

**Music Consultation  
Phase 1 – Audit report  
July 2013**

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**St Andrew's, Earlsfield**

**Diocese of Southwark**

Garratt Lane  
Earlsfield  
London SW18

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# 1. Background Information

St Andrew's PCC had identified at their day conference that, having worked previously on making the church a welcoming and inclusive place, with a pleasant internal and external environment, which is child friendly and with good preaching, music was the most important element for the parish community to address in their agenda for the year.

The PCC engaged Andrew Lyon M. Phil, B. Mus, an independent parish liturgist and musician, to provide an 'audit' of the music used in worship across both the parish communion and family services and to report back recommendations.

A consultation was designed in two main phases. Phase 1 would be an audit of the music, and phase 2 would be a practical programme of support to implement recommendations the PCC wished to take forward.

Andrew Lyon was engaged for phase 1 of this consultation, with a decision to be made regarding phase 2 once phase 1 was complete. This report hereby presents the results of the phase 1 audit.

## 1.1 Phase 1 – The Audit

The aim of the audit was to analyse 'Where we are now?' and 'Where do we want to go?'. This analytical process used a variety of methods to draw together very specific answers to these two questions culminating in this report, within which is included a set of recommendations for the route map ahead with respect to the music used in the parish liturgies. The analysis covers both the family service on the first Sunday of each month, and the parish communion service.

## 1.2 General Approach

Music used in liturgy can only be considered holistically. A true understanding of what makes 'good' or 'appropriate' liturgical music relies on an understanding of what 'liturgy' is and what it is for, namely that it is the totality of the worshipping experience involving not just the words that are said, but the music that is used, any visual art, the architecture and layout of the building, any hymnbooks/service sheets ('participation aids') as well as *the way that* these are used. The music cannot be considered in a vacuum, but only as part of the overall organism. This is central to the approach that this audit has taken. It is important to be aware, therefore, that although the music was the focus of the audit and this subsequent report, the recommendations refer to elements of the worship which, although not perhaps 'musical' themselves, *pertain* to the music and affect the way in which it contributes to (or detracts from) worship. The aim of the project is that the totality of the worshipping experience is given consideration in order for it to better lead the community who gather into a transformative experience of God.

## 1.3 Specific Approach

The audit was conducted between May and July 2013, and there were three main elements to its structure, as follows:

1. An observation of services:

Family Service followed by Holy Communion

2 June 2013

2. A questionnaire

Distributed to all members of the congregation during the first few weeks in June, the deadline for completion being 16 June. The results of this are presented and discussed in section 4 (on page 8) of this report.

3. A focus group

A focus group was established to work with Andrew in reflecting on the two questions underpinning this report. They met twice during the process: once to reflect on how music is currently used and to put forward suggestions for change, and also at a workshop to explore this report's suggestions for change. This report represents the results of these discussions.

The focus group comprised of the following members of St Andrew's community:

Cynthia Coker (PCC member)  
John Harding (the parish organist)  
Roy Lee  
Maria Mathews  
Davina Northcote  
Andrew Thomson

## 2. Executive Summary

2.1 St Andrew's has much to commend it. It is a parish with strong leadership and wide interests, and full of people from varied backgrounds, cultures, young and old. The structure of the liturgy, both in the parish communion and family service, is good and is well executed, and this is far more than might be expected in other similar parishes. The framework is therefore in place for a healthy musical life, and indeed there are many positives to point out from existing practice: the types of music sung are varied (including psalms, canticles, etc, as well as hymns), and the 'hymn sandwich', a problem afflicting many a parish, is absent here; there is a good and competent organist in post, who is committed and valued.

As described above, the PCC, however, have identified developing the musical life further as something which would benefit St Andrew's, and it has been widely noted and commented over a period of time, by the organist, the clergy and also by the congregation themselves that 'the congregation doesn't sing well' which is certainly one of the prime observations of this report.

The possible reasons for this will be discussed at greater length elsewhere in this report, but, by way of summary, and as a starting point, it is important to recognise from the outset that when congregations do not sing (which is less unusual in this day and age than it once was) it is not something for which they can be blamed or held responsible. The whole assembly (everyone who gathers; clergy and 'congregation') needs to be supported and empowered and equipped if it is to sing well. We would not, of course, expect a choir to be able to perform well without any prior training or musical education, and without any rehearsal of the music which they were expected to perform, but we are often, in the Church, seemingly content to expect exactly that from the congregation. As John Bell, of the Iona Community, who has spent years of his life working to help congregations, specifically, to sing, says: 'we presume that it is by the alchemy of osmosis that a congregation should be able to sing immediately a song they have never rehearsed! And worse, if they prove their ineptitude the musical sophisticats respond by miaowing their disapproval.'

