

CELEBRATING OUR MINSTER LIFE 2021

MINSTER FLOWERS

Everything has been evolving during the last 12 months with Covid restrictions slowly lifting.

I went into the minster at Easter 2021 via the office to prepare the Easter flower arrangements as the church was not open at this time. I would have a chat with Denise and so enjoyed having a private concert given by our dear Martin How playing the piano or organ lifting my heart in the house of God.

I have been so lucky in being able to carry on arranging the flowers which gives me so much pleasure. It was lovely to be able to ask Diana Hemmings and Christine Patient to re-join me at Harvest, Christmas and Easter as restrictions lifted. Their contribution is so valued.

What a joy that our minster is open again during the day for all to enter.

It is lovely to chat to people visiting the minster either for the first time or they might have attended the church, sung in the choir or been married here. Others quietly slip in to pray and light a candle and to find solace in this holy place.

I pray that some of our parishioners come forward to assist with this wonderful and fulfilling aspect of church life.

Penny Hall

PARISH MAGAZINE REPORT 2021/22

This has been an exciting year for our Parish Magazine. We have returned to publishing printed copies of the magazine, in response to feedback from members of our congregation, as well as continuing to

upload a digital version to the Minster’s website for those who prefer to read online.

Fr Andrew and I have continued to explore the idea of having a theme for some issues; recent themes have included ‘New Beginnings’, ‘Church Music’ and ‘The Eucharist’. We are thankful for the dedication of our regular contributors, who have continued to provide a range of interesting and thought-provoking articles, and it has been particularly pleasing to welcome several new contributors, some commissioned

by Fr Andrew. Members of the congregation have been invited to contribute to features about ‘My favourite hymn’ and ‘What the Eucharist means to me’. We pray that in future even more of our

congregation may feel inspired to write for the magazine.

Perhaps the most striking change is that since February 2022 the magazine has been professionally printed in colour. This has given me the opportunity to be more creative with the magazine’s design.

The new-look magazine has been on sale for a minimum donation of £1.00, and thanks to the generous donations of our congregation, it has been possible to break even on the printing costs.

Thanks are due to Denise Mead for all her hard work in the past printing copies on the office photocopier, to Fr Andrew for his work on commissioning, to Alice Bishop for her meticulous proofreading

and to Deborah Miller for her careful management of the magazine’s advertising revenue.

Liz Watkins, Parish Magazine Editor

HALLS REPORT

2021 was a slightly better year for Hall hire. Our let of the small hall to a local charity as office space, proved fruitful and they remained with us until October 2021.

We also managed to attract the local Croydon Boxing Club who have used the hall on several occasions for their local amateur boxing competitions. They are based in Centrale and this has been a good let for both of us.

Unfortunately, we had to spend quite a bit on having the large hall re-lamped however the new lamps are all LED Energy saving lightbulbs, which will save us & the environment in the longer term.

The hall has been used for Catechesis and teaching sessions and there is talk of relocating the choir robes and making one of the halls a robing room, but that is yet to be decided.

Once again there was no winter night shelter provision and it seems unlikely that we will be allowed to hold similar style shelters again. The Government are insisting that all participants have individual en-suite rooms, so I doubt any church hall will be able to offer these facilities.

Thanks must go to Melvyn Mead who regularly cleans the hall and sorts the furniture before & after outside lets.

Denise Mead, Parish Administrator

SERVERS

After several false starts, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to add two acolytes to the serving team, in the latter part of 2020, albeit on lighter duties. Since the return to public worship in summer 2020, I had single-handedly held the fort, so it was nice to have some of my team drifting back and it was with much joy that we were able to fully reintroduce the whole serving team in September 2021.

There was a very productive training session in early 2022 which has resulted in some new duties for the servers which they are adapting to very well.

We recently said a big ‘thank you and farewell’ to Mick Fry & Geoff Radford. Mick had been serving here for nearly 30 years and Geoff, who was sacristan in a previous church, for nearly 60, all told. Both will be greatly missed. You will probably have noticed that we have a few new young faces so we welcome Jeremiah, Levi, Tyra, Kyra to the team.

Denise Mead, Sacristan

FLOATING SHELTER

Once again, very sadly, we were not able to play host to the Sunday night guests for the last 7 weeks of the Croydon Churches ‘Floating Shelter’ project. Instead, we assisted with the production of sandwiches to go up to ‘Nightwatch’ for distribution to the homeless in Queens Gardens.

Each week we were asked to provide 90 rounds of sandwiches (minimum 9 loaves). We also took cartons of juice, crisps, cake & fruit, travel sized toiletries (where possible) and on the first week, some winter coats, scarves and hats and a couple of boxes of food which I had been given.

