

THE MINSTER COMMUNITY

Here is a snapshot in May 2024 of some of the things we get up to that makes that adds to the richness of our life together, drawing on peoples' talents and gifts. All are welcome to participate.

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE MINSTER

This last year has seen a growth in activities for the children who regularly attend the Minster and a deepening of the relationships between their parents and carers.



As children and families' catechist, I try to catch up with our regular parents and children in the congregation each Sunday, and to speak to and welcome those who are new.

Since Covid, we have not had any Sunday school groups and a monthly Sunday afternoon service was not well attended, and so we have decided to implement new ways of forming our children and families into a more cohesive group. One thing that we have done is to form a WhatsApp chat group for ease of communication - and to give a sense of identity.

We have also had a group event every couple of months, which have been great fun: at the end of December we had a Christmas party with food and games. On Shrove Tuesday we had a

pancake party, which included a pancake race, and many sweet and delicious pancake toppings! And recently we had a trip to Oxygen trampolining park for an hour of jumping, followed by tea and games at St George's Waddon.

On the liturgical side, we had a very moving Good Friday children's service, which took the form of stations of the cross, and we have 3 candidates who are preparing for the forthcoming Confirmation by the Bishop of Southwark at St George's Waddon. We are also planning a children's Mass and lunch in the coming months.



It is well known that parents are the primary catechists for their children, and that children who see their parents praying and reading the Bible and talking about their faith in a natural way, are many times more likely to remain practising Christians into their adult lives. Please remember to pray for our Minster parents as they bring their children up in the faith, and for our Minster children, whom we commit to pray for at every baptism:

People of God, will you welcome these candidates and uphold them in their life in Christ?

With the help of God, we will.

Alice Bishop, *Children and Families' Catechist*

ALTAR SERVERS

It is my privilege to report that the Serving team is in good fettle. Our ages range from 7 to over 70!

Easter 2024 was a particularly busy time for the serving team.

With the introduction of the 5.30pm Sung Eucharist on a Saints' Day or Holy Day, I have found myself in the Sanctuary more often either serving or acting as Thurifer.

The youngest servers start as 'boats', where they carry the Incense pot for the Thurifer. As they grow, the youngest are trained as 'Acolytes' to carry a candle and assist at the altar.

This year we welcomed Ross, David & Shenay as boats. Jeremiah, Kira & Tyra were promoted to Acolytes and Eliana joined the acolyte team.

Toby is training to be a Thurifer and was able to have his sister's expert help over Easter. Whilst at university, Charlie often serves in Chichester Cathedral.

The serving team are blessed that Charlie, Charles & Hugh are happy to serve when they are down from university. This is an enormous assistance to the team and we are grateful to them for giving up their time.

Earlier in the year we were sad to lose Amma who, after the sad loss of her mother, moved away. This year we will probably lose Edmund who is getting married and relocating and Isabel who will be off to university.

The team are indebted to Sue Williams who launders and keeps the white Cottas, white!

Denise Mead, *Sacristan & Verger*

MUSIC AT THE MINSTER

Throughout the past year the Minster choral foundation has continued to enrich our worship and parish life. Numbers all around are healthy; we are fortunate to not have much difficulty recruiting choristers, and we have also welcomed a number of new volunteers to the back row. Our girls have remained strong despite sadly losing a handful of choristers due to changes of school and transport issues. This will be a huge challenge to overcome as a large number of our dedicated girls continue to leave Old Palace before its closure. Please continue to keep these families in your prayers during this time of enormous change.

Maintaining and developing the Opus Dei is the bread and butter of our offering, and throughout the year we have added more seasonally appropriate liturgical music to enhance our worship. The number of midweek sung masses has continued to rise, and I do commend these opportunities to you, in addition to our usual round of sung services. Our 'carol' services – during Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and Lent are some of our most excellent services of the year; they are great opportunities to invite a friend to the Minster to hear the story of our faith through words and music.

The choir continues to add works by underrepresented composers to the repertoire, some of which was inspired our invitation to sing in the diocesan celebration of Black History Month in October. Additionally, there have been several new pieces by female composers. The choir loves to explore new music, but sheet music is expensive for a choir of our size, and composers, quite rightly, need to be paid for their work. If you'd like to sponsor a set of new music (£200-£300) please do be in touch.

