OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

ST. MICHAEL'S CHOIR SCHOOL

2014 - 2019
Today, St. Michael’s Choir School is a strong and vibrant institution that excels in its mission and is recognized as a leader within the Toronto school community and beyond.

This document is written with guidance and in the spirit of the Pastoral Plan and is one of the efforts to make certain that the School can continue to serve the community with excellence, well into the future. With the 75th anniversary celebrations still top of mind and as we look forward to, once again, renewing our learning quarters to meet the ever-changing needs of our students, it is the perfect time to reflect on the direction of this institution over the next several years.

All of the participants in this endeavour have worked together to identify specific courses of action and prioritize needs for St. Michael’s Choir School.

The Pastoral Plan of the Archdiocese of Toronto notes that “For over 75 years St. Michael’s Choir School has served as an important element in the mission of the Cathedral.” It further states that “Within the area of the ‘Cathedral block’ we must find a creative way to provide for the future of the school… fulfilling the noble intention of Monsignor Ronan, founder of the school.”

These areas of focus have been identified as:

- Excellence in sacred music
- Excellence in education
- Pastoral presence and guidance
- Staff
- Parents and family
- Alumni
- Governance
- Admissions
- Communications
- Finance and advancement

This strategic plan was developed through an open process that included all of our constituencies. We believe that it represents, as closely as possible, a consensus of the thoughts and ideas expressed throughout the process. We want to thank all those who gave of their time to engage in this exercise—ideas were contributed by a wide variety of participants.

We invite all members of the St. Michael’s Choir School community to review this document in the hope that we will all work together to implement these important next steps.
our MISSION

The formation of Catholic men
through the service of sacred music and the pursuit of knowledge.
ST. MICHAEL’S CHOIR SCHOOL creates an environment that allows each student to live the motto upon which the School was founded: *He who sings, prays twice*. Each boy will be supported and mentored as he devotes all that he is for the glory of God through the study and service of sacred music in the Cathedral, and through academic achievement.

**our VISION**

The commitment to sacred music provides a deep sense of the beauty and joy of the Catholic spiritual tradition, which helps each student realize his calling and vocation as he matures in his faith. The Choir School also strives to unite this musical dedication with academic goals and the development of men of character who will contribute to the common good.

St. Michael’s Choir School is a community that includes students, parents, friends, educators, staff, clergy, alumni, and the Toronto Catholic District School Board, united under the spiritual leadership of the Archbishop of Toronto. Upon graduation, students of St. Michael’s Choir School continue to serve the Church, the community, and the School.
our MOTTO

Bis orat qui cantat.
He who sings, prays twice.
## EXCELLENCE IN SACRED MUSIC

**Objectives**
- To serve God, the Universal Church, the Archdiocese of Toronto, and the community with commitment and joy through sacred music
- To safeguard and develop the living tradition of music specific to the Roman Rite, with a focus on Gregorian chant and polyphony
- To make sacred music a profound part of the faith development of our students
- To prepare and encourage students to use their knowledge of sacred music in a faith-based life after they graduate from the School

**Actions and undertakings**
- Provide sacred music of the highest calibre to St. Michael’s Cathedral and the Archdiocese of Toronto and maintain a high standard of music performance through concerts and touring
- Explore ways to further engage students in their musical work at the School
- Strengthen our delivery of vocal, theory and instrumental programming
- Promote St. Michael’s Choir School as a resource for knowledge in sacred music and liturgy
- Develop apprenticeship programs for organists, cantors and choir directors
- Establish and implement a concert series in the Cathedral that showcases our high standard of sacred music in order to further deepen the relationship between students, alumni, and the music community of Toronto
- Establish relationships with other choir schools around the world

## EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

**Objectives**
- To provide the best balanced education for the whole boy in keeping with the mission of the School that enables our students to develop healthy minds, bodies, and spirits
- To encourage the pursuit of excellence in faith, intellect, and character in keeping with the mandate of the Archbishop and the Toronto Catholic District School Board

