

Church Music report 2021-2022



Before writing this report, I re-read the one I produced for 2020-2021 (written in May 2021), which has emphasised for me that, although music-making in church has only gradually returned to something approaching “normal”, we have become much less restricted in our activities over the year, thanks to the roll-out of vaccines.

When I wrote last year’s report, I looked forward to being able to say goodbye to Zoom choir practices and resume in-person ones in church, as we had done briefly in autumn 2020. However, extra government caution about singing (possibly more risky than speech as it may produce more aerosols) produced a last-minute extra restriction as many others were lifted in mid-May – only six “amateur” singers were allowed to sing

indoors at any one time. This lasted until the end of the summer term. Our solution was to start outdoor choir practices, held outside the Centre – the first took place on 28th May (pictured). We just managed to avoid the rain! We drew up a rota for Sunday services so there were six singers each week. It was wonderful to me to hear the choir actually sing together (in choir practice) an anthem that we had learned on Zoom.

During spring and summer there was reduced music within the services in any case, but we did introduce the practice of singing the final hymn outside, so everyone could join in, unmasked. This proved very popular and we only stopped doing it when the autumn weather arrived. Normally the choir take a break in August, but in 2021 we carried on singing in the Sunday services, as restrictions in numbers had by then been lifted. In September we resumed choir practices in church. We had also been able to provide instrumental accompaniment for the restored All-age services from July, and for these we have moved towards more of a worship band style to the accompaniment, with use of the PA system, which has improved projection of the sound and support for the singing.

We have continued with socially-distanced seating in the choir, and currently have not resumed processions, except at Advent and Christmas when we devised a socially-distanced procession. With restrictions lifting completely now, I am actively considering a return to normal practice, but at the time of writing Covid cases are very high which makes me reluctant to make changes just at present.

It has been with great pleasure that the choir were able to lead worship as usual for

- Harvest Festival
- Remembrance Sunday
- Advent Sunday candlelit evening service
- Christmas service of lessons and carols
- Ash Wednesday

We were also able to lead the Isabel Hospice Lights of Love ceremony at Hertford Castle again, as that takes place outside.

We contributed to the “Our lockdown in 30 objects” exhibition with a selection of our lockdown recordings (the “object” being my microphone) and I have now put together a complete playlist of those recordings which can be shared with anyone who is interested.



Practice for 7 Lessons and Carols service 2020

Same rehearsal in 2021 – same seating and masks!

Our worship band have been able to start activities again, and it was good to be able to participate in the Beer and Carols event in December 2021. This was held outside with the band under gazebos. It was most successful despite the prevailing restrictions, as we were very visible and audible to passers-by and the community. (However, I should report that the cold, dark and damp did affect the instruments, music sheets and performance –speaking for myself at least!) We have resumed plans to lead worship for non-all-age 5th Sunday services, although the first of these was a bit disrupted by Covid. I wish to record my thanks for the input by John Wachter, Sam and Rachel Chaplin and Katie Seaton, and especially to Sam and John for leading the music at the church Away Day.

After many postponements, we anticipate a welcome return to the folk concerts booked by Chris Seward, with Fairport Convention due to appear in May. In 2021 the Hertfordshire Festival of Music did take place, with a string quartet appearing at St Andrew’s (with two short concerts rather than one longer one, to distribute the audience). A similar concert is scheduled for this June. Choir 18 also performed a Saturday morning concert in the church in November. Future plans for our choir include a concert as part of the Platinum Jubilee and Herts Festival of Music, jointly with Hertford Chamber Choir and All Saints choir, in All Saints Church, on June 3rd.

My very grateful thanks go to David Boarder, Richard Prince and Mark Buck for their organ playing and support. As ever I am amazed by, and thankful for, the dedication and enthusiasm – and expertise – of all the choir and instrumentalists in the church family, without which we could not have resumed our activities and retained our previous standard. We now look forward to leading the music in the Holy Week and Easter services, for the first time since 2019.

Jane Eldred