

Church Music 2023-2024

I believe I can say without exaggeration that we are a musical church. We are blessed to have some fine musicians within our congregation who play a very active part in providing music for worship and other events, ever-enthusiastic singers and instrumentalists, and a wider congregation who value our contribution as musicians.

We are also very fortunate that our clergy and others who lead worship in this church work with us and support what we do. Our church choir is affiliated both to the Royal Schools of Church Music (RSCM) which provides support and training, a very useful magazine with hymn and anthem suggestions throughout the church year, joint choral services etc.. We are also a member of East Herts Church Choirs Association, which is an independent group of church choirs in the area, normally organising joint evensongs and other services in local churches, but also aiming to provide informal mutual support for Directors of Music in the area. Since the pandemic I have attended occasional meetings of my colleagues in this group, as some have felt the need for this support as they try to keep music-making alive in their churches' worship, often in very challenging circumstances. Difficulties include the scarcity of good organists and the lack of willing singers and instrumentalists especially in smaller congregations, but also lack of awareness in some clergy about the vital role that music could and should be playing in the life of their church. Added to this are conflicting attitudes between musicians and worship leaders as to what style of music their congregations want/like/should be offered. These are thorny issues, and my aim is to avoid such conflicts arising in our church. This is why we try to provide a mix of the more traditional hymns and anthems with worship songs, use of the amplified piano to accompany the latter where appropriate, Celtic music etc. Hymns/songs are chosen or approved by the person preaching. I try to be flexible and to make use of all the variety of expertise that we are blessed to have at our disposal. So, to summarise:

- Creators – for the past six months or so we have been using a new setting of the sung parts of the Communion Service by Harold Chaplin. Harold has the gift of being able to write interesting but also accessible, easily-learned music - I feel this setting is now embedded in our traditions! We also had the great pleasure as a church to host the launch concert of Rachel Chaplin's beautiful album *Music from an inner space*. This had the feel of a church event and it gave us a chance to fully appreciate Rachel's talents as writer and performer, and to welcome many of her supporters from further afield.
- Choir – continues to be an expert, loyal and mutually supportive group who have provided an anthem each week, and special services for Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week and Easter, to a consistently high standard. Members of the choir have taken part in joint Evensongs at other churches and cathedrals. We have also sung for weddings and sadly, this year, some funerals, including that of our much-missed choir and band member, Colin Crowhurst.
- Flare – our worship band have again taken the lead at Beer and Carols and HarvestFest events, and occasional services. Members of the band also play for Soul Food.
- All-age instrumental group – an overlap with the personnel of Flare, but aiming to include anyone who plays an instrument!
- Young people – many thanks to John Wachter in particular, and Sam Chaplin, for encouraging TMM members to make music in the church. I want very much to encourage young people

who are learning an instrument to join in with the band at All-age services, and if they like singing, to join the choir and/or sing at All-age.

- Organists – we are fortunate to have our three excellent organists, David Boarder, Richard Prince and Mark Buck playing regularly for us – many thanks to all of them.
- Concerts – over the past year St Andrew's has hosted, in addition to Rachel's concert, a vocal recital by Richard Prince, Herts Festival of Music events and the continuing series of folk concerts by renowned artists such as Eliza Carthy and Martin Simpson.

I am grateful for the positive feedback from members of the congregation that I often receive, and welcome suggestions related to music in the church. Thank you all very much.

Jane Eldred (Director of Music)