**Actions and undertakings**
- Further enhance the integration of the academic and music programs
- Continue to develop relationships with relevant national and international programs
- Develop a focus on real-world problem solving using appropriate technology in the daily curriculum
- Amplify intuitive instructional approaches with research-based, relevant, and developmentally appropriate best practices for educating boys
- Infuse the teaching and learning environment with opportunities to demonstrate and develop character

## PASTORAL PRESENCE AND GUIDANCE

**Objectives**
- To assist our students in engaging in the life of their parish and in the Cathedral
- To have a pastoral presence as a consistent part of the school life of our students
- To provide pastoral counselling

**Actions and undertakings**
- Strengthen the connections and relationships with parishes across the Archdiocese in terms of the sacred music program
- Communicate with the parishes of the Archdiocese in order to determine the possibility of parish participation
- Work with the rector of the Cathedral in the assignments of associate priests in order to ensure a consistent pastoral approach in the School and in the development of the choral and congregational music at celebrations facilitated by St. Michael’s Choir School
- Arrange for priest alumni of the School to attend “Career Days” and other opportunities where they can share their experience and encourage continued commitment to the Church
- Develop an annual pastoral plan in conjunction with the chaplain (chaplaincy team leader/co-ordinator) at the School and the rector of the Cathedral
Objective: To attract, support, develop, and retain staff connected to the School’s mission, values, and high standard of excellence.

Actions and undertakings:
• Develop human resource materials that convey clear information about the unique mission and activities of the School to be distributed to prospective employees.
• Continue to nurture an environment that supports positive staff relations.
• Ensure that, in consultation with the principal and the director, the entire staff develop an annual growth plan that supports their professional learning and development.
• Design and implement an intentional and responsive strategic planning program with emphasis on key centered relational teaching and learning world problem solving.
• Establish and nurture partnerships with other organizations.

Objective: To recognize and honour the role of the parents as the first teachers of their sons by involving them in the mission of the School.

Actions and undertakings:
• Encourage parental engagement in the School through the Catholic School Advisory Committee.
• Provide opportunities for parents to have input and offer input in the complete education of their sons.
• Strengthen the relationship between the Church and family by including the parents and family in the students’ religious education.
• Develop a formal orientation plan that would assist new students and parents to transition into the School.
• Create a plan for introduction and ongoing involvement for parents in the Catholic Church life of the School.

Objective: To support a strong alumni community that contributes to the School and its students.

Actions and undertakings:
• Promote the St. Michael’s Choir School Alumni Association with the purpose of furthering the interests of alumni and the School.
• Develop a communication plan for alumni.
• Establish a formal mentoring program for students and alumni.
• Keep records of the profiles and activities of alumni in the School.
• Explore opportunities for alumni involvement in the School.
• Encourage participation in the activities of the School.
• Promote the School as a resource centre of music for alumni and the wider community.

Objective: To recognize the alumni of the St. Michael’s Choir School in the development.

Actions and undertakings:
• Develop and implement an awareness and streamlined communication plan that aligns with TCDSB communication policies, and that provides information, schedules and forms to fellow Roman Catholic Education Trustee, to enhance the School’s brand.
• Develop and implement a public relations and media plan to raise the profile of the School.
• Establish a strategic and sustainable plan for new students in need.
• Establish a formal orientation plan that provides for new students in need.
• Develop a plan for the School, and parents to showcase the School’s talent locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.
• Develop a “speakers/teachers” bureau of students and staff to showcase the School’s talent locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.
• Develop a plan for students requiring financial assistance.

Objective: To support and communicate directly and effectively with parents, students, staff, clergy, relatives, alumni and friends.

