

Music Report 2017

The main "event" of the musical year was the arrival of our new Allen organ in May 2016. After the sad demise of our lovely Copeman Hart organ in 2015, and a long loan of a demo organ from Allens, it was great to get the new organ back in its proper place, and to start discovering what this new instrument could do for us. It has a wide variety of sounds, and those who are more techno-able can twiddle with the controls and settings to their heart's content. There was one Sunday in September when no-one was available to play, so we enlisted Bennet Smith into the ranks as an honorary organist, and he selected the hymns and a voluntary from a memory bank, so that the organ could play by itself. The addition of antiphonal speakers above the console has made a huge difference to the overall sound, meaning that the old time delay between the West-end speakers and the chancel is now a thing of the past, and there's no excuse for the choir to lag behind the congregation! We are extremely grateful to the anonymous donors who enabled us to have such a fine instrument, and we hope it will prove its worth for many, many years to come. Our two regular organists, Nick Castell and Daniel Eaton are certainly putting it through its paces. The organ was dedicated by our Archdeacon, Clive Mansell, in June.

The problem of what to do with the old Copeman Hart console was neatly solved by Nick, who arranged for it to be removed, stripped out and re-fitted with software linked to a computer, enabling it to be used as an organ again, but this time at Walthamstow Hall School, where he is Head of Music. It is good to know that it has found a new life there, and many of us heard it at its inaugural concert in the Spring term.

We are delighted that more people have joined the choir, so on a good day we could have 16 singers, but the average is about 10 at Sunday services. There's always room for more, especially Altos and Tenors. Practices are on Thursday evenings from 8-9 and are great fun, thanks to Nick, our excellent choirmaster. The choir was very much to the fore on our Music Sunday, which coincided with the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations. We raised funds for the Royal School of Church Music and for our own musical needs, with a retiring collection.

The Music Group still plays for Family services. Currently we have 3 flutes, 2 violins and 1 cello, but we shall soon be losing Laura and Anna to university, so we really need some new players. The group is very suitable for children who are learning an instrument, and it doesn't matter what stage they are at, because music can be adapted to suit their ability. It is a great way of getting experience of ensemble playing. Please contact Janet Sharp to find out more.

The choir has taken part in various combined services in the district - a Come and Sing Vivaldi Gloria at The Drive Methodist Church, the Christian Unity service at St Thomas RC Church in January, and the Good Friday music at St John's URC. We also sang carols for the Riverhead Christmas lights switch-on, and at the Bullfinch pub, raising money for the Children's Society.

The hymn books are reaching the end of their useful life. Many of the larger ones used by the choir are falling apart, so it really is time to start thinking about replacing them, especially if we can find a book that has a good selection of old and modern hymns, to save the constant printing of hymn-sheets.

As well as our regular music for services, there have been a few concerts in church this year. In May, we welcomed back our friends the London Estonia Choir, and girls from Walthamstow Hall School, for a joint concert with our church choir. Temenos Chamber Choir rehearses regularly in the church, and has given 2 very successful concerts here this year.

It remains for me to thank our two wonderful organists, Nick and Dan, for all that they do for us - it is a joy to work with them, and to hear their lovely playing. Special thanks too to Nick for being our choirmaster, and lastly, thank you to our loyal choir and music group for all that they do to enhance our worship.

Janet Sharp