

Worship and Music Report

The choir sing regularly at Holy Communion services at St Mark's on Sunday mornings and occasionally at special services. I also play hymns and songs at the Brunch service and All Age Worship at St Mark's on the 1st and 3rd Sunday mornings of the month. In 2024 the parish continued Songs of Praise services at 9.30am on the 5th Sunday of the month. The music was chosen in collaboration by members of the congregation and by the Music Director. I also planned the structure of this service with readings and prayers based on a pre-chosen theme.

I also played the electronic organ at Evensong at St Edmund's on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, but due to the small congregation at Evensongs, it became the norm for me to lead the congregation in singing hymns unaccompanied. I also played the organ at both churches for funerals, weddings and baptisms.

Apart from breaks in August and immediately after Christmas and Easter, choir practices were consistently held on Thursday evenings at 6pm. Choir numbers remained stable at 6, although 2 of our female singers are finding it progressively harder to attend regularly because of family commitments, but their contribution when present always enhances the choir. I would like to thank all members of the choir for their ongoing commitment and support.

I was asked to continue coordinating the planning of parish worship by the churchwarden, and later in 2024 by Rev Sandra after her appointment. I am still responsible for the planning of readings, the distribution of music (previously agreed with the Rector), and communicating the music and any special requirements with PTO clergy before they celebrate the Eucharist with us. As always, we welcome anyone who would like to join the choir or the list of Sunday readers. I am convinced that a vibrant act of worship that expresses who we are as a parish will be an excellent form of mission to those who are on the margins of our parish community.

I believe that worship will continue to be important in the growth and development of our East Medina plurality. There have been issues in creating services across the plurality, but I have continued to direct Cantus Vesperi in singing Evensong across the Island, and I believe that their base in Wootton will support the development of high-quality music across the plurality. Cantus Vesperi sang Evensong on Pentecost Sunday at St Edmund's as well as an Advent carol service on the 2nd Sunday of December, and both were very successful and well attended services. With Rev Sandra's and the PCC's approval, I intend to book them again for these services in 2025. Cantus Vesperi rehearse after Evensong services at St Edmund's.

We continued the practice of having the Christmas Carol Service on the morning of the Sunday before Christmas, in place of All Age Worship. Holding it at St Mark's encouraged greater access for families and the elderly to this service. The choir also welcomed two occasional members for this occasion. The carol service was well attended and appreciated. Christingle on Christmas Eve was a highlight in the parish's annual worship and the church was again packed in 2024. The morning service on Good Friday was largely planned by Steve Beynon and included a combination of readings, prayers, moments of reflection and music which aimed to be as accessible as possible. The services on Good Friday, Easter Day and Christmas Day were at 10am to encourage greater attendance from the congregation. Steve and Sue Beynon continued to lead the planning and delivery of the Brunch service with a rota of people taking charge of activities for children. David Bennison's role as a Lay Worship Leader has been very important in our worship, as has the support of Hilary Baldwin in leading services. This team of people have enabled the parish to use the spiritual gifts of a wide range of its members.

I have an ongoing concern about the state of the pipe organ at St Edmund's, since I rarely play it, but when it has been played it appears to be in good order and does not need major repair. There have been occasional ciphering issues with the organ at St Mark's in 2024 but these have been dealt with promptly.

Lastly, I would like to thank the whole parish for their ongoing support to me personally and for their encouragement in planning worship. I believe that 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. I would also like to thank the churchwardens and PCC in the past year for their ongoing support and generosity. Lastly, I am very grateful to Rev Sandra for putting faith in me in continuing to play a leading role in the delivery of the parish's worship.