

## Director of Music Report 2025.

I'd like to ponder a few questions if I may. Firstly, what is the place of music in worship? [Pause for reflection] For me at least, it is a means of bringing heaven to earth and us nearer to our most awesome and Holy God.

Perhaps the next question might be: How then can we best serve His people and the community around us in bringing an offering worthy of such an awesome and Holy God? [Pause for reflection] Well, isn't that exactly what we are all working out on a daily basis, and as far as music goes at St Michael's, we love to worship Him and long to make His praise glorious, joyfully exalting Him, far above all earthing things, and exhorting others to do the same! In short, we want it to be said of our people and community: "Surely, God is in the midst of her!"

Whilst the choice of music will have a bearing on this, we are not constrained by style or changing fashions. This I hope is something we try to reflect in our willingness to explore new dimensions in music, whilst respecting time honoured traditions. Furthermore, it is not so much *what* we do, but the *way* in which we do it (queue another song)! Nonetheless, I hope that as time passes there will be more and more opportunity for us to expand our experience of the deep and wide ocean of musical and creative expression that exists in corporate worship. In summary, watch this vast space!

On that note, we as ever, very much welcome your input and ideas, so please do speak to either Derwyn or I in person or drop us a line with any encouragements, suggestions, or questions around the whole area of creative expression in worship. We are all learning in this area as we grow and explore the majesty of God together. Once again, thank you in advance for your support in this!

In choir news, I'm delighted that after their probationary period, we have just admitted 7 new trebles to the choir. You will, I am sure be pleased to know that they have all undergone extensive training in leading worship and eating pizza. This has included working through musical theory and singing technique under the auspices of the RSCM 'Voice for Life' programme. We are also most grateful to Dotun Akinde and Bill MacDonald for their input in supporting our youngsters' nurture in the Christian faith and to the many helpers both in the choir and amongst the choristers' families that support our young singers, week by week.

As always, we are looking to recruit new singers to the choir from age 7 to 107, so please share with family and friends who you think might enjoy this exciting opportunity, either by word of mouth or by downloading or picking up copies of our choir flyer from the North porch entrance. For more information, please see <https://www.saintmichaelweb.org.uk/Groups/310492/Choir.aspx>

In terms of engaging with our wider community, it has been wonderful to see so many folk enjoying our Sunday afternoon recital series which comprises high calibre musicians performing music on a diverse range of instruments in an eclectic mix of styles, followed by convivial chat over tea and homemade cake. This truly is a 'no brainer' in terms of creating opportunity to extend hospitality to folk of all walks of life through the universal gift of good music, good cake, and good company! It was also great to host pupils from Bishop's Stortford College again in February for a special Thursday lunchtime recital series. Our Sunday afternoon series is now booked up until 2026 with some very special guest musicians on our roster. Please see our dedicated website page for more details: <https://www.saintmichaelweb.org.uk/Groups/310530/Music At St.aspx>

We continue to enjoy singing Choral Evensong both here at St Michael's and also by invite at Cathedrals across the country. This month we had the privilege of singing at Ely Cathedral

accompanied by one of our former Organ Scholars, Mitchell Farquharson. Looking ahead, we will celebrate Choral Eucharist for Ascension Day this coming Thursday and Choral Evensong at St Michael's for the feast of St Alban on Sunday 22 June.

On the subject of scholarships, we have for many years now offered scholarships to those in post-16 education, both in the choir and on organ. There has been something of a post pandemic lull here at St Michael's, and to some extent nationwide which we would like to address in order to secure the future of church music and musicians. In order to promote the need for education in this area, the Royal College of Organists have declared 2025: "Play the Organ Year" <https://www.rco.org.uk/play> and we would like to respond by increasing awareness of what has always been on offer here at St Michael's in terms of opportunity for growth both musically and spiritually through our choral and organ scholarship programmes. To this end we would love to hear from those in our congregation and community who would like to support both financially and pastorally and of course those who might like to enjoy being the recipient of such support. In broad brush strokes scholarships normally have a tenure of one year and comprise a generous stipend and the cost of music tuition for that period along with a mentor to support integration and personal and spiritual development. Thank you again in anticipation for your interest in this most vital part of our ministry.

Finally, please do pray for me and those who support the work either by participation in our music-making or by facilitating it. Our prayer is that we may be protected and guided by God as we seek to serve Him well in the church and community.

Many thanks,

Nathan