

Sing Joyfully

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter



Vol. 5 No. 6

July 2017

The program for July

Sunday 9 July, Choral Communion at 10 am

We will have only this opportunity to present to the St Swithun's congregation the setting by Herbert Sumson that we will be using in Dublin.

Friday 14 July, RSCM Midwinter Dinner

The highlight event of the RSCM year in New South Wales is the famous Midwinter Dinner. This year it is being held at All Saints Hunters Hill, 2 Ambrose Street. The evening begins with the resident choir singing Evensong in the church at 6:30 pm and continues afterwards in the parish hall. The guest speaker will be John Cleary, veteran broadcaster and commentator on things religious. In his 30-year career with the ABC he worked extensively in both radio and television, but was known principally for his association with Sunday Nights on ABC Local Radio and *The Religion Report* on ABC Radio National.

Book through **Trybooking**: www.trybooking.com, enter "RSCM" to find the event, then follow the prompts. Cost is \$55 per person. BYO refreshments.

Saturday 15 July, Evensong at 5 pm

Our regular July Evensong will feature canticles by Thomas Attwood Walmisley, the student (and godson) of Thomas Attwood, who was a pupil of Mozart.

Saturday 15 July, Choir party at 7 pm

Following the Evensong refreshments, the choir and invited guests will stay on in the church hall for further drinks and refreshments to mingle with the people travelling to Dublin.



The recent past – June

Friday 2 June, Service for Christian Unity

The annual week of prayer for Christian unity is an initiative of The World Council of Churches. In Australia it was celebrated over a week at the end of May. A contingent of choir members augmented the congregation on the Friday evening to support the singing during the service of celebration. The occasion was well attended by folk from a number of nearby churches.

Sunday 18 June, A Clare Benediction

John Milford Rutter was once a member of the choir of Clare College Cambridge. In his *Notes* written in 2003, he records: "A *Clare Benediction* (1998), named in honour of my alma mater, Clare College Cambridge, is one of a number of choral blessings I have written over the years, in every case for a person or institution of special significance to me." He wrote both the text and the music.

This work was presented to the congregation by the small choir at 8 am on the second Sunday in June. It will soon become part of the whole choir's standard repertoire.

May the Lord show his mercy upon you;
may the light of his presence be your guide:
May he guard you and uphold you;
may his spirit be ever by your side.

When you sleep may his angels watch over you;
when you wake may he fill you with his grace:
May you love him and serve him all your days
Then in heaven may you see his face.

Sunday 18 June, 100% Hope Choir

Many of us stayed on after the 10 am service to watch and listen to the young choir from Uganda perform in the church. It was well worth it to experience the stories and the rhythms and the music of this energetic young group. Apart from the miracle of the group itself, it also seemed miraculous that the bowl of flowers standing on a pedestal beside the pulpit survived the experience intact!



Sunday 18 June, annual Huguenot Service

Meg Matthews was the guest director for this service which was very well attended by descendants and friends of descendants of French Huguenot refugees.

We sang, for the third year, the Huguenot anthem *La Cévenole*; our French is improving year by year. There were four popular hymns: *Thine be the glory*; *Be thou my vision*; *Guide me O my great redeemer*; and *For all the saints*.

As an anthem we sang a version of Martin Luther's hymn *A mighty fortress*. Luther also composed the tune, named *Ein feste Burg* from the text's first line, in 87.87.55.56.7 meter. This is referred to as the "rhythmic tune" to distinguish it from the later isometric variant, in 87.87.66.66.7 meter which is more widely known and used in modern hymn books. We sang a version close to, but not the same as the original rhythmic version which is shown below.

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott 8,7,8,7,5,5,5,6,7 DR. MARTIN LUTHER, 1529

1 { A might - y fort - ress is our God, A trust - y
He helps us free from ev - 'ry need That hath us
shield and wea - - - pon; The old E - vil Foe
now o'er - tak - - - en.
Now means dead - ly woe: Deep guile and great might are his
dread arms in fight, On earth is not his e - qual.

Sunday 25 June Choir Workshop

What a busy singing day! We sang at both the 8 am and 10 am services, then after a short break returned to the church for our second choir workshop this year. We sang through the psalms we shall sing in Dublin and revised a number of the canticles we are taking with us. Phillip seemed relatively unaffected by having only one arm for conducting as he recovers from his recent operation.



“The Patrick Project”

There are a mere seven weeks to go before the choir arrives in Dublin. While the weather is so cool, choristers need to take special care to protect themselves from the ravages of seasonal illnesses. We need a fit and healthy crew to sing in the cathedrals.

The road to Dublin

Chapter 21: Church of Ireland liturgy

We are familiar with the text of the Book of Common Prayer (1662) which we follow when we sing Evensong in English Cathedrals, and (mostly) in our own Evensongs in Pymble. In Northern Ireland, that same prayer book is still in use.

