

Choir Notes – June 2024



On 19th April, a member of the choir points out that Jeff has new glasses, only for him to say that he's had them for weeks, but no-one noticed. I have a cold. I sit apart, so as to avoid spreading it, remembering our super-spreader Good Friday event in 2020, when a quarter of the choir caught Covid. The separation makes the singing more difficult, or that might be the effect of the cold, as I do not feel lively. We sing psalm chants to animal sounds, moo, woof, neigh, baa etc, before getting to the words. Jeff says he asked another choir to sing to pig noises, and most people went "oink, oink", easy enough to sing, but one man found it difficult. Jeff asked him why, as he was doing snorts instead of oinks - difficult to do on more than one note. Why do we do these things? It works as we learn the chants doing it, and it is funny, relaxing us to sing. It is announced that we will sing at a concert on 13th July to raise funds for Norbert's farm project in Kenya. We all miss him.

On 26th April we practice *Give Us the Wings of Faith* by Ernest Bullock and the Hylton Stewart Canticles. Jeff rewards our efforts with the canticles with: "You're making it sound nice - *pause* - most of the time". He adjusts our breath breaks, and comments that the music in places goes down where you expect it to go higher, and we fall into the trap every time. The next Saunderton Evensong will be at the end of June, so we have time to perfect it (or make it presentable). We try again, and he congratulates our interesting harmonies, but says that they were not intended by Hylton Stewart.

Then a surprise, as Jeff hands out *A New Song* by James MacMillan (b. 1959, pictured above). Now, we have sung this before, many years ago. It terrified us then, and terrifies us now. If Hylton Stewart has a few traps, *A New Song* has quicksands, imbroglios, and counting. It has long notes followed by super-fast, twiddly bits. The whole thing is meant to sound ethereal, rather than full of unconfident panic. But do not worry, Dear Reader, for the dread will be conquered. It was last time, and will be again. We managed to sing it successfully during one of our cathedral visits years ago, and we will eventually sing it successfully again. Jeff intends us to perform it in the parish when we have it right, and it should be a treat.

Jeff tells us that our trip to Durham, deferred previously into next year, has been deferred again to 2026! But he is expecting us to get a weekend at Bath Abbey on 15th and 16th February of next year.

I go to the concert by Ian Lynch (trumpet) and Rebecca Holt (piano) on 27th April at Holy Trinity. Jeff started these concerts using his extensive network of musician friends to pay for the piano. He tells us afterwards that we have now paid for the piano and that further concerts will pay into church funds as well as supporting the choir. The piano is marvellous for rehearsals. Thank you all for coming to these concerts!

I miss our next rehearsal for a holiday. I hope that I can catch up at the next rehearsal!

Rob Hill