

Choir Notes May 2017

Oh my-oh-my, what a month, oh-my-goodness the choir has been busy. We sang at Eucharist on 10th April, again on 16 April for Easter, at our concert on 22 April, a Taize service on 23 April, and then to crown everything else, the family service on 7 May, when Jennifer said goodbye to us.

I heard only two farewell-to-Jennifer ceremonies, at the concert and on 7th May, but I am sure that there were others, and the two I heard said different things, adding up to a grand paean of praise. I have not been present when the choir has thanked her publicly, though the whole of our concert was a big thank you to her. She has thanked us every time we have performed without exception, and has appreciated our efforts.

Any change is a move into the unknown, and we can only hope for equal support from the next incumbent, as the support cannot exceed that given by Jennifer.

One memory which sticks out in my mind is when she came to support the choir in Peterborough last year, and read the lesson. It was the icing on the cake for a wonderful day out, and her support of the choir was deeply appreciated.

The month has been so busy that there has been little time to practice individual items, and we only started to learn the farewell piece composed by Stephen Bartlet-Jones on the Thursday before the farewell service. It must have been scary for Stephen, as it has tricky bits (but he put them in), and the Choir took time (of which there was not a lot) to get to grips with it: we had to learn all the music for the service in one evening. More often we learn pieces over two or more rehearsals, and there are learning aids available for home study, which are not present where, as here, the piece has been composed by a choir member; but Jeff recorded our singing on his phone, and sent it round afterwards, together with the other pieces also sung for the first time at the same rehearsal. It helps to have more than one practice, as you can learn on your own: the better you know the tune the more you can look at Jeff when singing, which brings praise from him and better results.

Cathy Stone has written separately about the concert which involved practising over two or three months, and sometimes it seemed as if we would never get a grip. Jeff judges expertly the length of time it will take to reach performance standard of any piece, but occasionally his calm exterior cracks, but then his other great skill shines out, when he makes a brutal comment right on point, and shocks malefactors into singing out, smiling or whatever he wants; but all with good humour, and sometimes by telling us that Hosanna is supposed to be a happy sound, rather than reading a gas bill you have just received. He did once pretend (?) to bang his head in frustration!

Rob Hill