We were commended on the way we laid out the sandwiches with clear labelling and the decorative positioning of our weekly box of fruit. Sandwiches were expertly made by Diane Edwards, Diana Hemmings, Sue Williams, Penny Hall, Stella Olatidoye & Mayowa, Lorraine Paruma & Grace, Jody & Tammy Symonds and myself. It was a great pleasure to take our offering up to Nightwatch each week, who were so appreciative.

Denise Mead, Co-Ordinator

LUNCHTIME RECITALS

For every venue which produced artistic work, the last 12 months have been lived on a knife edge, wondering when it was safe to resume production without the threat of further lockdowns. We took the decision to resume the lunchtime recitals in January 2022, and were blessed with the numbers of performers who contacted us for opportunities to contribute. To date we have not had to initiate an approach to anyone.

As in previous years, recitalists included gifted students from Old Palace, Trinity, and Croydon High schools as well as students from the Royal College of Music, and our own professional musicians from the Minster. However this year, we have also welcomed students from the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. The resulting Spring and Summer series have yielded a varied programme of the highest calibre, much enjoyed by the small, but loyal, audience who attend each week.

Once more, we would like to pay tribute to the wonderful and committed team of ushers who volunteer their Friday lunchtimes to welcome the recitalists and audience: David Morgan, Frances Martin, Diane Edwards, Chris Shields, Elaine Cooper, Sue Williams and Ann Young – thank you!

We ask your prayers for support in spreading the word that these recitals exist and encouraging more people to come and enjoy a different form of outreach and ministry that Croydon Minster offers to the wider community.

Pamela Hall,

A REFLECTION ON THE MINSTER NURSERY AND INFANTS’ SCHOOL ACADEMIC YEAR 2021 – 2022

As with all schools, the previous two academic years had hit the school hard and, whilst superb efforts were made to maintain online learning and contact between families and staff, together with face-to-face teaching for particular groups of children who were unable to remain at home, there was a considerable decline, not only in measurable learning but in the children’s later resilience and ability to socialise and enjoy school community life.

This became particularly apparent when all pupils were able gradually, during the academic year 2020 - 2021, to attend school once again. It became very clear that expectations by staff relating to progress had to be reduced, patient additional support provided and focus given to the development of age-appropriate skills in respect of many children as a result of the long school absence.

This last academic year has seen an intake of children in the Reception Year who have been able to experience a normal teaching environment and whom, we hope and trust, will be able to progress during their primary school years, fulfilling the expectations of their teachers and families.

We give thanks for the resumption of a normal school year with the warm supportive and family atmosphere we are accustomed to provide, for the dedicated efforts of the teaching and administrative staff, ably led by the Head Teacher and her two Deputies and the support for families provided by the Family Liaison Officer.

We are also looking forward in September of this year to formally becoming part of the Southwark Board of Education Multi-Academy Trust. Our application to join the SDBE MAT stemmed from a perception that our school would benefit greatly from the in-house expertise which would become available to us and to a greater financial stability - all in line with a common vision to ensure that all children in member schools realise their God-given potential and aspire to exceed expectations.

We are thankful for this opportunity but also ask for the prayers of the church as we embark on this new venture.

We ask the church also to remember in prayer the challenge presented this year for those children within the school who still struggle through having lost many months of vital learning and also for those of our pupil cohort who have additional educational needs and whom we strive to support with love and to the best of our ability.

Diane Edwards, Chair of Governors

REPORT ON MINSTER JUNIORS

One of the most significant things that has happened this year in the life of Minster Junior School is our recent joining of the Southwark Diocesan Multi-academy Trust. It has been a long journey over the last year towards full membership and we are particularly grateful for the help and support from Mark Burnett, Chief Operating Officer of the trust and Marcus Cooper from the Board of Education who have guided us so well throughout the process. We were delighted to join at Easter this year with our annual celebration of the new life that the resurrection of Jesus brings, coinciding with the new life and opportunity that membership of the trust brings to our school. We have also had changes in the leadership structure of the school with our headteacher, Hannah Farhan going on long term maternity leave for the next year. I am pleased to announce that Hannah has recently given birth to a beautiful baby boy and we wish her every joy and blessing with this new addition to her family. While Hannah is on maternity leave, we have appointed a new acting head, Claudette Green who is being supported by a part-time executive head, Martina Martin, who is also the head teacher of another local Church of England school, St John’s in Shirley. It has been wonderful to welcome Claudette and Martina to their new roles and the school is already benefitting from their wisdom and expertise.

We would value prayer for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for us in this new stage of the life of the school and for Hannah and her family during her maternity leave.

Fr Alan, Co-Chair of Governors

BELL RINGERS REPORT

After difficult times and complete silence from the belltower, we were gradually allowed to ring again in June 2021, albeit in reduced circumstances. We were restricted to 6 people which meant that we could not welcome visitors which has long been a tradition at Croydon. But it provided a welcome return to the routine which has been part of our lives for so long.

