**Director of Sacred Music**

**Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church**

**& Diocesan Shrine of Divine Mercy & St. Faustina**

Kansas City, MO

**Job Type:** Full-time

**Application link:** <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/1771542>

**Description**

**POSITION OBJECTIVE**

The primary objective of this position is to maintain and grow a high-quality sacred music program at Our Lady of Good Counsel parish. This program is to be rooted in the sacred music tradition of the Church, most especially through Gregorian chant, polyphony, and to a lesser degree, hymnody.

**GENERAL PARISH DESCRIPTION**

Our Lady of Good Counsel is a parish of the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph located in the Westport District in the heart of Kansas City, MO. Built in 1907, it is a beautiful church of traditional sacred architecture that seats roughly 330 people, and is home to a total weekend Mass attendance of 600-650 people. The size of the parish has nearly doubled in the past five years.

Our parish is a bit unusual, demographically, in that we have a large and consistently growing number of young adults and especially young families. The average age of the parish, if you include children, is probably around 30 years old.

Over the past 20 years, Our Lady of Good Counsel has become a place known for liturgical beauty and reverence. We have over 20 boys regularly serving as altar servers at our Sunday Masses, make use of a communion rail for the distribution of Holy Communion, celebrate all of our liturgies exclusively ad orientem from a high altar, only make use of Latin ordinaries when Mass is sung, and make use of incense throughout the entire calendar year at our two largest Sunday liturgies (9:00am and 11:00am).

Additionally, our parish was also erected in 2005 as the diocesan shrine to Divine Mercy & St. Faustina. A special love and devotion to Divine Mercy has developed within the parish over 20+ years, initiated by long-time pastor Msgr. William Blacet, who passed away in June 2020 at 98 years old. He served as pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel from 1992-2017, taking the parish from the verge of closure to a joyful home for many faithful Catholics. Speaking of mercy, our daily 12pm Mass Mon-Fri welcomes 10-20 each day for confession, with two additional hours of confession on Saturdays.

It is worth noting two independent Catholic apostolates that are closely connected to the parish, both because they rent space from us within which to operate, and also because many of those involved in these two apostolates are also parishioners.

The first is the **Chesterton Academy of St. Philip Neri**. The Chesterton Schools Network is a national network of classical Catholic high schools located now in many cities across the country. The first Chesterton Academy in Kansas City opened in Fall 2022 here in one of the newly acquired buildings on our parish’s property (an old Methodist church next door that we acquired in 2021). The school finished the first year on a good note with 20 students (freshmen and sophomores), and will begin their second year next year with roughly 40-50 students. Even though the school is independent of the parish, we have a good relationship with them – many of the staff are parishioners, and roughly half of the students come from the parish.

The second is **City on a Hill Young Adult Apostolate**. This is a very large metro-wide Catholic young adult community that I myself (the pastor) have been involved with as director and/or chaplain since 2016. They also rent space within the same building as the Chesterton Academy and host many young adult events and initiatives on campus. Like Chesterton, they are an independent Catholic apostolate.

**PARISH MUSIC BACKGROUND**

Our Lady of Good Counsel boasts a solid sacred music tradition stretching back 20+ years, with a choir that has consistently sung simpler polyphonic motets, although without much training or background in Gregorian Chant. Our congregation confidently (and joyfully!) sings Mass VIII on most Sundays of the year. Mass XVII has been introduced during Advent and Lent over the past couple years, and the congregation has slowly grown in confidence singing that Ordinary as well.

The full Gregorian propers, chanted by the entire choir or a schola, have yet to be incorporated into the parish’s Sunday liturgy, but the person in this position would be expected to lead the choir in that direction, while maintaining and improving the choir’s mastery of other choral music.

