

Music Report 2013-14

I estimate that over the years I have written 24 annual music reports, for 3 different vicars, and through 2 interregnums, but now this is to be my last one, so it's the end of an era. After much fruitless searching for a replacement organist, we are delighted that Edwin Davis has appeared on the scene to take up the reins as organist and choir master. I will continue to run the Music Group and will play and assist at services as and when necessary, and I have swapped the organ seat for the choir stall.

Already the choir has taken on a new lease of life under Edwin's leadership, and we hope that we will attract more singers to join us. We especially need more Altos – Jean Knaggs has been a stalwart choir member for much longer than me, but ill-health has prevented her from singing with us for a while now, and our sole alto, Jane Ibbotson, is feeling a little lonely in her absence! We sang Choral Evensong for Candlemas in February, and we hope to have further occasional evensongs throughout the year.

Our Christmas Carol service was definitely one of the best ever, as Edwin and I shared the playing and conducting. We were fortunate to have some extra singers, who also joined us when we did our customary carol-singing at the Bullfinch pub, raising over £60 for the Children's Society, and sharing a Christmas meal together afterwards.

The Music Group continues to thrive, currently with 1 flute, 3 violins, 2 cellos and 1 cello/bassoon. Our young musicians are very versatile, and they contribute so much to our family worship, especially when I manage to get them to play an occasional solo. There is always room for more players among our young people. If your child is learning an instrument and would like to have a go, I will happily arrange music that is within their capabilities – it's an excellent experience of playing in an ensemble and a way of getting them involved with the musical life of the church. It's great to see them mature as musicians over the years.

We hosted three major concerts at the church during the past year. In May we were visited by the superb Hermitage Ensemble from St Petersburg; 4 male singers who entertained a packed church with their wonderful singing of a wide variety of Russian music. Many of us were involved on the hospitality side - feeding the singers and providing overnight accommodation etc, as well as providing refreshments for the large audience. It was a most successful evening. In November our "resident" choir, Temenos, (which rehearses at St Mary's), gave a concert of Spanish Renaissance music, with instrumental items from Tom Ellis, a brilliant young guitarist. Again, this was a most successful evening. Then at Christmas time our friends from Second Wind gave their customary concert of carols and Christmas music. I'm sure we shall continue to host many more occasional concerts such as these.

Members of the choir have joined in with various combined-choir events locally, such as the Northwest Fellowship Advent Carol service at The Drive Methodist; the Christian Unity service at St Luke's in January; the Women's World Day of Prayer at St Mary's Kippington in March; and Stainer's "Crucifixion" at The Drive Methodist on Good Friday. It's always good to join in worship with other singers, and there's invariably a good tea as well!

I should like to thank those who have helped the musical life of our church over the past year; young singers and players and the parents who bring them to practices, those who have deputised at the organ, especially Laura Rhodes, and an especial big thank you to all the wonderful members of my loyal choir.

It has been a great privilege to be in charge of the music of such a thriving church, and I have learnt so much over the years. Thank you to everyone for all your support, and long may we continue to be a church where music is treasured and celebrated. I feel sure that under Edwin's leadership we shall continue to develop the musical side of our worship in many exciting ways.

Janet Sharp