This report, then, presents a set of recommendations focussed on supporting and *equipping* the entire assembly to sing. There is, in fact, a set of 29 recommendations in all within this report, but the 'headlines' are detailed here in this 'executive summary'. Throughout, the report focuses more on the 'what' rather than the 'how'. Although it will be important to consider the practicalities of any initiatives, these are the concern of any 'phase 2'. The focus for phase 1 is simply to analyse what is happening, and to generate ideas, without the latter being closed down by potential restrictions, or by the memory of previous initiatives which may have struggled to succeed.

2.2 **Observation** Congregational participation in the musical life of St Andrew's is generally poor. This is both in terms of participating in singing on a Sunday morning, as well as in terms of their involvement in organising music 'behind the scenes'. Music is currently looked after solely by the vicar and organist. Let us take each of these elements in turn:

a) Singing. The congregation struggles to take a full part in singing during services. Some elements of the liturgy, such as the sanctus, for instance, are sung with a greater amount of

confidence, borne out of repetition, which allows the congregation to make the words their own and sing with sincerity. Much of the music, however, seems almost foreign to many in the pews, the quality of hymn-singing being particularly poor. Although it is one of the strengths of the liturgy here that hymns are not overused, they are themselves the weakest element of the sung liturgy.

**This report recommends** encouraging the congregation to sit more closely together as a group. St Andrew's provides a huge amount of space, and the way this 'space' (being the operative word) is used will be key to helping inspire confidence in the congregation to sing, helping them to sit and move together like a group, rather than a collection of individuals. The report also recommends looking at the repertoire used, which is unfamiliar to many members of the congregation. Unfamiliar music, especially used sparingly, among a larger collection of well-known music, is not in itself something to avoid, but without any rehearsal, or strong leadership, the congregation is required simply to 'pick it up' as they go along which results in lacklustre singing, which is then a distraction from a focus on the sentiment of the song itself.

b) involvement in organising music. At the moment the responsibility for organising and implementing music rests solely only with the vicar and the organist. Aside from this being a huge amount of work, it creates a sense of disengagement because there is no sense of ownership of the music or this element of the worship for the rest of the congregation.

**This report recommends** ways of sharing the responsibility for 'programming' and 'implementing/organising' music which will, with appropriate training, both share the administrative burden more widely and increase the feeling of ownership which will, in turn, inspire greater involvement. With more people involved, you will find that, over time, the quality of the singing and some problems of repertoire will solve themselves as people's level of engagement increases.

2.3 **Observation** The musical diet at St Andrew's is unvaried. The music is all led by the organ; the hymns are all taken from one hymn book; the same elements of the liturgy are sung to the same settings at the same points each week. Liturgy should be in constant conversation with what is happening outside of the church doors, and music is one of the most potent ways of effecting this - whether that be reflecting a mood, or reacting to a specific event.

**This report recommends** broadening the repertoire of music used in worship, including but not limited to hymns, and suggests ways in which this might be done. It also suggests that the instrumentation used to accompany singing might be varied, which is dependent on resources and organisation, and that the best of both old and new styles of music be embraced and combined sensitively within the liturgy.

2.4 **Observation** As with many Anglican churches, St Andrew's is haunted by the ghost of the organ-choir paradigm. The role of the traditional choir, robed, installed in the chancel, with rehearsed repertoire, and giving a strong lead to an often-times larger congregation, remains 'familiar' and understood by many members of the congregation, either through direct experience from when this was a reality, or it is held within the cultural memory.

In more recent years it has become increasingly difficult to maintain a full choir in many parishes with any regularity, and at St Andrew's this has certainly been the case due to a

changing demographic and modern lifestyles (people are more mobile, and also there are fewer people attending church at all than there were even a generation ago.) As this paradigm has begun to break down, it has not been replaced with any alternative philosophy. This audit has found that the organ-choir paradigm shapes the understanding of music for the majority of the congregation, and not only for those who remember the old days: many of the conversations about music over coffee happen within the rhetoric of this understanding. This is also evidenced in responses to Question Six of the church music questionnaire, which asked people to reflect on what was not working well. One respondent commented, 'we badly need a regular choir', for example.

