

# St. Faith's Church Choir

## NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020

**Welcome** to another edition of ramblings from the organist! I hope you're continuing to keep well. I often wonder between writing these newsletters if I'll have enough content to fill these pages, but I always seem to have too much! As always, comments, improvements, suggestions are very welcome.

### Online singing opportunities

I hope that you have been able to get involved with some singing during this period of lockdown. I'm sorry that I am not better equipped at home to personally offer more creative opportunities, but as I'm on furlough I am not meant to be doing any work for the church!!



William Saunders from Bury St. Edmunds is continuing his hymn practice sessions on Saturday mornings. A very good way to keep singing some great hymns!

<http://william-saunders.info/2020/05/21/hymn-practice-congo-live-on-saturday-mornings/>

In a similar vein, Richard McVeigh is continuing to offer hymns and organ music at your request via his "Beauty in Sound" YouTube channel every Sunday evening from about 5pm.



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKdRXZZXDmLJM6XBnUpIooq>

**RS M** The Royal School of Church Music

continue to upload a wealth of resources to use during lockdown, including a "Hymn of the Day". During this time between Ascension and Pentecost, the church prays "thy kingdom come" and there are currently daily resources geared towards this:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RSCMCentre/videos>

If you're interested, the RSCM recently hosted a webinar titled "What next for the Ministry of Music in our Parishes and Diocese" which had a star studded panel that included Dr David Price, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Portsmouth Cathedral and the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Right Reverend Christopher Foster.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9GYiVqgZYI>

---

## Live streamed services

Here is my pick of online services that I've dipped into during the week. As previously, I'm going to focus on services and videos which contained music in them.

A late Ascension Day service choice is this video from York Minster, which includes some superb photography of the building.



The service is led by the Right Reverend Dr Jonathan Frost who is the Dean of York and from 2010 to 2018 was much loved in the Diocese of Winchester as the Bishop of Southampton.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gY6xdXHVXA>



This weeks "choral classics" from St. Stephen's Church in Walbrook featured music and readings on the theme of the theme of Ascension. The Rev Stephen Baxter leads this service

and continues to display his collection of suit jackets.

Two lovely hymns to sing along to in this video, including "Hail the day that sees him rise". I liked the anthem based on the prayer St. Richard of Chichester, but I can't say I liked the wallpaper in the background of this video as much!

<https://www.facebook.com/161694014320553/videos/598553567684898/>

This weeks "Great Sacred Music" services from St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London was based around the theme of journeys in the Bible and is titled "Walk softly".



Rev Dr Sam Wells chooses not to wear a jacket and enjoys broadcasting from what I assume is his lovely garden.

Listen out for the excellent diction in the hymn "Brother, sister let me serve you" and watch out for the dog in the background.

<https://www.facebook.com/173712669321008/videos/1604644553053108/>

Finally, here is the Ascension Day hymn "Hail the day that sees him rise" to a tune that you probably don't know.

The tune in this video was composed by Sir Sydney Nicholson who was organist at Westminster Abbey 100 years ago!



The hymn is sung here by members of the choir of Chingford Parish Church, NE London.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZ4xILtARA>

# Anthem of the week

The anthem for this Sunday would have been "Listen sweet dove" by Grayston Ives.

You will probably remember that we spent a chunk of time learning this anthem earlier this year to sing in March. As it turned out, the anthem got swapped to "God so loved the world", so I guess this anthem has the unusual accolade of being dropped from a service twice!!



Grayston (also known as Bill) Ives was born in 1948. He was a chorister at Ely Cathedral and studied music at Selwyn College, Cambridge where he had a choral scholarship.

After a period as a music teacher, he became a member of the famous Kings Singers from 1978 to 1985. His voice can be heard on a number of recordings from that period, including "We all stand together" by Paul McCartney and the Frog Chorus:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcDVH8DiBnM>

For eighteen years, Grayston Ives was Organist, Informator Choristarum and Fellow and Tutor in Music at Magdalen College, Oxford. In this role he was responsible for the daily musical life of the college chapel. He retired from Magdalen College in March 2009.



"Listen sweet dove" was commissioned for the 1973 Guildford Diocesan Festival and uses words by the prolific writer George Herbert who was born in 1593 into an aristocratic family.

At the age of 25, he became a Member of Parliament and was destined for a life at court. To everyone's surprise, he decided to be ordained and was made a deacon in 1626. In 1630 he became priest of St. Andrew's Church, Bemerton which is a few miles north west of Salisbury.

He died on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1633 at the age of 40 and the Church of England is invited to remember the life and work of George Herbert on this date every year.

The full text of this anthem (titled Whitsunday) is available here:

<https://ccel.org/h/herbert/temple/Whit.html>

Further information on George Herbert is here:

<http://www.georgeherbert.org.uk/index.html#home>

I enjoyed this 2008 recording of the anthem, sung by the Girls and Men of Bath Abbey:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O00IRuOBXaM>

# Featured Composer!

This week I've chosen to focus on a composer of church music. Continuing with the "Herbert" theme on the previous page, I've gone for the English musician Herbert Sumsion who was born in 1899 in Gloucester. In 1908, Sumsion became a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral and sang with the choir until 1914. In 1911, he became organist at Ashleworth (a small village six miles from Gloucester) where he was responsible for the church choir and the "organ blower" (which I guess was the person who pumped the organ) for a fee of £5 a quarter. What a responsibility for a 12-year-old!



In 1919, Herbert Sumsion became assistant organist at Gloucester Cathedral alongside Herbert Brewer who was organist at the time (I hope these Herberts aren't confusing you). In 1922 Sumsion moved to London to work as an organist and music teacher. In 1926, he was invited to work at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

In 1928, Herbert Brewer died suddenly of a heart attack. Before his death, Brewer had expressed that he wanted Sumsion to succeed him and this wish was granted, although Sumsion had to negotiate as he had just accepted the position of organist at (the old) Coventry Cathedral! As well as being organist of Gloucester Cathedral, he was heavily involved in the famous Three Choirs Festival, which takes place alternately at Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester Cathedrals.

Sumsion retired from Gloucester Cathedral in 1967, which means that he was organist there for a total of 39 years. What a record! He remained living in Gloucestershire and continued to teach and compose. He died in 1995 (25 years ago this year) aged 96.

Sumsion leaves a large legacy of choral and organ compositions, as well as some chamber and orchestral music, including settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis. I think my "Sumsion choice" would be his wonderful setting of words from psalm 107: "They that go down to the sea in ships", composed in 1979.



Here is a lovely recording on YouTube from 1989. Its sung by Derby Cathedral choir conducted by Peter Gould:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6eWy610AE0>

I love the organ part in this anthem, especially at the end, after the storm at sea, where you can picture the rippling waves as the ship sails away.

I also really like the of this anthem by the RSCM Millennium Youth Choir on their CD titled "Out of the Stillness". This is one of my "Desert Island CD" and I highly recommend it.

<https://www.rscmshop.com/books/B0275/myc-cd-out-of-the-stillness>

For a contrast, here's Grayston Ives again, with his setting of the same text. A short extract can be heard here: <https://conviviumrecords.co.uk/product/music-for-seafarers/> Listen out for the use of the Sailors Hornpipe.

---

That's all for this week! Stay safe and keep singing!

*Graham*