



“Whoever
sings, prays
twice”

(St Augustine)

What's happening in music?

A quick look back,
as we look forward

In the light of changes and developments over the last few years and the number of folks who have asked what is happening, I thought it would be helpful to put in writing where we are and what is happening with choirs, music group and worship.

What's the history?

St Peter's has a long and rich musical tradition that we can be rightly proud of. Both musically and spiritually it is to great credit that members of both the Girls' and Men and Boys' choirs have gone on to be ordained in the Church of England as well as to sing in church choirs across the country.

When I arrived twelve years ago, there were on a typical Sunday more people in the choir stalls than in the church pews. For evensong we didn't use the pews at all, everyone fitted comfortably into the choir stalls. There was a Men and Boys' choir at 11.00am, the same men with supporting women sang in the evening and the Girls' choir sang at the 9.30am. Over the years since then congregations have grown but the number of boys first, and then girls, wanting to be choristers has declined. It was observed that virtually all recruits were either the younger siblings of existing boy and girl choristers or those leaving the top end of young church. As chorister numbers declined and the boys' choir was closed the pool of potential recruits became more limited and recruitment in schools no longer had the impact of forty, thirty or even twenty years ago.

Where are we now?

Despite the huge amount of time, energy and creative recruitment events put in by Andrea (youth minister) and the choir parents, it has become clear that fewer girls want to sing in a Church choir – a situation recognised not just here but nationally. In March this year the numbers of girls had declined to a level where the Head of Music Ministry and Assistant Organist decided that due to the numbers, the Girls' choir was no longer viable. There are many possible reasons why this change has taken place but we can't rewind the clock and need to move on from where we are.

Looking forward to the future

For the future the worship requirements of our different services and our Church mission will shape the music provision. We have had both male and female priests, sacristans, communion assistants, young church leaders, intercessors and lesson readers for many years. Single gendered choirs are out of step with the inclusivity of worship, so for the future we want to make participation as open as it can be.

The shape of this provision for most weeks is outlined below, however there are some exceptions such as Remembrance and Easter Sunday.

Family service, second Sunday of the month (10.00am)

For this service when the children remain for the whole service, the lead will be the **Worship Band** with instrumentalists and singers with individual microphones. The worship band will rehearse on the Saturday afternoon before family service.

Holy Communion and Holy Communion with Baptism (10.00am)

We have called the group for these services **All Together** because it describes the bringing together of all age singers – including former girls' choir members, worship band and choir members who sing in the morning. It expresses that important purpose of 10.00am worship of bringing everyone together. However, perhaps it needs a better name? Suggestions to the vicar would be much appreciated! This group is a mix of singers and instrumentalists but with a large group (we hope) of singers positioned on the dais. Instead of individual microphones there will be a couple of stage microphones picking up the whole sound. The group is open to all ages (children still go out for young church and young people to Grid) and it is not robed. For young people who would like to, there is the opportunity to sing at RSCM days and summer week.

They will sing the familiar mix of hymns and worship songs we use in the morning and hopefully going forward will increase the repertoire – particularly for during the receiving of Communion.

Rehearsal will be for half an hour before the service on a Sunday morning and all are welcome even if they can only participate once a month. Although at present only a small fraction of our music budget is spent on this service we are hoping to be able to bring in an additional musician who is naturally familiar with contemporary worship and able to resource this service and Sanctuary.



Evensong and Choral Evening Holy Communion (6.00pm)

The musical lead for this will be a four-part robed choir with organ. Over the years it has been called the Evensong choir, the Men and Boys' choir, the Men and Ladies' choir and more recently SATB. It will be called **St Peter's Church Choir**, and will be open to all adults and young people aged 11+. It will be a robed choir and will sing choral music from the Anglican historic tradition; to what we hope will continue to be a cathedral standard. The choir will continue to offer the opportunity to sing at a cathedral for a week, or part of a week, each year. Young people in the choir can participate in both the RSCM Voice for Life and Chorister medal schemes. Church will continue to fund two paid music posts at this service – choir director and organist. St Peter's Church Choir will rehearse on Friday evening and Sunday afternoon before the service.

Sanctuary, currently first Sunday each month (7.45pm)

This will continue with its mix of guest and in-house worship leaders, and its range of contemporary worship songs will expand. If this is met also by an increase in the number of times each month that it gathers, Sanctuary will be able to draw on the support of a new contemporary worship leader.

Finally, and importantly, a big thank you!

At this time of transition, I want to say an important thank you to the girls from the Girls' choir who have faithfully supported our Sunday worship over these last few difficult years. It is much appreciated and I am confident that I am speaking on behalf of many in the congregation who would want to share their appreciation too.

If you have any questions, do please come and see me – you can book in to a vicar's surgery through the office.

Patrick