In the Irish Republic (including Dublin), the liturgy has been revised many times but, since 2004, the cathedrals of the Church of Ireland have reverted to the words of the Book of Common Prayer, with some notable exceptions. For instance:

Preces

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us. Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

The minister stands and says:

O Lord, show thy mercy upon us and grant us thy salvation.

O Lord, guide and defend our rulers and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness and make thy chosen people joyful.

O Lord, save thy people and bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord, because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.

O God, make clean our hearts within us and take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

and

A prayer for the President and all in authority:

Almighty God, who rulest over the kingdoms of the world; We commend to thy merciful care the people of this land, that being guarded by thy providence, they may dwell secure in thy peace. Grant to the President of this State and to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do thy will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, that they may serve thy people faithfully to thy honour and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A prayer for the Houses of the Oireachtas¹:

Almighty God, source of all authority and wisdom: guide by your Spirit those who represent us in Dáil and Seanad. As representatives of the people keep them humble, as legislators make them compassionate, and as politicians defend their integrity. So may the proceedings of the Oireachtas serve the truth and promote the common good. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the servant Lord. Amen.



¹ The Oireachtas (/ˈɛrəktəs/; EH-rək-təs), sometimes referred to as Oireachtas Éireann, is the legislature of Ireland. The Oireachtas consists of (i) The President of Ireland and (ii) the two houses of the Oireachtas, Seanad (upper house – Senate); Dáil Éireann (lower house).

O for a thousand tongues

In May, 1738, while he and his brother were studying in London under their spiritual mentor, the German-born Moravian missionary Peter Böhler, Charles Wesley suffered a bout of pleurisy. At the time, Wesley was plagued by extreme doubts about his faith. Taken to bed with the sickness, on May 21 Wesley was visited by a group of Christians who offered him basic care and prayed with him. He read from his Bible and found himself deeply affected by the words, and at peace with God. Shortly afterwards, his strength began to return. He wrote of this experience in his journal, and counted it as a renewal of his faith:

Sunday, May 21, 1738. I waked in expectation of His coming. At nine my brother and some friends came and sang a hymn to the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half an hour they went. I betook myself to prayer, the substance as follows: O Jesus, thou hast said, I will come unto you; thou hast said, I will send the Comforter unto you. Thou hast said, My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you. Thou art my God, who canst not lie. I wholly rely upon thy most true promise: accomplish it in thy time and manner.... Still I felt a violent opposition and reluctance to believe, yet still the Spirit of God strove with my own and the evil spirit till by degrees he chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself convinced, I knew not how or when, and immediately fell to intercession.

One year after the experience, Wesley felt the urge to write a hymn in commemoration of his renewal of faith. This hymn took the form of an 18-stanza poem. The opening verses were:

*Glory to God, and praise and love be ever, ever given,
by saints below and saints above, the church in earth and heaven.*

*On this glad day the glorious Sun of Righteousness arose;
on my benighted soul he shone and filled it with repose.*

The seventh verse was:

*O for a thousand tongues to sing my dear Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace.*

The words reflected those of mentor Peter Böhler who had said, “Had I a thousand tongues, I would praise him with them all!”

The hymn, with all of its eighteen verses, was published in 1740 under the title *For the anniversary day of one's conversion*. Charles' brother John Wesley selected a shorter, re-arranged, version of it for publication in his *A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists* published in 1780. John's version had ten verses, but it was the one that began with the original seventh stanza, *O for a thousand tongues to sing my dear Redeemer's praise!*²

Hymns for Today's Church sets Wesley's text to one of two tunes; the one we invariably sing is *Lyngham*, composed by Thomas Jarman. Jarman was a prolific composer of English psalmody in the early nineteenth century. He published an enormous quantity of music, including over six hundred hymn-tunes, besides anthems, services, and similar pieces. He is little remembered now, except for the tune *Lyngham*, which was published in his first book of psalmody, *Sacred Music, Comprising Select Hymns* (1803-5) with the title *Navivity*. The tune is categorised as a “fuguing” tune.



Choir patrons

Once upon a time, the choir appointed patrons. The first was Alice Hancock, a retired Swiz chorister, after whom Alice Hancock Close at Mowll Village, Castle Hill was named. Alice died on 23 July, 1997. In an effort to learn more about Alice, one of our longer-standing current choristers undertook to interview Ruth Marshall who was a chorister with

² Some modern commentators regret the loss of the original version's build up to the “rapture” of the “thousand tongues”.

Alice in the 1950s. The interview has taken place, but was not really productive – Ruth is now of very advanced age and her memory is not what it once was.

The second patron was Enid Watt, wife of the well loved and respected assistant minister Rev. Brian Watt. Enid and Brian now also live within Mowll Village at Castle Hill; Brian is in Brian King Gardens and Enid recently joined him there. When the Watts left the parish, Enid felt that she should retire as choir patron and she relinquished her badge of office.

The third appointed patron was Ros Holmes, a soprano who had herself retired from choir service because of failing health.

The full story of our patrons is yet to be told, but the chorister who has volunteered to write it has started by revealing some of her own background as a member of St Swithun's choir. That background follows. And we look forward eagerly to the rest of the story as she unfolds it, and to the full story of our patrons.