Currently, at the principal Sunday Mass, the music looks like the following:

**Processional**: Hymn (we have the Adoremus hymnal)

**Introit**(during incensation): Choir director chants antiphon solo and a capella, English

**Ordinary of the Mass**: Mass VIII (Ordinary Time, Christmas, Easter) or Mass XVII (Advent & Lent)

**Responsorial Psalm**: English to a psalm tone, with polyphonic verses

**Alleluia**: Graduale Simplex with simple English verse

**Offertory**: Choir director chants antiphon solo and a cappella, English and sometimes an additional motet by the choir

**Memorial Acclamation**: Latin chant from missal

**Pater Noster**: Congregation sings confidently in Latin

**Communion**: Choir director chants antiphon solo and a cappella, English with a number of psalm verses. Choir sings at least one motet. Hymn

**Recessional**: Hymn

It is the pastor’s vision (me) for Our Lady of Good Counsel to grow its sacred music program significantly in the next 5-10 years. Concretely, this means the following:

**Adult choir:**This choir, which numbers roughly 10-15 singers, should grow in both size and ability. To help with this, I will make funds immediately available to our new choir director to hire four section leaders for the entire 2023-24 musical season (Sundays, Holy Days, and big Feasts), should the new choir director agree with the prudence of such a decision.

**Children’s choir:**It is also my vision for the new choir director to continue to grow, expand, and improve our children’s choir (currently 15-25 children coming for weekly choir practice). The children’s choir will be entering its third year, and periodically sings at the 11:00am Sunday Mass.

**Additional choirs/scholas:**At some point in the next few years, I would like to see a skilled men’s chant schola developed. This would be a new initiative that has not been done before at the parish.

**Sunday Vespers:**I would eventually like to incorporate regular Sunday evening Vespers into the life of the parish. We did it every Sunday for Lent this year with a group of four paid professional singers and it was very well received by parishioners. The choir did a different polyphonic setting of the Magnificat each time, in addition to polyphonic psalm verses, even. I would like, over the course of 3-5 years, to slowly build up to regular sung Sunday Vespers from Labor Day through Corpus Christi. N.B. – There is not a single parish in the Kansas City Metro area which offers regular Sunday Vespers, so we would be the first.

**Pipe Organ Project:** The interior of our parish is already quite beautiful. That being said, there are still quite a number of improvements I am planning to make through a larger restoration/renovation initiative. Part of this is (95%) likely to include a pipe organ project, as we currently only have an electronic organ. I can’t give an outright promise that this will take place, but this is definitely my goal. The new sacred music director would need to take charge of organizing and planning what would be necessary to either acquire, refurbish, and install an old pipe organ, or to plan for a custom-built pipe organ. The possibility of a custom organ over acquisition of a used organ would be entirely dependent on available funds and fundraising efforts.

Additionally, it may be worth noting that, over the past 10 years or so, the Kansas City Metro area has slowly been attracting more parish music directors that are devoted especially to the sacred music tradition of the Church. While the number isn’t huge, there is at least a contingent that would make our new music director feel as if there is some networking and wider support that is locally available. In other words, our parish wouldn’t be a complete “island,” so to speak.

Finally, to give a little personal background, I (the pastor) have a deep love and appreciation for sacred music, so my plan is to be as involved and supportive as possible in the development of the sacred music program here at Good Counsel (without micro-managing).

I did not grow up hearing sacred music in a liturgical setting, but once I discovered it, I knew there was no going back! My first real taste of polyphony actually didn’t come until my first year of theology in seminary, where the seminary choir sang Morten Lauridsen’s *O Magnum Mysterium*, and I remember being incredibly moved (to tears, actually) by the piece and also wondering why I had never heard similar music in the liturgy before…

I’ve had many experiences of extremely well-done sacred music before, have a rudimentary understanding of the history of sacred music, the “musical structure” of the Mass (both the extraordinary form and Novus Ordo) and can read and sing Gregorian chant with moderate to high proficiency. I say all this just so the new music director knows that, at least to some degree, I would be able to have knowledgeable conversations with them about decisions regarding the sacred music of the parish, which I know can be helpful for a director.