If the organ-choir paradigm has begun to break down, and if no alternative philosophy has replaced it, what provides the current backdrop to the liturgical music? The answer is that the backdrop to the way the music is organised is simply the elements which happened to have survived from the organ-choir heyday: namely an organ leading the worship, no longer in a good state of repair; a loyal organist, empty choir stalls, choir robes which nobody wears hanging in the cupboard, and a musical repertoire which, although pared-down, is nevertheless in keeping with an organ-choir style. Most significantly, *the understanding of the role of music in worship* across the assembly is strongly redolent of this paradigm: for instance, who ought to be doing the singing, who ought to be leading the music and where they ought to be sitting.

**This report recommends** introducing a new philosophy to replace the existing paradigm. At the centre of this new philosophy is the idea that the true 'choir' – the organised group of singers – is the entire assembly who have an equal stake in the worship offered. The specific recommendation is to introduce a programme of education to equip the assembly to understand this and to give them the tools to participate.

If, however, alternatively, the church wishes to revive the organ-choir set-up, then a programme of action needs to be drawn up to effect and support this. It is the observation of this report, however, and the instinct of its author, that the resources are not there to support and fuel this.

Finally, it is important for the PCC to realise that although there are some 'quick' fixes available, what is suggested here is nothing short of a cultural change and this will inevitably need time, consistency and a shared vision to effect.

In summary:

1. Sit together
2. Expand the repertoire and share responsibility for planning and implementing
3. Keep the conversation going - and widen it to the whole congregation.

### **3. Some noted features of best practice**

#### **3.1 Service sheets**

The service sheets prepared for use during worship are excellent. They present a modern, professional, and welcoming first impression to visitors and guide the worshipper through the liturgy in a helpful way. The presentation largely follows the recommendations put forth by *Common Worship*, and as such they are a great aid to participation.

'Participation Aids', in fact, is the proper terminology for these sheets and it is useful to think of them as such because it underlines their importance and the way in which they are constructed, in a way that an 'order of service' does not.

The fact these sheets are produced each week and are dated is extremely helpful, because it immediately indicates that the liturgy is relevant to how the world is to be found on this particular day. This also means that the sheets can be absolutely tailored to the liturgy as it will actually happen that week, and those who organise and plan the liturgy are not restricted creatively by the tyranny of pre-printed prayers, etc.

The font size is good and readable, and parts for clergy and the whole assembly are distinguished clearly, with rubrics distinguished further, all within a sensible hierarchy.

The Bible readings are reproduced in full as are all the spoken and sung parts of the service in which the assembly is expected to join. In some parishes, such sheets are not produced because of the worry that producing these sheets week after week might be seen as a waste; on the contrary, such a tool is vital in fostering participation and the parish is to be commended for producing these.

Notwithstanding the above, there are a few ways in which these sheets could be improved further; please see section 5.7.1 of this report for details.

#### **3.2 The range of music sung**

The ancient Mass contained chants that were 'ordinary' (i.e. happened every week) and chants that were 'proper' to the Sunday (i.e. special to that day). In modern worship, even if the ordinary chants (eg Gloria, Sanctus, etc) are sung to a service setting, the 'proper' slots are often filled by hymns, often creating a 'hymn sandwich' effect. One of the strengths of the worship at St Andrew's is that there is a good range of music sung, including hymns, psalms, anthems, canticles and acclamations, and the balance of these largely works well.

#### **3.3 The organist**

The organist, John Harding, is an asset to the church. He plays competently and with pride, and has a good understanding of the role of music in liturgy and is keen to support that. He prepares thoroughly and prayerfully for the services and thinks carefully about the music he chooses for voluntaries, and is keen to help others participate and increase their understanding of music making.

John is only too aware however of the practicalities involved and the enormous administrative workload, as well as the problems of dealing with people who have busy lives with lots of commitments, which one encounters when trying to do anything 'extra' with the music. He therefore needs supporting in this role. Please see 5.5.1 below.