An introduction to St Swithun's Choir

Having been a parishioner of St Swithun's for 10 years in which time the choir metamorphosed from 4 part adult to 2 part children's choir and back again, my underlying ambition was to join this band of singers. Twenty five years had passed since singing in a 4 part all-girls school choir and confidence was low. In conversation with one of the choristers I tentatively mentioned my interest. I found myself encouraged to 'Turn up next Thursday at 8.00.' Was she sure I shouldn't make a formal application? 'Quite sure.' 'But it's years since.....' 'You'll be right.' And would there be an audition? 'No.' – relief. And so, on Thursday night at 8 pm I 'turned up' to be warmly and quickly welcomed. On being asked what part I sang I balked – 4 part girls' choir singing 2nd and 3rd parts – here goes – 'alto'.

Ron Martin was organist and choir master having stepped in when Don Edgar had had a heart attack and who was now recovering (*this was in the early 1980s – Ed.*). There seemed to be a vast amount of music and I learned there was to be a special choral service as Ron Martin said farewell, his locum role coming to an end. My response was that I would not even try to sing on the Sunday. This was strongly overridden and there I was robed (who found the robe?) and lined up to 'process' singing to my(?) place in the choir. My knees shook as we moved off and my sincere hope was that no-one could hear my noises. To this day, when new choristers join and are encouraged to sing 'this Sunday', I know exactly how they feel.

And so my re-learning commenced. The hardest challenge was the hymns. To sing the melody line week after week hard-wires one's brain. The anthems were not weekly features then, which gave me time with a great deal of help from my fellow altos. I was blessed with stereophonic sound from two highly competent choristers, Carol Rowling who sang with the Sydney Philharmonia and Jan Kneeshaw who had sung since childhood and who, years later, became St Swithun's choir director. One cannot underestimate the support, the knowledge and the laughter with which these two choristers encouraged me. The first time I actually heard the alto part in the introduction to a hymn they almost had to sit on me I was so excited. Thus commenced my choral journey with St Swithun's Choir.

Lynne Bullock

A letter to the editor

Sing Joyfully readers may be interested to know that the 40 singers of the RSCM America National Choir are looking forward to their 2018 post-Christmas residency at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. The National Choir will perform five Choral Evensong services and one Choral Eucharist there between 28 December 2018 and 2 January 2019. Let's hope that we of the St Swithun's Choir are a hard act for them to follow a year and a bit after us!

On the subject of US choirs touring to the UK, Darren S. Herring has an article in the latest RSCM America newsletter about the benefits for church choirs of a summer residency in a British Cathedral.

The RSCM America National Choir in front of the doors of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, where they sang in February this year.



He writes that, *“the experience of singing services in these stunningly beautiful and ancient buildings is an experience that any church choir member would cherish.”*

He writes about the feeling of singing in an English Cathedral the first time he had that privilege, something which I'm sure many St Swithun's Choir singers have also experienced:

“As we began the Preces (a lovely Tudor setting), it occurred to me that I was standing in the exact same spot, dressed the exact same way, singing the exact same words and notes that someone had been singing nearly 500 years ago and every night since! It was a life-changing moment for me.”

He also gives readers the benefit of his experience about how to organise a choir tour. I don't think there is anything there that our own wonderful tour committee does not already know, but it is an interesting read nonetheless.

Some of the tips and hints reflect a uniquely US perspective. At least we Australians know how many beds to expect if we book a double, twin or single room in the UK, and we know that we would most likely need to make a reservation if we wanted to bring a large tour group to a restaurant for dinner! He writes of British restaurants where “reservations must be made in advance, as your group may end up occupying all the seats in most establishments.” I did have sympathy though (thinking of the 43 stairs up to our room in the college in Durham) for his observation that, “many British hotels are quite old and may have no elevator and several flights of stairs that will have to be climbed multiple times a day.” Do we have to get in training for Trinity College stairs, I wonder?

Reading his article, it's a good feeling to know that we are part of a worldwide community of people who love church music and love to sing it in worship.

Pamela Summers

Choir program – 2017

Date	Venue	Time	
2017			
Sun 9 Jul	Swiz	10 am	Sumsion Communion service
Fri 14 Jul	All Saints Hunters Hill	6 pm	RSCM Midwinter Dinner
Sat 15 Jul	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong
Sat 15 Jul	Swiz	7 pm	Choir party
Sat 5 Aug	Swiz	5 pm	Farewell concert
Sun 6 Aug	Swiz	10 am	Commissioning service
Sun 13 Aug	Swiz	10 am	Last service before Ireland
19 – 20 Aug	Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin		
21 - 27 Aug	St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin		
Thu 14 Sep	Swiz	8 pm	Rehearsals resume
Sun 17 Sep	Swiz	10 am	First service after the trip
Sat 28 Oct	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong
Sat 25 Nov	Swiz	7 pm	Bach Christmas Oratorio

Please stay continually alert for advice about additions/amendments.