**PARISH YEARLY MUSIC RHYTHM**

Currently the parish Mass schedule, and what the music director would be initially responsible for, looks like the following:

**Sundays**

4:00pm (Saturday Vigil Mass) No music

7:45am No music

9:00am Adult Choir

11:00am Cantor or Children’s Choir

**Holy Days of Obligation**, when falling Mon-Fri (if Sat, Mass is at 9:00am)

6:00am No music

12:00pm No music OR Organ/Cantor

6:00pm Organ/Cantor

**Feast Days** special to the parish (Mass times and musical accompaniment will vary)

St. Faustina (Oct 5)

St. John Paul II (Oct 22)

Our Lady of Good Counsel (Apr 26)

Dedication Anniversary of the Parish (Nov 28)

5-6 feast days per year chosen for celebration of a Sung Mass in the extraordinary form (accompanied by organ and schola)

First Fridays (including exposition & benediction)

**ESSENTIAL DUTIES**

**Choral conducting**

Recruiting, training, rehearsing, and conducting choir members for 2-3 choirs/scholas (Labor Day until Corpus Christi). Right now there are two choirs, as mentioned above: the adult choir and the children’s choir.

Conducting of parish choir(s) for all major liturgies (Sundays – excluding summer, all Holy Days of Obligation, & Holy Week).

Recruit section leaders for the choir, and additional instrumentalists.

**Organ accompaniment**

Organ accompaniment for the two principal Sunday Masses, Holy Days of Obligation, and other Feast Days of significance.

Be available for weddings and funerals as needed (per diem stipend as arranged)

**Teaching**

Forming and teaching children of all ages from the parish in how to sing Gregorian chant and polyphony

Forming and teaching the various adult members of the choir(s)/schola(s) how to sing sacred music, particularly Gregorian chant.

**Administration**

Communicating effectively via e-mail and phone with choir members, musicians, and pastor.

Compile and maintain a list of approved music for weddings & funerals, as well as musical guidelines for weddings and funerals.

Find substitute organists, cantors, and/or choir conductors when necessary.

Compiling and editing any leaflets or booklets that may be needed to assist the congregation with music.

**Other**

Fostering an atmosphere of reverence and decorum among choir members, primarily through one’s own example of proper worship of God during Mass.

Given the desired growth of the music program at OLGC, flexibility is needed regarding duties as the program grows.

Adequately preparing the parish for any significant changes for music within Mass via bulletin explanations, links to music on the website, etc. (e.g. learning a new Mass ordinary).

N.B. – We are about to launch a new parish website. So if you look up our current website to get a feel for the parish, it probably won’t be particularly helpful… We are hoping to have the new website live by end of June or early July.

Our Lady of Good Counsel offers a comprehensive benefits program, including medical, dental and vision plans, STD/LTD fully paid by the employer, retirement plans including a 403b plan and a defined benefit pension plan. Paid time off includes generous Vacation and Sick leaves, plus paid Holidays.

**Requirements**

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES**

**Choral conducting**

Strong conducting skills, both in the areas of polyphony and Gregorian chant.

Ability to teach people, with no previous background, how to sing Gregorian chant.

**Organ**

Strong foundation in organ technique, with the ability to improvise, prepare and perform solo repertoire, accompany for choir and cantors, lead congregational hymns, and read 4-part polyphonic choral scores.

**Other**

Accurate and extensive knowledge of all Church documents pertaining to sacred music within the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite liturgy, and a working knowledge of other liturgical documents as well. This includes a good grasp of the principles found within, at minimum, the following:

*Tra Le Sollecitudini* (1903)

*Musicae Sacrae* (1955)

*De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia* (1958)

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963)

*Musicam Sacram* (1967)

Firm knowledge of the musical structure of the Mass, particularly the 18 Gregorian Mass settings found in the Graduale Romanum, and the role of the propers in the Mass.

Familiarity with the musical structure of the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite, or the willingness to learn. Currently Our Lady of Good Counsel celebrates Sung Masses in the extraordinary form on a select number of feast days throughout the year (around 5-6 times per year).

**BASIC QUALIFICATIONS**

* Undergraduate degree in music, musicology, vocal performance, organ performance, or another related field is **required**.
* At least three years of experience leading and conducting sacred music is **required.**
* Practicing Catholic with ethical standards, personal integrity, and conduct consistent with the morals and teachings of the Catholic Church; includes faithful obedience to the Magisterium.

Note: All employees are required to consent to a background check, commit to our Code of Conduct policy, and complete online and in-person trainings prior to hire.