Our local band quickly got back into the routine, although many of us soon realised that some of our skills had gone on to the backburner and our muscles needed retraining. Sadly, at least two of our regulars had found other calls on their time during lockdown and are no longer joining us and Geoff has decided to call it a day in the tower, although remaining a great friend and loyal supporter of everything we do. Thankfully, we can now ring without restriction, but sometimes we struggle to be quorate – we must be grateful that our small number are so loyal.

The tower has had a major clean up after the work on the bells and this has created a more pleasant environment for us. We are beginning to attract visitors again and we welcome an accomplished Surrey band once every two months to ring our glorious 12. Sunday service ringing has occurred almost without a break since we were allowed the freedom to proceed normally. We thank the church for their support in our efforts to ring whenever we can.

Our challenge is to recruit! We need more people! Almost anyone can learn and we are willing to teach. It's a slow process but very rewarding and we look forward to boosting our numbers.

Shirley McGill, Captain of the Bell Tower

STEWARDS (SIDESPEOPLE) REPORT

2021 saw the stewarding team continuing to provide a welcoming service to worshippers during the global Coronavirus pandemic. In these circumstances our primary concerns were

(i) to ensure that everyone felt safe whilst in the church and

(ii) to comply with the prevailing government restrictions.

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has volunteered and contributed to meeting the guidelines and rules set out by the government and the Diocese.

We are thankful that the Minster decided to maintain public worship in the church throughout the majority of the year. However, this decision meant that at various times there were restrictions on the number of people allowed to be in the congregation and, until September, we had to collect contact tracking details. My thanks go to Angela Bond and Denise Mead for their assistance with the Eventbrite ticketing administration.

Finally, we are looking to expand the team I would like to encourage anyone who feels they would could serve in this role to contact me.

Arlene Esdaile

Churchwarden

MUSIC AT THE MINSTER 2021-22

In March 2022 we welcomed Justin Miller as our new Director of Music after Ronny Krippner’s appointment to Ripon Cathedral. We were fortunate that Sophie Garbisu was able to direct the choir with the support of visiting organists and Ollie Morrell was able to step up as Acting Sub Organist.

Like Ronny, Justin holds the post here alongside the Head of Choral Singing at Whitgift School. Coming from St Matthew’s, Northampton, and the David Ross Academy schools Justin has begun working in a characteristically unflustered and clear style.

As we look to the future, we are pleased that the Cathedral Music Trust has named Croydon Minster along with 21 choirs around the country, including Westminster Abbey and St Paul’s Cathedral, to receive grants. The money from the grant will enable a singing development leader to go into schools to promote singing and all the benefits that accrue from it.

“We want children and teachers to find their voices,” says our Director of Music, Justin Miller. “When children sing, they are taking in and processing a vast amount of information in an extremely complex way. This uses more areas of the brain than any other activity. If it’s made an enjoyable experience, they don’t even know they are doing it. The benefits in terms of confidence, socialisation, numeracy, and language development are well-documented, aiding both the individual and the school environment.”

The award will mean that choristers coming for rehearsals at the Minster will also be able to have individual singing lessons too. Our incumbent, Fr Andrew, welcomed the grant. “The Cathedral Music Trust grant is great news for Croydon Minster and for choral singing in Croydon. The grant makes possible our long-held aspirations to widen the choral excellence we already have and, working in partnership with local schools, to share this wonderful tradition of music with more children and young people.”

Peter Allwood, the chair of the Cathedral Music Trust, said, “Sacred choral music brings joy to people and life to our cathedrals, churches and communities. This round of funding will help develop the music-making in choral foundations that is deeply loved and admired by local communities and international audiences.”

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE MINSTER

The pandemic hit our existing work with children and young people hard. We were obliged to stop our Sunday morning provision – our Kingfisher and Blue Groups – and this coincided with Dave and Ann Young laying down the task of running the Sunday morning creche, having served for many years and seen many young children come through the doors and grow in the life of the church. This is an opportunity to thank those who still have a heart for our work with children and young people and a request for prayer as we seek to discern new ways forward.

The challenge is how we build work with and for children and young people on a sustainable footing that goes with the grain of 21st century styles of learning and the demands of modern family life. These questions predate the pandemic, but the questions have been highlighted and sharpened by this.

* How do we teach the faith in a society that no longer broadly holds the principles of the Christian faith?
* How do we resource and support our work with children and young people, and encourage their teachers and leaders?
* How do we make Christianity plausible and credible as a way of life for the young (and older) members of the Church? We are very aware of the need to support parents and carers who are the primary catechists of their children.
* How can the church best support that?

One development for which we are thankful for, that has come out of the pandemic is the now monthly service for children, young people and their families on Sunday afternoons at 3.30pm. This service came into being to enable children and young people to worship together in the absence of the Sunday groups.

Of course, our young people’s ministry thrives within both the choirs and the altar servers. There are over 70 young people aged between 7- 18 in the choirs and 12 young altar servers aged between 7-18 on the rota. This is a remarkable achievement.