## **4. Questionnaire analysis**

### **4.1 Background**

Part of the audit involved distributing a 'church music questionnaire' to all members of the congregation, which is included in Appendix 1 of this report. This was designed to be very brief, and only to ask 'top level' questions so that we could get a broad picture, leaving the more detailed questions to be asked of the focus group.

### **4.2 Demographic**

In total, we received 40 (forty) responses to the questionnaire (5 of which were submitted online). This accounts for approximately 50% of people who attend each Sunday (including both adults and children, but excluding any 'extra' people who might come for a particular occasion such as a baptism.)

Of these respondents, 75% were female, and 25% male. 68% of the total respondents were below the age of 50, with the average age of all respondents being 47 years of age. Encouragingly, 92.5% of respondents attend both the family service and the parish communion service regularly.

### **4.3 Question One**

This asked respondents to give the music at St Andrew's, generally speaking, a rating 'out of 10' - with 1 being bad and 10 being good. Out of 40 respondents, the average answer was 5.98 out of 10, so just under '6 out of 10'. The overall average was pushed up by the children's positive responses and (in part) by the positive responses of the 70+ age group. In the largest demographic (aged 31-50), however, the average among the females was 5.4, and among males it was 2.5.

### **4.4 Question Two**

This asked respondents about how easy they find the music to participate in, and rate their answer on a scale in the same manner as for Question One. Out of 40 respondents, the average answer was 6.23. Interestingly, as with Question One, those at either end of the age spectrum answered fairly positively, showing that both children and those who are 70+ find it easier to participate than those in the 31-70 age bracket, where there is much more of a spread, particularly in the 31-50 age bracket, which makes up 50% of the total demographic.

### **4.5 Question Three**

This asked respondents how much the music helps them to enter more deeply into worship. Out of 40 respondents, the average answer was 6.28

### **4.6 Question Four**

This asked respondents how much they like the *style* of the music used. Out of 40 respondents, the average answer was 6.

The full numeric breakdown of this analysis of Questions One to Four is found in Appendix 2. As you will see, the demographic breakdown is displayed at the top, followed by each question analysed separately. In the lefthand column (Column A) you will see the rankings from 1-10,

which the respondents were asked to select. In columns C-J you'll find each of the different age groups, and each of these are broken down into male and female. Within each of these columns, the numbers of people selecting each ranking is recorded, with the totals being calculated at the bottom of each column, and the grand totals in column M, at the bottom of which is calculated the average (mean) score.

Various patterns/trends can be seen if one wishes to 'drill down' to specific subsets of those who responded. One interesting pattern is that males in the 31-50 age group never scored any of the questions a 5 or higher, suggesting that this is one demographic with which the music isn't resonating. The spread of answers for females in this age group, by contrast, is much more evenly spread across all of the rankings.

#### **4.7 Questions Five and Six**

These asked for more qualitative information, asking respondents to comment freely on what exactly they liked/didn't like about the music used. All of these comments are transcribed in Appendix 2 by age group & gender. Answers to Question Five, regarding what people like and thinks works well already, are highlighted in green; responses to Question Six, regarding what people do not like, and think does not work well already, are highlighted in red. A constant theme throughout the responses to Question Six was the choice of hymns, which are strongly felt to be unknown by the majority.

## 5. Recommendations for action

In this section is set out a number of recommendations for how the music might be developed at St Andrew's. These recommendations range from small suggestions - 'quick fixes', perhaps - which could be implemented immediately, and others for which further thought, investment of time and/or money, or significant planning will be necessary. They are organised under seven main headings. It is to be emphasised at this point that in no way is it suggested that all of the following recommendations are to be implemented, either at all, or at once. Some are more important than others, and this is indicated below, and the timing and order of each of these will be crucial to your future success.

### **5.1 EDUCATION**

#### **5.1.1 Design a programme of education for all**

A programme of education should be designed to increase the level of understanding within the parish of the role of music and who the music 'belongs to'. There is still a general assumption that there is a divide between 'those who are musical' and 'those who are not', it being assumed that those who are musical should be 'up there', i.e. 'in the choir'. To move forward, and to encourage greater congregational participation, it is essential that the whole assembly develops a sense of itself as the 'choir', with ownership of the music, with each member - musical or not - equally welcome to and *equipped* to participate. This has sound theological and historical roots, but is often masked in a community in which the organ-choir paradigm either reigns, or has once reigned.

Such a programme of education should be open to the whole community, and could be delivered via a mixture of lectures, workshops, articles, sermons, or even online. Users should be able to access as much or as little of the programme as they feel called to, with the understanding that the information conveyed will equip them to understand, plan and participate more fully in the musical life of the church. In no particular order, a selection of ideas for what this programme might include is detailed below:

- a) Why music is used in worship - could be an article, a debate, a talk...
- b) The history of the organ-choir paradigm and its place in modern parish worship
- c) The modern parish choir - who they are and what they sing.
- d) Introductory workshop to 'modern' worship music
- e) A training session on choosing music for liturgical use.
- f) Exploring the liturgical music repertoire (sanctuses, glorias, Gospel greetings, etc).
- g) 'Music for Advent/Lent/Pentecost' and other themed workshops
- h) A short course on learning to read music - 'learn to read music in 4 sessions'...
- i) A visit to another church\*
- j) A visit to a synagogue\*\*
- k) A congregational rehearsal. (See also 5.5.4 below regarding a cantor - a music leader for the congregation)

\* It would be really interesting and helpful to arrange, on occasion, a visit on a Sunday morning to another church, either for individuals or for any group who may in the future be given some responsibility for planning music and liturgy, where best practice can be

observed. I would be happy to recommend places to visit and it will be inspiring to see how others approach the same liturgy.

**\*\*It can be hard for us who are used to going to church to appreciate how unnerving it can be for newcomers to enter into this strange building where a ritual ceremony is going on which they don't understand, involving people they don't know dressed up in odd clothing. I would highly recommend a Saturday morning visit to a Synagogue (assuming it is outside of the experience of those who go) so that they can experience the feeling themselves, and then return to the parish and consider afresh 'what might it be like to be a visitor to our church for someone who has never been inside a church before?' This is important largely because the music and liturgy, and the way these are executed, have an effect on the welcome we give because they have the power to make people feel either comfortable or unsettled.**

Such a structured education programme could be designed as part of phase 2. It might also be worth contacting the RSCM to see what diocesan music courses are provided.

## **5.2 THE RANGE OF MUSIC USED**

### **5.2.1 Think about how solo singing might be used**

A soloist is often a good way of providing a contrast to a large group of singers, and it is a good way of learning new music and providing inspiration. A soloist might be asked to sing one verse of a hymn, for example.

### **5.2.2 Think about how unaccompanied singing might be used**

Unaccompanied singing is generally underrated and certainly underused in most churches. 'We can't sing without music,' is the often-heard retort, forgetting that singing itself is music, of course. A strong leader can alleviate any anxiety about singing unaccompanied and the effect can be quite moving, as well as bringing home the point that we 'rely' on each other to sing to keep the whole thing going!

### **5.2.3 Expand the range of hymns used**

At the moment all the hymns are taken from *Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New*. While this is one of the best resources around, it is not recommended to take all of your hymns from any one source alone. This is extremely limiting, both culturally and theologically. There is a wealth of hymns and songs from different periods and different traditions on which you can draw. This does not involve investing in a huge number of hymn books for every member of the congregation. It is recommended that the words of the hymns can be incorporated into the weekly service sheet (See 5.7.1 below for a more detailed explanation). There are also lots of new hymn words written each year which are relevant to our modern world and can be sung to existing tunes. These can be used to greatly enhance the relevance of your worship and will themselves therefore foster empathy with the words and encourage participation.

### **5.2.4 Introduce a range of modern worship songs**

Often you will find that parishes have 'their' type of music, whatever that happens to be. Rather, it is to be recommended that the best of the old and the new be embraced. Often, for communities that are emerging from the legacy (bondage?) of the organ-choir paradigm, it is assumed, or claimed as a defence against modern music that it is all happy clappy, or that the theology is bad. While there are many modern worship songs with bad theology, there are equally many traditional hymns with questionable theology, but selecting 'the best of the old and the new' will help to make the liturgical music used at St Andrew's less monochromatic, changing the atmosphere of your worship and helping to include others.

### **5.2.5 Change settings of the acclamations, etc, and adapt seasonally**

While it is commendable that the Gloria and Holy Holy, and other liturgical elements, are sung, some of the settings used are arguably of poor liturgical quality, and certainly are not good for encouraging people to join in. Widen your repertoire of these, by selecting liturgically good settings which do not obscure the words they are intended to support, and consider changing seasonally to avoid boredom, and also to help change the character of the worship to reflect the season. This will need sensitive implementation, however because although it is useful to change the character of the worship, some of the strongest elements of participation are currently found in these sung acclamations.

## **5.3 INSTRUMENTS**

### **5.3.1 Invest in the piano, or an electronic piano**

St Andrew's has a piano, but it is in a state of disrepair. Either it should be repaired, or replaced with a new piano (or a good second hand one) or an electronic piano if the funds can be raised. It is important, if you are to introduce a wider range of musical styles, that you have the tools to enable you to use them. Many of the modern worship songs are not suited to the organ because of the style of the accompaniment, and if they are played on the organ it will not produce the desired effect, meaning that they will be unlikely to edify the people. The contrast of an alternative keyboard instrument to the organ such as the piano played to accompany a psalm, or a gentle, 'gradual' hymn, for instance, can transform your worship.

### **5.3.2 Invest in the organ**

Without contradiction to 5.3.1 above and 5.3.3 below, it is important that if the organ is to be used at all, that it must be kept in the best possible shape, and it is currently seriously in need of repair and enhancement. It is encouraging to know that the PCC is seeking funding to restore the organ under the guidance of the Diocesan Organ Advisor.

### **5.3.3 Expand range of musical accompaniment**

It is common in most parishes to use the organ as the default method of accompaniment, but there is no reason why the organ needs to remain as the only regular accompaniment for sung worship. It is my recommendation that the organ should continue to be used, but only as part of a wider selection of accompaniments, or in combination with other instruments, as and when required, and when particularly appropriate within any given service.

### **5.3.4 Call for more instrumentalists/singers to come forward**

There are a number of closet musicians hiding in the pews in St Andrew's, and it would be good to encourage them to make themselves known. This has been successfully trialled before, for instance, with John Harding's encouragement, the use of a violinist at Christmas, and with occasional singers during communion which worked beautifully on 9 June. Music should be planned far enough in advance to enable people to be approached in good time for a one-off commitment.

## **5.4 SPACE**

### **5.4.1 Sit closer together**

This may seem obvious, but one of the principle reasons that people do not join in singing is that they are sitting too far apart. This distance is very damaging because it destroys the sense of 'community', and so people, rather than feeling they are part of a larger group, in which the sound of their own voice may be masked, they instead now feel exposed, and are therefore frightened to sing - which is the exact opposite of what we hope can be achieved. It won't necessarily be easy to encourage people to sit together, but this is vital to the success of getting them to join in the singing and it won't happen unless you achieve this. This should be your top priority: get people to sit together, towards the front.

### **5.4.2 Use space more effectively in the church**

Think about how we gather and what happens when we gather, during the first section of our liturgy. How can we use space for the liturgy of the word, and for the liturgy of the sacrament to better reflect the character of these portions of our worship? Specifically, think about the use of furniture. What furniture do we have, and how is it used? If we were furnishing the church for the first time, how would we arrange it in order to best fit the needs of the community who gather here?

## **5.5 PERSONNEL**

### **5.5.1 Appoint a music coordinator**

Following on from 3.3 above, consider appointing someone to take responsibility for coordinating the music and the efforts of the liturgy/music committee. This will support the responsibility currently shouldered by the organist, particularly as demands intensify, and will also broaden things out.

### **5.5.2 Widen the group of people choosing the hymns**

At the moment all of the hymns are chosen by the vicar. While this is probably administratively easier, it is liturgically and theologically poor. It robs the community of their rightful ownership of the music, which won't encourage them to join in, and does not reflect therefore what everybody knows or likes. It is strongly recommended that this task be shared, and there are a number of ideas to explore how this could be done:

a) Have a rota and allow a different person each week to choose the hymns (each person on the rota should be trained)

b) Set up a music committee, overseen by the vicar, who will look at the music (not just the hymns, but all the music!) a month at a time and plan ahead according to the theme of the service and the season of the church year.

c) get members of cong to suggest (& lead?) songs from the front, teaching them to the congregation, and/or saying why it is important to them. Perhaps have a 'hymn of the month'?

