilities include the development and maintenance of the music repertoire, collaboration with music coordinators in the selection of music for Masses, rostering of music coordinators and other music ministers, budgeting for liturgical music expenditure, procurement and maintenance of musical instruments, procurement and maintenance of hymnals, procurement and maintenance of music manuscripts and other resources. Suitably qualified liturgical musicians will fill these positions.

Spiritual Gifts: Vocal and Instrumental Music, Administration, Discernment, Leadership

Ministry Commitment: 3-4 hours per week; ongoing ministry training
- **Music Administrator:** In addition to the ministry leadership roles, there is the need to provide coordinated administrative support for the music ministry, including (1) copyright license administration; (2) administration and preparation of music resources (e.g. sheet music, pew-cards, booklets and audio-visual worship aids) for musicians, singers and the assembly; (3) music ministry scheduling.

Spiritual Gifts: Administration

Ministry Commitment: 1-2 hours per week, ongoing ministry training

- **Projectionist:** Many parishes and schools now use audio-visual worship aids. The ministry of projectionist is responsible for the preparation and orderly operation of computer and audio-visual equipment to display the melody and texts of songs, and to synchronise the playing of audio backing tracks and DVDs during the liturgy when necessary.

Spiritual Gifts: Skilled Crafts

Ministry Commitment: 2 hours per week, ongoing ministry training

Depending on the particular needs, size and complexity of the parish or school, more than one of these roles may be fulfilled by one individual (e.g. music director and choir director; voice trainer and music coordinator; music administrator and projectionist). In some cases the music director may be a suitably gifted priest or assistant principal or REC.

Of all the music ministries, the ministries of cantor of the psalm and accompanist need particular focus. The development of school and parish choirs and ensembles are also encouraged for their contribution to supporting the assembly's participation in singing the Mass.

- **Cantor of the Psalm:** The Hebrew Psalter is the Christian songbook *par excellence*. The skilful singing of the responsorial psalm in the Liturgy of the Word provides an incomparable beauty and recollected solemnity, contributing greatly to the uplifting experience of the community at prayer and worship. For this reason the Diocese is encouraging the development of the ministry of cantor of the psalm by offering scholarships. Typically, a cantor would commit to sing the psalm at Mass weekly, fortnightly or monthly. They would prepare and rehearse the psalm, and would undertake two one-on-one singing lessons with a voice trainer in preparing a psalm prior to singing it at Mass. The scholarships offered would contribute to the cost of singing lessons with a voice trainer.

Spiritual Gifts: Vocal Music

Ministry Commitment: Rostered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, 3 hours per Mass; ongoing ministry training

- **Accompanists:** The skilled accompanist leads, supports and animates the assembly's voice. In the dynamic of poetic expression and aesthetic reception, in the hearing and in the playing, "when song and music are signs of the Holy Spirit's presence and action, they encourage, in a certain way, communion with the Trinity" (John Paul II, *Chirograph on Sacred Music*, 3). The accompanist is a critical part of this communication, so much so that the experience of the community at prayer and worship is seriously diminished in a Mass without an accompanist. For this reason, the Diocese is encouraging the development of the ministry of accompanist by offering scholarships.

Spiritual Gifts: Instrumental Music

Ministry Commitment: Rostered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, 3 hours per Mass (5 hours if accompanying choir rehearsals); ongoing ministry training

Choral music has been at the heart of Christian worship since the beginning, when choir (Gk. *choros*) and assembly (Gk. *ekklesia*) were synonymous. With the development of the *Schola Cantorum* in the seventh century and the subsequent development of polyphony, the choir increasingly came to mean a group of specialist singers separate from the assembly. The organ became a popular instrument in liturgy, and eventually orchestras and various ensembles. Today, John Paul II's vision for "the smooth coordination of all" sees a return to the idea of the assembly as choir. In this model, the specialist choir is a part of the assembly and the choir director is also the music coordinator for the Mass.

In this model choirs, cantors and musical ensembles have a special role in leading and supporting the assembly's singing, much like the role of the accompanist. There are also times when the choir or cantor alone may sing, or the musicians alone may play. You are encouraged to develop choirs, cantors, bands and ensembles to provide opportunities for ministerial stewardship of the many musical gifts God has provided.

- **Choir Conductor (Band Leader, Ensemble Leader):** This ministry is responsible for the preparation, rehearsal and conduct of music at a given Mass, including all choristers and musicians.
Spiritual Gifts: Vocal and Instrumental Music, Administration, Leadership
Ministry Commitment: Rostered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, 6-7 hours per Mass; ongoing ministry training
- **Cantor:** This ministry is responsible for leading and animating the assembly's singing at a given Mass.
Spiritual Gifts: Vocal Music
Ministry Commitment: Rostered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, 2 hours per Mass; ongoing ministry training
- **Chorister:** This ministry is responsible for preparation, rehearsal and singing in choir at a given Mass.
Spiritual Gifts: Vocal Music
Ministry Commitment: Rostered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, 3 hours per Mass; ongoing ministry training
- **Musician:** This ministry is responsible for preparation, rehearsal and playing an instrument in a band or ensemble at a given Mass.
Spiritual Gifts: Instrumental Music
Ministry Commitment: Rostered weekly, fortnightly or monthly, 3 hours per Mass; ongoing ministry training

All the preceding specialist liturgical music ministry roles work together to support the *primary liturgical music ministers*:

- **The Assembly:** The assembly includes EVERYONE – the priest celebrant, the deacon, the acolytes, the servers, the readers, the communion ministers and the gathered people of God.

