

Cantors in the Anglican Church

A Cantor is a singer who leads either the congregation or the choir with his or her voice. It is a very ancient and traditional office which exists in all three Catholic Churches - Anglican, Greek and Roman. During the Reformation of the 14th and 15th centuries some Protestant Churches such as the Lutherans began to style their music directors and chief musicians Cantors (J. S. Bach was often referred to as Thomas-kantor meaning Cantor at St. Thomas Church) In the Anglican tradition, there may be one, two or four cantors in a service, depending on the style of music and liturgy to be performed. The purpose of an Anglican Cantor is to encourage congregational singing by leading with a clear strong voice, and to perform certain portions of the Liturgy such as Introits, Gospel Alleluias, Communion Anthems, and or Post-Communion Anthems.

Related words:

Canticles (songs which are chanted) See BCP p. 8ff

Chant - an ancient form of singing, based on 8 classic "modes". See the Hymnal 1940 p.697-699

Choir - a body of singers assisting at Divine Services in the singing of Service Music and Hymns.

All these words are descended from or related to chanter (pronounced "shahn-tay"), the French (Latin) word for song.

The Communion Anthems Sung by Anglican Cantors are prescribed in the Minor Propers of the Anglican Altar Missal.

The musical settings are taken from a variety of sources including The English Gradual Part II - The Proper by The Royal School of Church Music; Dorking, United Kingdom.

Communion Anthem for the Fifth Sunday after Easter Also called Rogation Sunday

O sing unto the Lord, alleluia:

Sing unto the Lord and praise his Name;

Be telling of his salvation from day to day, alleluia, alleluia.

O sing unto the Lord, alleluia.

Sources: The Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, & Ritual Notes - A comprehensive guide to the rites and ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer.