

# London Church Music Forum 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007

## St Paul's Cathedral Conference Suite

### DISCUSSION SESSION – Random Groups

Random groups were formed to consider two topics

- Sharing of thoughts between different traditions and styles and different parts of the Diocese.
- What are the Issues and challenges facing church music and musicians in London?

### Summary of Responses

- Copyright: CPDL (Choral Public Domain Library) is a good thing.
- Increase in musical diversity.
  - Introduction of some more modern music into traditional services, combining both, can attract new church members whilst retaining older members ( often...).
  - Use of un-tuned percussion can be used to encourage young children to actively join in worship.
- Take suggestions from congregation for the hymns they like (including ethnically diverse music); keeps contact rooted in congregation and avoids overly top-lead music.
- Rehearse on Sunday instead of mid-week. It avoids the commitment issue and when you get to the rehearsal you know whom you have got for the service.
- People don't come to church 48 weeks of the year so the regular routine of weekday choir practice and the Sunday service often doesn't work.
- Organising music group or choirs is much more work without regular commitment from members.
- Request for CPDL style repository of arrangements by church musicians.
- The social side of choirs is very important, but does need commitment (the "C" word).
- Children involved tend to be girls.
  - Football/ Rugby practice on Sunday morning
    - One solution might be to offer Sunday evening services.
- Strong involvement now from musicians from other countries.
- Choirs and music groups can be a way into the church for people from the outside. Membership should be open to those outside of the church.
- Disappointment at the general lack of participation of clergy in the forum (from one of the clergy present) despite the extended notice.
- Absence of comment in Deanery church audits about music and worship
- Lack of organists
- Sunday school programmes conflicting with choir practice
- Parents – commitment to choir practice and bringing children to rehearsals on time can be difficult (time deprivation 'business')
- How inclusive should we be in terms of including less able singers/musicians?
- Organ –tuning sometimes requires PCC approval – no specific music budget.
- Funding: working out a realistic balance between one's offering of the skills with the money being given.
- Skills and contribution sometimes not appreciated or credited leading to feelings of being taken for granted by either clergy or congregation members.
- Finding Musicians often a challenge
- Finding Leaders
- Integration of choir and congregation
  - Either party may grumble about the choice of music.
- Time issues and having the right level of energy
- Auditing Diversity
- Engagement with parish
- Being a parish musician can be an isolated position.

- Finding ways to draw children into music
- There is recognition that there is a ministry of musicians.
- Today's forum shows that there is a willingness to provide supportiveness.

## DISCUSSION SESSION 2 – By Area.

Groups comprising participants from each Episcopal area\* where asked to consider the following questions:

- What are you going to do at the Area level?
- Who will help to take matters forward to the next stage?
- What support do you need from the Diocese and from Organisations?

\* For this discussion participants from Stepney and Two Cities joined together.

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### **Edmonton Area**

1. Area / Deanery Primary church choir, audition only, 8.15-8.45 Mon – Friday
2. possibly 1/2 diocese 1/2 council funded
3. Teenage music group
4. all bring own music, guitars, clarinets into church setting with adult supervision
5. Survey of NEEDS and Resources in the Area
6. Resource sharing – books & music
7. Simple listing of available music from each church displayed on website with contact details
8. Involve different Christian denominations – we all worship the same God!
9. Share resources / arrangements with linked schools
10. Encourage Diocesan facilitation and communication with schools, businesses etc
11. New secondary school starting in Finchley – how can we have an input NOW?
12. Christian Music school on Saturdays in Cockfosters
13. Email lists, both by area, and by musical taste!
14. Use the RSCM new committee – they have people with time, waiting to help!
15. More frequent Area meetings e.g. 1 every 4 months in the diary!

### **Kensington area.**

Suggestions for activities at Area level

1. Encourage church members (especially younger ones) to attend biennial services at St Paul's Cathedral, to enable them to experience and be inspired by church music at the highest level
2. Hold an exhibition day where choirs and worship groups from around the Area can come together

In discussion, we realised that a major problem in Kensington Area (and possibly others too) is that it covers a wide geographical area which makes it difficult for people to do much together across the Area. We therefore felt it might be better to look at activities at Deanery level. Alan Matthews (Christ Church Turnham Green) has undertaken to raise the issues discussed at the LCMF at Hounslow Deanery level.

Support needed at Diocesan/Organisational Levels

1. We felt strongly that the Music and Liturgical Committees should be encouraged to work together, and a suggestion was made that if Music Committee information went out on Liturgical Committee notepaper it might actually be read by clergy!
2. It would be helpful if the RSCM would organise some training on a Deanery basis
3. We felt that a great start has been made to establish contacts but it needs some co-ordination at Diocesan level to strengthen this and encourage further networking - suggestions included sending out a contact list of attendees at the LCMF and setting up an internet forum and/or a MySpace group

## Two Cities / Stepney

- a) RSCM person's focus is on the volunteer sector in typically struggling Anglican parishes. Hopes that better-resourced parishes might have the facility to also help, in the future.
- b) Lack of competent singers in a congregation meant that work had to be done from a low base, engaging interest, animating from a very low base. a) RSCM hoped to support just here, with skills training aimed at leaders.
- c) St Helen's Bishopsgate hold occasional Worship Conference (songsfortoday.com), with new material being added all the time
- d) Useful to have a Diocese calendar of such events, and even a chat room, and a listings area with resources available which could be shared (whether that be instruments, paperwork, skills, time...). Response: there was already a 'City Events' facility. Contact LD web director.
- e) Instance of neighbouring churches not actually talking to each other. Clergy sometimes hard to persuade of the mileage in a new idea
- f) Archdeacon's questions on annual visitation could give more focus to the issue of musician support
- g) Question: do the vigorous churches have spare musicians who could be hired out to particular events that need heating up?

Poll of what in general the people present could offer:

- professional cantor/animateur
- experience in organising things
- 'find your voice' training / instruments to hire
- skilled music teams for training and performing one-off events
- several glorious big spaces
- training in jazz piano styles for worship
- worship song training, and improvisation

## Willesden Area

1. London School of Theology would like to explore placement of students on the Music and Worship degree course with local churches or churches receiving visits from them to inject and generate cross-fertilisation of ideas.
2. Request to make the register of musicians that is being added to the Diocesan database available to organisations such as the RSCM to use.
3. Key request for help needed to develop and coordinate connections between musicians and provide information about events and ideas etc. i.e. a Music and Worship Diocesan website.
4. Develop mechanism for sharing copyright-free music among churches- a local version of CPDL.
5. Explore opportunities for church musicians to contribute and participate in local festivals, e.g. Uxbridge runs a local BigFest event with local council, businesses and the community but at the moment churches take little/no part.
6. No apparent diocesan involvement in developing church-based schools

7. Working with local church-based schools seems sometimes to be difficult compared with a few years ago. Need to work at re-establishing and rebuilding these links to recreate this important and vital source of young musicians and singers for churches.
8. Some churches have very few children and do not recognise the need to develop a children's ministry or the involvement of children in music as part of creating a sustainable church
9. Explore opportunities to contribute to and get church musicians performing on local radio; e.g. Premier Christian Radio, Hayes Radio.
10. Explore other Christian music resources e.g. Resounding Worship.
11. Organise Deanery level choir events.
12. Request for an event to explore performing 18<sup>th</sup> C music in an authentic style.
13. Provide some help to get going at an Area level with next steps.