Actions and undertakings:
• Continue to build a bursary and scholarship fund that will meet the rigorous music and academic standards of the School.
• Develop a plan for students requiring financial assistance.
• Develop a five-year financial plan that reflects the true costs of operating the School according to its mission and values.
• Promote tentacle tuition schedules in order to allow for student parental financial planning/commitment.
• Develop a strategic plan for fundraising and other funding ventures.
• Establish a fundraising gift and event plan with a strategic approach for advancement that includes:
  • Advisory Committee
  • A “speakers/teachers” bureau of students and staff to showcase the School’s talent locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.
  • A plan for students requiring financial assistance.
• Develop a plan to implement best practices in stewardship of the School’s heritage through its archives.
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A talented young musician, John Edward Ronan, happened upon a passage in Pope Pius X’s *Motu Proprio, Tra Le Sollicitudini*, in which the pontiff called for a restoration of the ancient choir schools of the Church. For Ronan, this simple text guided much of his adult life and service to the Church, and laid the ideological foundation for what is now St. Michael’s Choir School.
In 1937, after studying at the Pius X School of Sacred Music in New York City, Father John Edward Ronan was appointed as Director of Music at St. Michael's Cathedral. In October of that year, St. Michael's Choir School opened in a single room in the diocesan office building at 67 Bond Street, Toronto, with Fr. Ronan as its head. Through this Cathedral Schola Cantorum, the young Fr. Ronan was now able to realize Pius X's vision with a student regimen of piano, choral music, theory and Gregorian chant that continues to this day.

Fr. Ronan was recognized by Pope Pius XII for his teaching and promotion of liturgical music and was elevated to Prelate of the Papal Household, with the title of Monsignor in 1947. Shortly thereafter on June 18, 1950, Cardinal McGuigan blessed and officially opened a new school building to accommodate the growing enrolment. In 1955, the School was granted affiliation with the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome—only six other choirs and choir schools in the world share this privilege.

Throughout the 1960s, the School continued to grow and the need for new space became paramount. This resulted in further expansion to 56 Bond Street. The continuous expansion, however, took its toll, and by 1967 financial difficulties were so dire that it was uncertain whether the high school would open for the 1967-68 year.

The Choir School, which up until that point had been private, negotiated a partnership with the (then) Metropolitan Separate School Board. Under the partnership the academic program would be overseen by the school board, while the musical training remained privately funded. This arrangement, which continues today, allowed the School to receive provincial funding, yet retain autonomy and flexibility in its musical program—a musical program that is recognized and celebrated throughout the world.
For its 75th anniversary, St. Michael’s Choir School had the honour of performing for the newly elected Pope Francis, as well as at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome: an institution whose legacy and influence over the School has been profound.

As the School moves towards its centennial year, Monsignor John Edward Ronan’s dedication to service through sacred music continues to live on. The spirit of innovation, growth and educational excellence that marked the early years is as vital today as it was then, and will continue to characterize St. Michael’s Choir School into the future.
St. Michael’s Choir School is a successful institution by any standard. Our commitment to sacred music is deep and respected; the Archdiocese and the Toronto Catholic District School Board are served well by our dedication. Our graduates are provided with a myriad of choices about where and how they will bear witness to their faith after they graduate.

The mission of the School and its personality will go forward alongside the strategic plan, but they will not fundamentally change. We are an institution devoted to sacred music. It is our intention to remain small and to retain the closely knit community we currently enjoy which spans grade levels and cultural heritage. We are proud of the rich complexity that makes up St. Michael’s Choir School, including that of the students, their families, staff, clergy, and alumni.

As the world changes we will respond and use new developments to advance our goals. Some things, however, will not change: our core, our faith and our values. St. Michael’s Choir School remains devoted to its tradition; to an excellent and exciting present, and to a promising future. We intend to continue to be leaders in safeguarding and developing sacred music, and promoting the highest calibre of Catholic education in Canada and in the wider world.
“Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works”

Psalm 105:2
Acknowledgements

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• The Strategic Planning Steering Committee
• The Archdiocese of Toronto
• The Toronto Catholic District School Board
• The St. Michael’s Choir School Advisory Board
• The St. Michael’s Choir School Finance Council
• The St. Michael’s Choir School Catholic School Advisory Committee (CSAC)
• The St. Michael’s Choir School Alumni Association
• The faculty, staff, students, parents and friends of St. Michael’s Choir School

We would also like to acknowledge all the members of our community who attended the open house discussions. Your insight, suggestions and involvement were invaluable to the development of this plan.