

Worship and Music Report

The choir sang regularly in 2025 at Holy Communion morning services at St Mark's on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. I also played hymns and songs at All Age Worship at St Mark's on the 3rd Sunday morning of the month. For much of the year, however, I was unable to attend Brunch in Wootton on the 1st Sunday of the month as I was asked to assist Rev Sandra in leading the first part of Holy Communion at St Mildred's in Whippingham until Sandra arrived from an earlier service at East Cowes. I was welcomed kindly by the St Mildred's congregation. Steve and Sue Beynon continued to lead the planning and delivery of the Brunch service on the 1st Sunday of the month with a rota of people planning activities for children.

Early in 2025 Rev Sandra asked for a regular Holy Communion service to take place at alternating churches across the plurality on the 5th Sundays of the month. Four plurality services took place in 2025. The music was chosen in collaboration by Sandra and the hosting congregation with some input from me. I also supported the general planning of readings and prayers for the plurality services.

During 2025, the regular congregation at Evensong at St Edmund's on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month continued to shrink and it became the norm for me to lead the congregation in singing unaccompanied hymns.

I continued to play the organ at both St Mark's and St Edmund's for funerals, weddings and baptisms. With other work becoming more consistent for me, it has become harder to be able to play at occasional services as often as I would like. But I still intend to make myself available as often as possible.

Apart from breaks in August and immediately after Christmas and Easter, choir practices continued to be held on Thursday evenings at 6pm. The choir numbers increased to 7 with the arrival of Sarah, although our other female singers do not always find it easy to attend regularly because of family commitments. However, their contribution when available to sing always enhances the choir. I would like to thank all members of the choir for their ongoing commitment and support.

I would like to welcome anyone who wishes to join the choir or the list of Sunday readers and intercessors. 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 also believe that worship will continue to be important in the growth and development of our plurality. Participating in singing and reading is an essential element of the spiritual vitality of the parish.

I continue to be responsible for the planning of readings, the distribution of music (previously agreed with the Rector) and organising the rota for PTO priests when we need their ministerial support.

Outside regular services, I continued to direct Cantus Vesperi in singing 7 Evensong services across the Island in 2025, and I believe that having the choir's base in Wootton supports the development of high-quality music across the Island. The choir rehearses normally after Evensong services at St Edmund's. Cantus Vesperi sang Evensong on Pentecost Sunday at St Edmund's as well as an Advent carol service on the last Sunday of November, and both were very successful and well attended services. I intend to book them again for these services in 2026.

We continued the practice of having the Christmas carol service on the 3rd Sunday of December, in place of All Age Worship. Holding this service at St Mark's encouraged greater access for families and the elderly to this service. The carol service was well attended and appreciated. Christingle on Christmas Eve is now an annual highlight of the parish's worship, and the church was again packed in 2025.

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. David Bennison's role as a Lay Worship Leader has been very important in our worship, as has the support of Hilary Baldwin and Jonathan and Erica Hall in leading services. This team of people have enabled the parish to use the spiritual gifts of a wide range of its members.

I rarely get to play the pipe organ at St Edmund's, but when it has been played by other organists, they have reported that it is in good order and does not need major repair. There have been occasional ciphering issues with the organ at St Mark's, 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 especially like to thank the churchwardens and PCC in the past year for their ongoing support and generosity. I would particularly like to thank Sandra for encouraging me to play a leading role in the delivery of the parish's worship.