Other highlights of the past year:

- July: Ships Ahoy! – a celebration of singing with our Croydon Sings! partner schools and the choristers. The Minster was transformed beyond recognition, complete with pirate ships, for a performance of Britten’s The Golden Vanity and Horowitz Captain Noah and his floating zoo.



- October: Bishop Rosemarie kindly invited the choir to sing for the diocesan Celebration of Black History Month in Southwark Cathedral.

- November: Mozart Requiem, with London Mozart Players, sponsored by Whitgift School, with all proceeds going to Lives not Knives. We were fortunate to have substantial audience for this monumental work and worthy cause.



- December: Christmas Cheer! which has been gaining popularity year after year, complete with a cameo appearance of the Grinch (Fr David!).

- January: BBC Radio Three Choral Evensong live from the Minster.

Concert highlights for the next year include What a wonderful world with the girls and our Croydon Sings! Partner Schools (7 June), Christmas Cheer! with the Salvation Army Band (14 Dec), and Messiah with Oxford Bach Soloists (29 March).



Although our grant from the Cathedral Music Trust has been depleted, Croydon Sings! continues to expand our reach to two primary schools in the parish. The project was never meant to be a recruitment initiative for the Minster choir, but with the closure of Old Palace, our links with these schools will be crucial as we go forward. Although we are asking for a small financial contribution from each partner school, we once again need to prayerfully consider whether the Minster has the resources to continue doing this important work with our local children. Music education in schools continues to diminish and sharing our wealth of resources is more crucial than ever.





I am indebted to Denise, Diane, and our army of chaperones for keeping the choristers robed, fed, watered, and safe. The lunchtime recitals continue to attract good audiences and promote young players, and we are grateful to Pamela Hall for organising the series. The dedication and expertise of the adults of the choir does not go unnoticed, nor do the miles of transport provided by the parents. The department is fortunate to have the support and prayers of our wonderful clergy, and I would like to express my thanks, on behalf of the choir, to Fr Andrew and his team for all that they do.

Finally, I would like to thank each member of the parish for their continued commitment to our flourishing department.

Justin Miller, *Director of Music*

PARISH MAGAZINE

This has been another successful year for our Parish Magazine, with the printed copies growing in popularity. When we began having colour copies printed professionally, some concerns were expressed about whether this could be cost-effective, and I am happy to report that thanks to the generosity of our readers, recent issues of the magazine have made a profit. After several issues sold out, we increased the print run to 75, which costs £138. Advertising revenue for each issue brings in £100, and the takings from sales of recent issues have been in the region of £90–£100, giving a profit of approximately £50–£60.

We have continued to upload a digital version of the magazine to the Minster's website for those who prefer to read online.

Fr Andrew and I have continued with the idea of having a theme for each issue. Since my previous report, themes have included 'Walking with God' (exploring pilgrimages, retreats and other journeys); 'Learning and Growing' (an education theme, to tie in with the beginning of the new academic year); 'Celebrate Black History Month'; 'A Global Christmas' (looking at Christmas traditions in a variety of



cultures around the world); 'Lent: Giving up or taking on?'; and 'Who is my neighbour?' (including articles by guest contributors from several organisations and charities in the local area).

My thanks go to Fr Andrew and Fr Alan for their work on commissioning and liaison with guest contributors, to Denise Mead for her assistance in preparing the diary pages, to Alice Bishop for her careful proofreading (often at very short notice with print deadlines approaching!) and to Deborah Miller for her management of the magazine's advertising revenue. Most of all, my thanks go to our contributors who make the magazine what it is. Alongside our 'regulars', we have welcomed a number of new contributors this year from both within and beyond our worshipping community, and we pray that in the coming year, this number will continue to increase.

If you have an idea for a theme or an article for the Parish Magazine, please speak to me or Fr Andrew. We are very keen that everyone should feel able to contribute to the magazine, and we would love to hear from you.

Liz Watkins, *Parish Magazine Editor*

CROYDON MINSTER EDUCATION OFFICER

In the last year we have welcomed over 400 pupils into Croydon Minster. Nine different schools have come to our wonderful building for tours and talks on a range of themes. Trinity, Aerodrome, Ark Academy, Beulah, Bensham Manor, Steps Language Unit, Gonville and our own Minster Infant and Junior Schools have come through our doors. The focus of their visits has included, general history, the life of Jesus, Baptism and St John the Baptist.

