

## Musical Director's Report 2016 – 2017

Last year's report began on a sad note with the departure of Gill Barrow (for the Wirral) and the loss of Albert Woodhouse. This year I am pleased to report an increase of three in our number. Mary Morris has joined the soprano line, Alan Smith has effectively doubled the tenors and we are delighted to welcome back soprano Val Allan.

All three have made a significant contribution.

There is, however, no room for complacency. The continuing shortage of tenors and basses means we can no longer sustain four-part harmony to the same extent and a balance between the parts is at times difficult to achieve.

Being a chorister involves at least an elementary ability to read music and a consistent commitment to attend practices and major services. Occasionally I have been asked whether or not these pre-conditions are requisite and necessary for membership. Neither the choir, nor the congregation, would I think wish to see quality superseded by quantity. So, as our search continues for male choristers we should be grateful for your help and prayers.

Our growth in numbers was, in many ways, thanks to Her Majesty the Queen's ninetieth official birthday celebrations in June when it was decided to invite members of the congregation to experience life as a Barthomley chorister. Nine intrepid volunteers answered the call. Much to their amazement they were asked to participate in all the choral items including the anthem, "Alleluia" by William Boyce and the stirring "Old Hundredth" arranged by Vaughan Williams for the Queen's coronation.

All nine conscientiously attended rehearsals and sang alongside the choir like seasoned members. By all accounts they enjoyed their time with us and I think all who attended the service would agree that they should be extremely proud of their achievement.

In July, at the service presided over by the Bishop of Stockport, the Rt Rev Libby Lane, the choir sang John Weldon's "O Praise God in His Holiness". It was very

much appreciated when the Bishop went out of her way to thank the choir personally for their part in the service.

In November we sang something quite different for Remembrance Sunday: a very modern version of “Drop, Drop Slows Tears” by Kerry Andrew. With the world in turmoil, with countless refugees humiliated and rejected and with haunting pictures of young children in war zones paraded on our daily news programmes, the words of “Drop, Drop Slows Tears” usually sung at Passiontide, seemed very appropriate. I hope its evocative harmonies helped us in some small way to reflect on the futility and cruelty of war.

The year culminated, as usual, with the Carol Service. At such a very frenetic period, preparation for this event makes a lot of demands on choir time. I should therefore like to express my gratitude to the choir for their dedication and hard work. The review in the Parish News boosted morale enormously. It reads:

*“The Carol Service in our opinion was absolutely superb, even by the choir’s very high standards.”*

Praise indeed! There was also the hint of a ripple of applause after “Masters in this Hall”, but for me the jewel in the crown was the trio “A Babe is Born” sung by Ruth Wilde, Angela Speedy and Lynne Evans.

As always many thanks go to our organists, to Chris Bailey for car parking facilities, to Darrel & Angela for winter comforts and to you all for your appreciation and support of our work.

Each edition of the Parish News begins with the words:

*“That the community we serve may know that St Bertoline’s is here to profess the faith, to celebrate it in worship and prayer, and to share it in fellowship, so that we may say, ‘We would see Jesus’.”*

I hope the music goes some way in helping to achieve those intentions.

Gillian Thorley  
Director of Music  
19<sup>th</sup> March 2017