### **5.5.3 Continue with focus group to plan liturgy**

The group that has been working together during this consultation is sensitive and intelligent and more importantly instinctively understanding of the role of music to bind together the congregation in worship. Encouragingly, there are people in the group who are full of ideas, and it will be important to keep a group going who can champion and advocate what is decided in phase 2 with the wider congregation, as well as support its implementation. Further and ongoing training for the focus group can also be arranged.

### **5.5.4 Encourage use of cantors, and provide training**

A cantor is not a solo singer, per se, but someone who can lead the congregation in song. It does not have to be someone with professional musical training, but a number of people who have the confidence, and can hold a tune, can be trained to perform this vital role. The more cantors you have, the more flexibility you will have, the wider the responsibility is spread and the more confident people you will have singing in the congregation. If you increase the number of cantors that you have, you will also increase the amount of new music you are able to learn quickly as a community.

### **5.5.5 Establish a worship committee**

A larger group than the steering group, but which can meet every 6 months to review services and give a 'top level' plan for the next six months. Chaired by the vicar.

## **5.6 SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS REGARDING ELEMENTS OF 'PERFORMANCE'**

### **5.6.1 The responsorial psalm**

One of the strengths of the worship at St Andrew's is that the Responsorial Psalm is included after the first reading. This is a strength because it includes this often-missed part of the lectionary readings, yet breaks up the potential monotony of the spoken word if there are three readings. It is a great way of encouraging people to participate, without them having to sing another hymn, and also allow them room for prayer and response to the readings. At the moment, however, the way the responsorial psalm is sung could be improved. The response, although sung with some confidence, is not executed in a way that enables those who are uninitiated, or less confident, to join in. Additionally, the clash between the sung response and the spoken verses is a barrier to any sense of the numinous which singing the responsorial psalm might evoke. Cantors (see 5.5.4 above) can be used to sing and lead the psalms and gather together a repertoire. Ideally, these should be settings which allow you to sing the psalms appointed in the lectionary so the theme hangs together with the other readings. This will take a bit of forward planning and rehearsal, but it is not a huge investment, and could form part of the responsibility of the planning committee.

### **5.6.2 The Gospel Greeting/Alleluia**

As above, it is a mark of good practice that this happens at all, and really helps to mark the Gospel reading out as special and as the highpoint of the Liturgy of the Word. Once more, there are simple ways this could be improved, such as allowing a cantor to sing the Alleluia once through before the congregation join in, and the gospeller singing a sentence after these, and before the final alleluia.

### **5.6.3 Use recorded music**

This might seem sacrilegious to musicians. Certainly, it is *never* recommended to use recorded music to accompany congregational singing, which is anti-musical and anti-liturgical. But recorded music can be used successfully to create an atmosphere, for instance, or subtly to teach new music. Such a device needs to be used only sparingly and deliberately on specific occasions. The music needs to be intelligently selected and used sensitively and must have the technical/electronic capacity to ensure it successfully fills its aim..

### **5.6.4 Think about use of silence**

Silence is another often underused device in churches, with musicians feeling compelled to fill every gap with mindless improvisation. Careful thought should be given to where in a service (or even in a church year) silence might create an effective mood. It should always be used deliberately, and crafted into the larger 'music' of the liturgy: it should never be used because a piece of music has finished too soon, for instance.

### **5.6.5 Consider singing during the prayers**

A sung response to the prayers might be something worth experimenting with during specific occasions when you want to draw people into an extended period of contemplation.

### **5.6.7 Work on the accompaniment of hymns**

The hymns are currently the weakest part of the sung liturgy. This is, in part, due to the selection of hymns, but this is by no means the sole culprit. The organ is not as powerful as it might be, and struggles to lead the congregation, and the tempi of the hymns is difficult to judge when trying to accompany an under-confident group of singers who are scattered across such a large expanse of space. One good experiment might be to sing a hymn with the congregation up in the chancel, for example: I predict the contrast found in just doing that would be remarkable.

### **5.6.8 Training for clergy in sung parts of service**

As well as cantors, the clergy should also take their part in singing well and leading singing when appropriate. There are some elements of the liturgy which are particularly suited to musical setting, and are properly the parts the clergy should be doing. Training might be sought for all clergy to expand the repertoire and to make sure they are singing 'liturgically well'.