As well as young people I have also hosted various adult groups for tours. The U3A and the Guild of Vergers group have looked around our building. As many people know I write a weekly Sunday Supplement column for Inside Croydon, an online local news outlet. We hosted an evensong and tour for readers of IC last Autumn. A similar event is planned for May when the group will be looking at the stained glass windows.

Writing for Inside Croydon brings aspects of the church to a wide audience.

I also go out and speak at differing associations, when invited, about the history of the Minster. In the last year I have given talks to the Probus Club and to a branch of the U3A.

All donations for talks and tours are given straight to the Minster. Sometimes that will be a fee, whilst at other times visitors tap on the card reader.

Croydon Minster always welcomes new visitors for Open House Weekend, a super initiative which sees many different sorts of building opening their doors to give access

to a range of visitors in September. This weekend is always popular and a team of volunteers ensures that Croydon Minster becomes a special place for more people.

Whenever I am in the building and visitors come in, I often end up chatting about the church and showing them something about which they are especially interested.

I also deal with emailed queries to the church which are linked to history. I recently met someone to show them our copy of the 1867 fire print. Interestingly their version differed slightly to ours, indicating that there are different versions of the Nash painting in circulation.

The history of our church is rich and diverse and deserves to be heard by the widest possible audience.

David Morgan, *Education Officer*

SEPARATED CHILD PROJECT

For over 18 months we have had the pleasure of working alongside the Separated Child Foundation creating bags of essential clothing and toiletries for unaccompanied refugee children arriving in Dover.

Back in March 2024, on the World Day of Sleep, we prayerfully created 200 'Sleep packs'. These packs contain things like: a large tee shirt to sleep in, eye masks, lavender bags, stress balls, bed socks etc.

Packing sessions take place on a Sunday morning from 11.30am-1.00pm. The very first session in September 2022 coincided with Harvest Festival where we also shared a sumptuous lunch cooked by Fr David. At that session we created 600 packs which were meant to last through the winter.



From May 2023 we had a monthly session where over tea/coffee, kindly provided by one of the coffee teams, where we create 200 packs per session.

The last session of 2023 was on Harvest Festival where again we shared a Harvest lunch cooked by Fr David.

The first session of 2024 took place on Sunday 12th May in church.

Denise Mead, *on behalf of Fr David*



HOSPITALITY TEAM

The Sunday morning coffee team enable offering coffee/ tea etc. after the 10am Eucharist. At present this takes place in the Church and is run by a team of 9 volunteers.

This service is very much appreciated with lots of positive and grateful feedback from the congregation and it has been encouraging to seeing the number of people staying increasing and new faces joining us. It is a great opportunity for us to get to know one another.

Diana Hemmings is leaving our team at the end of June and we are extremely grateful for all her hard work in helping to reestablish offering coffee and her work on the team.

In the next year we would ideally like to organise an alternative venue for when there are baptisms etc. after the service and where we can have some more social seating and child friendly space. We would also love to recruit some more volunteers, it's a wonderful way to get to know people, so please get in touch.

I can only conclude by expressing my sincere thanks to the team that make offering coffee possible.

Anne Young, *Coffee Tea Co-ordinator*

FLOATING SHELTER

Once again, we were not able to host guests for the Sunday nights for the last 6 weeks of the Croydon Churches 'Floating Shelter' project instead we assisted with the production of sandwiches to go to 'Nightwatch' in Queens Gardens.

This year we were asked to provide 120 rounds of sandwiches each week which were valiantly made, labelled and dated,



over the 6 weeks, by Diane, John, Penny, Tiffany, Justine, Rachel & Alan, Sue, Diana, Lorraine, Stella, Ann & Dave, Hilary & myself. All the sandwich providers were extremely generous and refused to be reimbursed.



To make up packed lunches we also provided cartons of juice; crisps, cake & fruit.

Bedford Park Masonic Lodge sponsored our work this year with a generous donation of

£1000 which meant that we were able to go the extra mile and not rely on church funds.

Denise Mead, *Floating Shelter Co-ordinator*



LUNCHTIME RECITALS

Last year we celebrated the fact that all three series of Lunchtime Recitals were booked by November. Because this naturally resulted in a few cancellations due to young graduates earning auditions with major orchestras or opportunities to go on tour, we decided this year to book each series just 2 months in advance, but to put prospective recitalists on waiting lists for the next season. Not only has this been extremely successful, but it appears that the reputation of the recitals has gained momentum and we have had applications from further afield than London, with one recitalist coming from Cambridge and another from York!



