

Choir Notes – July 2023



As a choir leader, mostly, these days, one is grateful to have a vicar who doesn't find the choir a total inconvenience and want to replace it with a couple of guitars and a tambourine! During my whole time in Bledlow, I have been blessed to have a vicar and a congregation who really appreciate the choir.

But then there is Norbert. In common with the old Kwik-Fit adverts, with Norbert, when we have gone to him with an

idea, it's always been "The answer is yes, now what's the question?"

I remember that for Norbert's Licensing Service in November 2018, we chose to sing a rhythmically very tricky, but extremely up-lifting anthem called '*O be joyful*' by Howard Helvey. It was a perfect choice to herald what was to come.

The support that we, as a choir, have received from Norbert has been extraordinary. He has treated our work in the church with such gratitude and enthusiasm. He has come joyfully to attend some of our outside events, and he has actively asked for more from us, a great example being the setting up of the Choral Evensongs at Saunderton on the fifth Sundays of the month.

The joy that Norbert takes in our contribution is obvious, and we were particularly touched by his enthusiasm

for our recent early music Latin Evensong.

Never to be forgotten is the occasion when Norbert and Trisa accompanied our version of the Swahili carol, '*Twende Bethlehem*', on the drums.

We went to him with the idea of buying a piano and received an enthusiastic "Yes! Buy it and I will square it with the PCC." Likewise, the idea for the coffee-time concerts was met with instant approval and joy at the prospect of the new people that it would attract into our church. This is a man who thinks outside the box and is always open to possibilities.

On a personal level, I have found Norbert an inspiration. One only has to look at his library and at the names which crop up in his sermons to realise that this is a man with a deeper understanding of spirituality than any priest whom I have met before in my life.

The issues with Norbert's voice have been - for us - a huge positive, because one has had to really listen to hear what he's saying, but what he is saying is always so enlightening and inspiring that I have always been glad of the need to really listen. The Covid-19 lockdown periods provided a perfect opportunity for Norbert, as it meant that an audience could really hear him and his messages and go back over the bits that they didn't quite get first time around on-line.

I had the pleasure of sitting with Norbert while he explained to me his vision for the next phase of his life. It was just amazing to see the spirit literally shining out of him as he spoke of his simple plan which could change world hunger for ever.

The world needs more people like Norbert. There is no doubt that we have been truly blessed by having his presence amongst us these past few years, together with Mercy, Steven and Trisa. We shall miss them all, but I believe that the changes through which they have led this parish will be with us for ever.

Jeff Stewart
Choirmaster