

ST MARY THE VIRGIN RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN MUSIC REPORT 2019

Music continues to play an important part in our worship here at St Mary's, thanks to the wonderful help we have from both Dan Eaton and Nick Castell, our organists, the latter also being our Choirmaster. Choir practices are always enjoyable, and we aim to sing at least one anthem at every communion service, depending on the availability of voices.

With the start of the 3 parish initiative, we are trying to make musical links with St Luke's and St Mary's Kippington. We were happy to be able to help St Luke's choir when they needed extra singers for their Festival Eucharist last June and we also joined with the Kippington choir for the wedding of Judy Borrowman's grand-daughter last summer.

Some of the choir sang in the NWF Advent Carol service at St John's URC, but there didn't appear to be a combined choir for the Week of Christian Unity this year. Our main combined choir event was the superb performance of the Faure Requiem on Remembrance Sunday, at The Drive Methodist Church, conducted by our very own Nick Castell. All of us who took part felt that it was a very moving experience, and a fitting way to mark the Armistice Centenary.

Our friends in the London Mixed Voice Estonian choir visited us in October, for the whole weekend this time, in order to make an audition video for the big Song Festival in Tallinn later this year. It was great fun having them here, and they gave a free concert in church to thank us for our hospitality. Barry and I are going to Tallinn for the festival in July, so we will report back.

Christmas brought its usual round of carol-singing – in the pouring rain at the Riverhead Christmas Lights turn-on, in the warm at the Bullfinch pub, when we raised money for the Children's Society, and round the piano in church during the Christmas Tree Festival. In addition to our 9 Lessons carol service, the choir joined with the music group and the Sunday Club for a musical production "Stargazers". Masterminded by Daphne, this was a different way to tell the Christmas story, and it was a very successful joint venture. Some children and adults were brave enough to sing solos, and I hope we can collaborate again in the future.

A new initiative this year has been the organ scholarship, our first recipient being Emma Van Setten, a pupil at Walthamstow Hall School, who is studying organ with Anne Marsden Thomas, one of the top teachers in the country. She is going to be playing at the family communion services, and occasionally at other services, to give her more experience. I am sure you will all give her your support and make her feel welcome. Young organists are rare, and we are lucky to have her.

As I write this report, we have just had a Choral Evensong, the first for quite a while, and we invited singers from other churches in the deanery to come and take part. This was a really successful service and everyone enjoyed it, both choir and congregation.

It just remains to say a heartfelt thank you to Nick and Dan for all they do for us, and a special thanks to the choir and music group for their loyalty. We need more singers in the choir, and definitely more instrumentalists in the music group. I'm sure nobody wants to see the choir or music group dwindle further, so please think about whether you could join either – singing in particular, is so good for your health!

Janet Sharp