## **5.7 MISCELLANEOUS**

### **5.7.1 Make the following improvements to the participation aids**

- a) Include the music line to sung parts of the liturgy.
- b) As the sheets are dated, make them even more specific to the day. For instance, if the Holy Holy is to be sung, it should be introduced with the words 'for ever praising you and *singing...*' for instance, instead of 'saying', as at the moment. If today's Gospel is '...according to *Mark*', then it should say so in the sheet, rather than, '...according to *N.*'
- c) provide words for the congregation to follow when anthems are sung during communion
- d) include all the words of the hymns sung each week, rather than handing out separate hymn books

### **5.7.2 Encourage competence/confidence in the spoken parts of the liturgy**

For a liturgical musician, the spoken parts of the service are of equal importance to the 'musical' parts. This is because the whole shape of the liturgy has a 'musicality' to it, with peaks and troughs, high and low points. The spoken parts should be as dramatic as is proper, and working on these, both with the clergy and the congregation, can also help transform the character of your Sunday morning celebrations.

All of the words we say on a Sunday morning, may well be carefully set out by the prayer book, but the words should be made 'our own', and come from our hearts, and each time we say them it should be as though for the first time.

Clergy and other leaders (the intercessor, the readers, for example) have an important part to play in helping the congregation respond positively; 'Thanks be to God', for instance, should sound like the acclamation it is intended to be, not an expression of relief that the reading has finally come to an end.

### **5.7.3 Think about where the notices might most helpfully be positioned within the service.**

The dismissal (the fourth and final part of the eucharistic celebration) is, according to *Common Worship*, 'deliberately short', the point of it being that, after the community has been fed with the sacrament, it is empowered to go out and fulfil the great commission: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Matt 28:19). Being told to sit for the notices at this point seems to challenge needlessly the 'sense' of being 'sent out', and they can often be woven in elsewhere quite cleverly, often at the very beginning of the service.

### **5.7.4 Review announcement of hymns/changes in posture**

This is largely done very well at St Andrew's, but it is always worth underlining the rule that in a good liturgy, one should never be able to 'see the stitching'. If worship leaders feel the need to direct people to sit/stand, or to join in with an acclamation, or to announce a hymn, then the administrative announcement *can* often 'cut' through the texture of the liturgy, and collude against the sense of the numinous. A combination of confident 'leading by example', and rehearsed cues, as well as directions in the participation aid 'signposting' the service are the tools to avoid this.

### **5.7.5 Make the readings more fun/dramatic, especially during family service**

There are some wonderfully 'theatrical' people within your community. Is there some way in which the scripture readings can be 'performed' more? Not in the sense of 'acted', but read in a way that might captivate the 'audience' more. Could the translation be varied to effect this? Are there other resources on which you could draw to add variety, such as Judith Carpenter's *Women on the Way* series.

## **6. Contact details and a note regarding phase 2**

### **6.1 Summary**

I hope the above report has been useful. It has drawn on a lot of work: observation, discussion, consultation, conversation, deliberation and research. I would like to reiterate that, both with the personnel in place, the spirit among the community, and even the building itself, St Andrew's already has a tremendous amount of positive elements, and it has been hugely encouraging for me to be part of the community over the past few months, and I am grateful for the invitation.

Some of the suggestions above you will find are easy to implement, and you will be able to 'see' how they might work or at least be trialled; others, you may find require further explanation from me, and I would be happy to provide that either in person at the PCC away day, or another occasion, or over email, for no extra charge.

If you would like my assistance in implementing any of the recommendations themselves, I am happy to help with this as well, either as another time-limited project, or on a series of shorter 'one-off' engagements as and when.

Making changes of any sort within the church takes time and careful planning. It will be important not to try to do too much at once, and also not to expect everything to change overnight, but it will be most important, I believe, in order to see any change, for St Andrew's to embrace the heart, or the essence, of what is contained in this report more than any of the specific suggestions: this will in itself bear fruit, and is why the education programme is, I believe, one of the crucial elements to take forward. There are, of course, a number of 'easy fixes' or 'quick wins' here as well. The PCC now, I know, will give careful consideration to how to move forward and which, if any, elements to prioritise.

### **6.2 Contact details**

This report was conducted between May and July 2013

and

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by

Andrew Lyon M.Phil B.Mus (Hons)

Flat 12  
46 Clarence Avenue  
Clapham  
London SW4 8DL

T. 020 3605 8203  
E. andylyon@talktalk.net