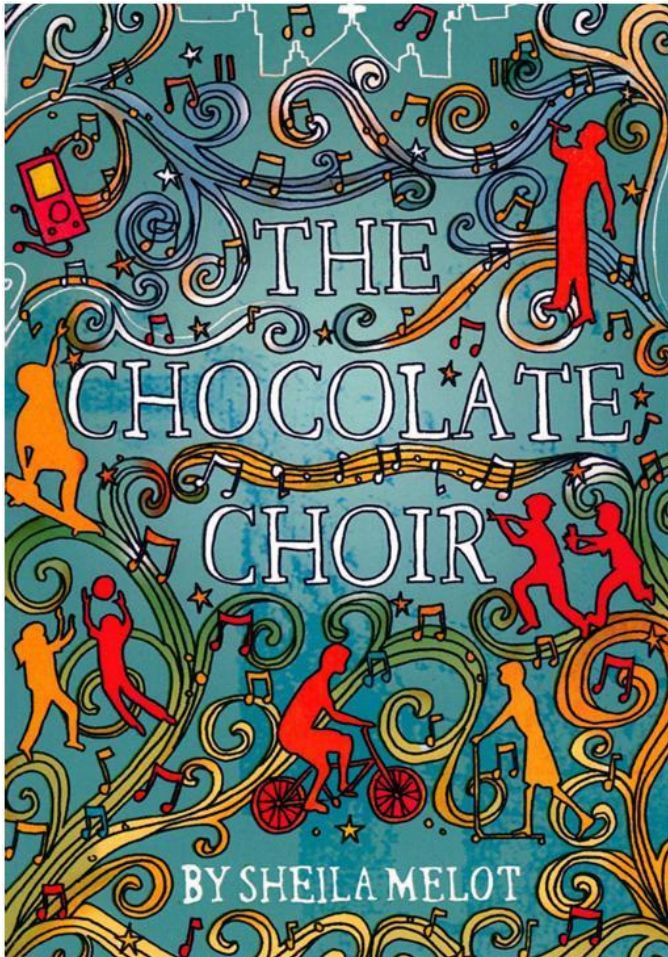


Presenting

“The Chocolate Choir”

A collection of stories for 7-11 year olds by Sheila Melot - trainee lay minister on placement in the East Bristol Partnership



'Ow!' The ball had hit Ben on the back of the head. It hurt! He turned round quickly, but it could have been any of the boys kicking a football as they made their way home. He trudged on down the road, his schoolbag heavy on his shoulder. Some girls skipped past him, chatting loudly to each other.

'Why does nobody seem to notice me?' thought Ben. For the hundredth time he said to himself, 'If only I had some friends. I wish we'd never moved to Bristol. My old school was much nicer.'

'The Chocolate Choir' is a book of stories for kids about kids. Kids who hang out together, argue and fall out, make friends again... Kids who suffer - from bullying, family breakups, illness - and who support each other through their friendship.

Set in the context of a children's church choir, these kids also ask themselves important questions, about God and prayer for example. But mostly they just have fun!

Sheila Melot is training for lay ministry at St Bartholomew's church in St Andrews, Bristol. Her many years running a junior choir inspired this book.

ISBN 978-0-9565490-0-6



Target age 7-11

Price £4.99

Sheila will have copies available after the joint service on Sunday 31st October , and she will donate £1 from every copy sold to church/partnership funds! People can also order copies from her direct by sending a cheque made out to 'Sheila Melot' to 47 Windsor Road, Bristol BS6 5BW, making clear which church they are from so that she can give the £1 per copy to the church. Or they can get copies from amazon.co.uk .

FROM CHOIR NOTES TO NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK

DAVID CLENSY meets the Bristol writer whose debut children's novel has been inspired by leading her local church's junior choir

SHEILA Melot can clearly remember the moment she decided to start a children's choir at her church.

"I was at a funeral service for an elderly parishioner, and the gentleman's grandson was singing a song he had written about his grandfather at the front of the church," Sheila recalls.

"He sounded so angelic, it suddenly flashed through my mind that we ought to have a regular children's choir in the church, so I made the decision there and then to set one up.

"I played the piano to Grade 3, and I'd been a regular in the choir when I was at school, as well as taking part in a little folk singing back in the 1960s, so I thought I would be able to take it on without too much trouble."

But Sheila had no idea what this momentary decision might lead to—or what she might be letting herself in for.

Now ten years on, and Sheila's adventures as the leader of the children's choir at St Bartholomew's Church in St Andrew's has led to a new book.

Inspired by her experiences with the church choir, Sheila has just published *The Chocolate Choir*—a children's book about a similar, fictional church choir.

"I've always enjoyed writing, and have long been a great journal-keeper," the 62-year-old retired charity worker explains, as she leads the way into her home.

"But a couple of years ago, when I went on holiday, I started to write down little stories about some of the things that the children had done over the years that I'd been running the choir.

"Gradually I started gathering them together, and I eventually started to think they might make a nice children's book.

"The name of the book, *The Chocolate Choir*, came from the fact that I always used to bribe the children to come to choir practice by giving them chocolate when they arrived.

"It became such a regular thing, some of the children's mothers started calling it the chocolate choir.

"Although the characters in the book aren't real, they're all inspired by children who have been in the choir over the years, and many of the stories are almost entirely true.

"For example, there really was an incident when a rendition of *All Things Bright And Beautiful* ended as normal with the line 'The Lord God

Photograph: Jon Kent

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True to life: Sheila Melot with a copy of her book *The Chocolate Choir*; below, St Bartholomew's Church choir



made them all'—until a moment later when one of the children in the choir said, 'no he didn't, it was evolution'.

"As you can imagine, that started a

rather deep debate among the choir, for which I wasn't fully prepared.

"On another occasion, one of the little girls in the choir became very

upset when we started talking about eating the flesh of Christ and drinking the blood of Christ.

"The little girl, it turned out, came from a family who weren't particularly regular church-goers, and she assumed that we were talking quite literally about eating flesh and blood.

"But generally the children are wonderful," Sheila adds.

"Occasionally they can be a little bit mischievous, of course, especially during choir practice, but when you get them at the front of a Sunday church service, or accompanying a wedding ceremony they become absolutely angelic, and I'm always very proud of them."

● *The Chocolate Choir*, by Sheila Melot, published by Tollem Publications, priced £4.99, is out now. The book is available online from Amazon.co.uk, or it can be ordered from all good bookshops.