What is the Remuneration for The Liturgical Music Minister?

Helping make “the liturgical moment **truly intense, shared in and fruitful**” is a marvellous reward in itself and many parishioners joyfully contribute their time, treasure and talent to this pursuit.

The Church is most grateful to the many people who see liturgical music ministry as one of the ways of expressing their stewardship of the gifts that God has given them. Our celebrations of Mass would be very much impoverished without the ministry provided by the many musicians and singers who regularly give of their time, talent and treasure to lead our singing. The time given includes the hours spent each week in preparing and rehearsing for Mass, in distributing rosters and coordinating volunteers, in developing the assembly’s music repertoire over time, in cataloguing and maintaining sheet music assets, in copying song sheets and reporting song usage to copyright license providers, and in preparing slides for overhead presentation. The talent contributed includes the money and time spent with music and liturgy teachers learning and developing their God-given musical gifts for liturgy. In addition, music ministers often contribute money to the costs of musical instruments, music manuscripts and other music ministry resources used at Church.

Professional musicians by trade, whose income is dependent on charging for their musical skills, are also invited to donate their services to Church ministry as part of their stewardship of God’s gifts. The Church is always very grateful for all professionals - architects, teachers, health care professionals, builders, electricians, plumbers, florists, etc. - who donate their services to the Church free of charge as part of their contribution to the stewardship of the Church. In the case of professional musicians, their gift is often more than a tithe (i.e. more than four hours of professional services each week).

In justice, the Church also recognises that it has an obligation to remunerate people for appropriately qualified professional services. Canon Law addresses this area specifically:

Can. 231

§1. Lay persons who permanently or temporarily devote themselves to special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation required to fulfill their function properly and to carry out this function conscientiously, eagerly, and diligently.

§2. lay persons have the right to decent remuneration appropriate to their condition so that they are able to provide decently for their own needs and those of their family. They also have a right for their social provision, social security, and health benefits to be duly provided.

For these reasons the Church and its agencies employ paid full-time and part-time permanent and casual professional lay persons in areas such as education, health care, youth work, social work, pastoral care, counselling and aged care, as well as administrative roles in finance and accounting, information technology, human resources, communications, marketing, fundraising, legal, secretarial and administration services.

So also, when the Church has a need for many hours of service per week from a professional director of music ministry, a music teacher, a liturgy coordinator, a voice trainer, a choir director, a singer or a musician, it expects to pay an appropriate level of remuneration.

Many parishes employ full-time and part-time directors of music ministry, choir directors and professional musicians to promote the active participation of the assembly in the Mass so that their celebrations will be an uplifting experience of the community at prayer and worship. The Church also encourages the employment of appropriately remunerated professional liturgical singers and musicians for baptism, wedding and funeral liturgies and other major liturgical events.

Professional liturgical music ministers are expected to have the necessary knowledge and experience of liturgy, as well as the musical skills necessary to lead the assembly in uplifting liturgical celebrations.

Conclusion

The Liturgical Music Minister is a key force in promoting participation in the liturgy. The myriad of roles are challenging and rewarding, always requiring a collaborative and generous spirit. The smooth coordination of all requires a skilled and experienced Music Ministry Director working with a team of patient and artful music coordinators, with support for administration and ministry formation.

Further References and Resources for Parishes and Schools

The following resources are available to assist parishes with regard to employing and paying professional liturgical musicians for services:

- *Formation Vision for Liturgical Music Ministry*
<https://www.catholic.org.au/news/formation-vision-for-liturgical-music-ministry>
- *Guidelines for recruiting, hiring and evaluating a Director of Music Ministry*
https://www.dosp.org/wp-content/uploads/28_Hiring-a-Parish-Music-Director.pdf
- Sample Job Descriptions of Parish Music Ministry Directors (U.S. website)
<https://npm.org/?s=Director+of+Music+Ministry>
- The Spiritual Gifts Inventory is available from the Diocese of Wollongong.
- Musician's Union of Australia Rates Calculator
<https://musiciansunion.com.au/calculator/>
- Sample of current Musicians Union rates. These rates are a minimum. Current commercial casual rates from funeral directors are generally 10 – 30 % higher.
 - Casual accompanist / singer for a funeral or wedding \$184.62 @ \$61.54 per hour (Casual Principal - 3 hour minimum call).
 - Weekly Music Ministry Director providing overall liturgical ministry leadership and undertaking coordination of two Sunday Masses and weekly evening rehearsal of one choir; ~15 hours per week (3 days of five hours) \$1,089.36 @ \$60.52 per hour (Weekly Leader – 3 or more).