

2022 Wootton Parish Music Report

During 2022, worship in our parish returned essentially to its pre-Covid form. The choir sing regularly at the two morning Holy Communion services in St Mark's on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. There was a heartening trend towards welcoming new members of the choir in the second half of the year, with Steve Beynon, and John and Jane Castle attending practices regularly and singing at services. A few members of our choir are unable to attend as often as they would like because of family issues, but their contribution always enhances the choir when they are able to attend. Currently the choir has seven regular members. As always, I would like to thank the choir for their ongoing commitment and support for worship. I would also like to thank the churchwardens and PCC in the past year for their ongoing encouragement and generosity, and for looking again at my salary, which will continue to be based on Royal School of Church Music rates.

Apart from breaks in August and immediately after Christmas and Easter, choir practices were consistent on Thursday evenings. Due to my other commitments, we moved the practice start forward in September to 6.15pm, and practices end no later than 7pm. Our practices started at 6pm from October to prepare for our additional commitments at Christmas. In addition to playing and directing the choir at Holy Communion services, I play the electronic organ at Evensong at St Edmund's on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, and play the hymns at the Brunch service and All Age Worship at St Mark's on the first and third Sunday of the month. Holy Communion services also took place on the 5th Sunday of the month, apart from one occasion when a priest was unavailable, and we celebrated Morning Prayer with the planned hymns.

Worship in our parish life has now returned essentially to its pre-pandemic forms. As every year, I would like to thank the congregation for the effort they make in worship. I plan from early next year to bring back the singing of occasional anthems as well as meditative choir pieces during the distribution of Holy Communion. During the summer, I was asked to coordinate the planning of worship, so I am now responsible for the planning of readings, the distribution of music, and communication with visiting clergy before they come to celebrate the Eucharist with us. Anyone who wishes to take part in reading and the choir is very welcome. Please let me or another reader or chorister know if you are interested. I am convinced that a vibrant act of worship of whatever type we have, that expresses who we are as a parish, will be the best possible form of mission that we can give to those who are on the margins of our church community.

Worship will be important in the growth and development of a future plurality with East Cowes and Whippingham. I am working with Stuart McKerracher (who is in charge of music in those two parishes) to coordinate some joint services in our parishes in 2023. Cantus Vesperi, which Stuart also directs, came to sing Evensong at St Edmund's on the 1st Sunday of Advent, and this was a very successful and well attended service. With the PCC's approval, I rapidly booked them to come again in 2023.

We continued the practice of the annual Carol Service on the Sunday before Christmas in the morning in place of All Age Worship. Having this service at St Mark's allowed for greater access to it from families and the elderly. We welcomed two more occasional members of

the choir for this service, and we also had an important contribution on the flute before the service. Thanks to all who took part in the Carol Service, which was well attended and appreciated. Christingle on Christmas Eve was also a highlight in the parish's annual worship, with the church packed. The worship planning group worked together to improve the morning service on Good Friday through a combination of readings, prayers, moments of reflection and music which was as accessible as possible to a wide range of people. I would like to thank the members of the worship planning group for their ongoing support in worship planning.

I am still concerned about the ongoing state of the pipe organ at St Edmund's, since I rarely if ever play it, and I do not wish it to decay from lack of maintenance. However, I have heard reports from those who have played at funerals and weddings that it is still in good working order. I would like to put on occasional services at St Edmund's, which might attract a bigger congregation and would make the use of the pipe organ more practicable.

Lastly, I would like to thank the whole parish for their ongoing support to me personally and to the variety of worship that we provide. We should always give thanks to God for the gifts we have been given that enable us to offer a rich and varied diet of services to a wide range of people, many of whom have not always been regular churchgoers. I feel that this is a good example to give to other parishes at this particular time.

David McCulloch