The quality of performance continues to rise: we have been treated to innovative performances (a highlight being a cellist performing with a loop) and sheer lyrical beauty of musicianship. As in previous years, recitalists included gifted students from Old Palace, Croydon High and Sutton High schools as well as students from the major London conservatoires (often prize-winners in international competitions), and our own professional musicians from the Minster community.



Our audience holds steady at around 25-30 and thanks to our now being advertised in Your Croydon Weekly online, we have gained some new audience members. Donations from the audience continue to be sufficiently generous that we can offer expenses to our London-based recitalists to enable them to travel out to Croydon. Given that we cannot pay them anything like what their performances warrant, this goes some way to show our appreciation of their gifts.

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, Sue Kibler, Chris Shields, Elaine Cooper, Sue Williams and Ann Young – and joined this year by Penny Hall, Christine Morgan and Liz Vernon – thank you! Thank you also to Trisha Kierzek who has posted extracts of the recitals on our social media, which is further helping to raise their profile.



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

SIDESPEOPLE

The primary role of a Sidesperson is to be the *first welcomer* when the congregation enters the church for a service. As well as greeting people, the tasks involved include distributing hymn books and service sheets, answering questions and giving directions, e.g. how to use the card reader. I would like to thank all the volunteers who have faithfully served in this role and welcome Stella Idowu who joined the team during 2023. I would also like to give a special mention to the children and young people who assist their parents whilst they are on duty!

One of the highlights of this year for us, was assisting with stewarding 'Windrush 75', an event held at the Minster during the summer. It was a truly delightful occasion consisting of music, hymns, speeches from local community leaders and advice from different agencies.



Finally, if you are interested in supporting the work of the Minster in this important safety and welcoming role, please contact me (churchwardena@croydonminster.org) or my fellow churchwarden Stephen Willmer.

Arlene Esdaile, *Churchwarden*

MINSTER BELLRINGERS

Our year has been quite typical, with the usual ups and downs of numbers attending – but we do keep going and take the rough with the smooth. Thankfully, there are more smooth moments of late!

Sunday ringing is our priority and keeping a quorum for this important role is uppermost. Different calls on time mean we are sometimes a little short but then we make up for it another week. We sometimes gain extra ringers from St Peter's and we, in turn, help them to keep their bells ringing on Sunday.

We have two learners – Izzy has been with us now for a year and still remains enthusiastic – learning to ring is quite a long process but she is a regular and committed attender. Liz joined us last year and has inspired us all with her determination and resilience – she is now ringing on Sunday mornings and shows great enthusiasm to improve. The two trainers, Hilary and Fraser, deserve special mention for their continued support.

Tuesday evening practice is attracting ringers from a wider area. We have sufficient numbers to do things that other towers find difficult and we do have a bit of a reputation for being 'useful' if you are trying to progress. It is not unusual to have more than 12 in the tower and our magnificent bells can be heard in their splendid glory.

We continue to join in with local events – outings, quizzes etc. Fraser and I have run training courses for the Surrey Association at Addington and Roehampton and have received good notices! Lucky retired Croydon ringers regularly support midweek activities which involve a little trip out to the country with a pub lunch as the major draw.

Shirley McGill, *Captain of the Bellringers*

MINSTER GROUNDS TEAM

The grounds team meet once a month mostly to try and tidy up the Church grounds and do some gardening.

Members also pop down to clear up and tackle additional tasks as they arise.

We are very grateful to everyone who gives up their time to help with this endless task, particularly to Simon who takes on all sorts of additional tasks including changing the light bulbs, fixing the up lights and many other such task around the building. He also researches to progress maintaining and improving our beautiful Church.

There is a continuous need for cleaning, tidying, gardening and general maintenance so we are glad of any help on a regular or ad hoc, occasional basis.

Dave Young, *Grounds Team Co-ordinator*

FLOWERS AT THE MINSTER

Our small flower team has increased this year with the arrival of Liz Grant Collie. Liz is a retired florist and has been a wonderful help to me since last June.

Diana Hemmings has been on the team for very many years and I thank her for all her help providing her lovely arrangements.

Liz and I work together and plan what we are going to do especially for Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

For Mothering Sunday Liz Vernon kindly joined us to make up the many daffodil posies.

At Easter we were given a wonderful donation to spend on the flowers so we were able to purchase an abundance of beautiful fresh spring flowers.

We thank the congregation for all their kind comments during the year.

Penny Hall, *Head Flower Arranger*