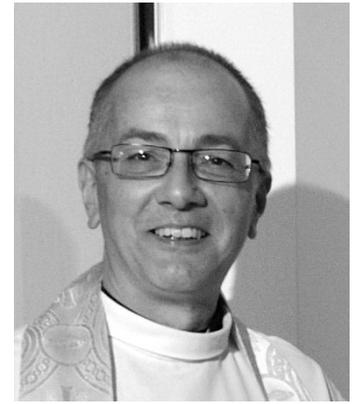


# Pastoral Letter

## Revd Roger Hagon shares his thoughts...



Dear Friends

We are fortunate this year in having Rt Revd Jonathan Clarke (Bishop of Croydon) come to St Mildred's on Sunday 6 October at 10am to Baptise and Confirm. Preparation meetings start later this month so, if you fall into any of these categories, now is the time to let us know at the Parish Office!

### Wondering about Christianity?

In our pluralistic society, the claims of Christ strike at our core values. Who or what do we worship or give value to? How is Christianity relevant to my life and that of the world in which I am set? Can I trust the claims of the Bible?

### What about Baptism?

It is never too late to be Baptised! Baptism marks our public initiation into the living grace of God. Through it we become one with Christ and his Body here on earth and in heaven.

### Thinking about Confirmation?

Confirmation offers us the chance to make a grown-up commitment to Jesus and his Church. We receive an inner strength from God, as well as Holy Communion. Also, 'standing-up and being counted' is a strong witness to others.

### Inside this issue:

<i>Pastoral Letter</i>	7
<i>Choir Notes</i>	8
<i>Sunday School</i>	9
<i>St Mildred's Got Talent</i>	9
<i>Bishop of Kingston</i>	10
<i>Mothers' Union</i>	12
<i>Diary</i>	14
<i>People of the Parish</i>	18
<i>Contact List</i>	23

### New to St Mildred's?

Even if you have already been Baptised and Confirmed, you may like to use this opportunity as a way of getting to know other St Mildred's people. Come along to the preparation meetings as we talk about the deeper things in life.

## Want to know Jesus better?

I guess we could all answer “Yes” to this one! Whether you have an intellectual curiosity or a more personal heart-felt desire, you will find both hard facts and prayer suggestions that will meet you at your point of need.

So - come and explore! Come and find out! Come and see for yourself!

**Roger**



## Choir Notes

With summer fast approaching, the choir has been working hard on music for our trip to Guildford Cathedral (25-28 July).

We will be singing services on each of those days and, as ever, it would be great to see some familiar faces!

We are continuing to look at recruitment for the junior choir in particular, so if you know anybody who might be interested please tell them to get in touch with me at church. The ability to read fluently (English that is, not music!) is the only prerequisite.

The organ rebuilding project is also progressing well and I hope to bring more news of that next month.

**Richard Mander, Director of Music**

*Charity*  
**CAKE SALE**

Our cake sale on 9 May in aid of APCMH (Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health) raised a fabulous **£345.00**. Thank you to everyone who came along.

**Leander Garner**

## People of the Parish

### The editors meet . . . Richard Mander

**As part of our occasional series 'People of the Parish', we previously interviewed Richard when he had only just taken up the post of Director of Music at St Mildred's. Now we revisit that interview and ask him to reflect upon the past few years for the choir and music at St Mildred's.**

The first time we talked to you, you said:

'I want to make St Mildred's a centre for musical excellence. This includes the choir, organ and other instruments. I would also like it to include concerts but the Big Church Project needs to be completed first. I would also like to work with other groups.

Our music should be all encompassing. There is no audition for the choir but we always work hard to do our best. It is about communicating to others via music. I want to make sure all the musical talent at St Mildred's is utilised as much as possible, whatever age or level of expertise!

In the church services I am trying to set the right mood for that part of the service; to complement the liturgy and to be sensitive to the moment.

It is hugely fulfilling when we get it right – everyone knows it intuitively.'

**1. Looking back over the past few years and with part one of the Big 'Our Church' Project now completed, what do you feel you've achieved and what are your hopes and plans for St Mildred's going forward?'**

There have been many areas where I'm very proud of the progress we have made together, but if I had to pick out a few I would certainly include the Junior Choir, which has improved hugely thanks to the dedication of the choristers and their parents. The Voice for Life programme is really bearing fruit in the skills and confidence of the choristers and the huge impact they are bringing to the choir

every week. The Choir Club, started last year, has also enabled them to get to know each other much better as friends, and this helps with attendance and confidence.

I would also say that the overall musical performance of the choir is much more where I would like it to be. We have worked very hard on two particular areas – communication and discipline.

By communication, I mean interpreting the music and performing with the sole intention of expressing the message of the composer, whether that be Allegri's *Miserere* on Maundy Thursday or Anderson's 'clappy' setting of the *Gloria* at all age worship. Music is the one universal language, and that is our means of communication. We are committed to enhancing worship at St Mildred's through sensitive selection and performance of music.

Discipline refers to musical discipline – we are attempting to apply the same rigour to our performance as a professional performer would. That means going into minute detail in rehearsal. I have been extremely pleased at how the choir now sings – much of the style is now embedded in the collective psyche and comes naturally. At rehearsals we are able to spend increasing amounts of time on finer details.

Overall, the one thing I really like is that St Mildred's is a place for music for all. I think it really is a centre for musical excellence, in that we are looking to improve and perform to the best of our ability. At the same time everyone of whatever ability or experience is very welcome and there are no auditions!

## **2. Could you tell us about the 'Voice for Life' programme? What levels are there and is it only for children?**

The Voice for Life programme is the Royal School of Church Music's programme for teaching music reading, theory and vocal technique, coupled with choral singing skills and liturgical relevance.

It is a very exacting syllabus – the top award (Yellow ribbon) is extremely advanced. All our Junior choristers are progressing well with the programme, receiving a free music education that cannot be found elsewhere. However, Voice for Life is also suitable for adults who wish to learn these skills, and can certainly be self taught with a little assistance.

Voice for Life is indeed delivering life skills to those who progress. Our choristers will be able to read music, and will never be confused or daunted by sheet music or performing as part of a group.

### **3. St Mildred's used to have an Organ Scholar Programme. Do you have any plans to resurrect this?**

This is currently very much a key focus. I have put together a specification which is being refined and at the time of writing an advert for the post is imminent, to start in September 2019.

As a former organ scholar at St Mildred's myself, I am well aware of the incredible experience that can be gained by a young organist in that situation. Plus there is of course a mutual benefit to St Mildred's with an extra resource at the organ that in turn allows an extra conducting option for the choir.

I am very hopeful that we will have positive news on this front in due course.

### **4. Can you tell us about the organ restoration project?**

By the time this is published I hope that there will be further news on this extremely exciting project.

The 1959 West organ was installed by NP Mander, and consisted of some new pipework coupled with many second-hand parts. This instrument has reached the end of its useful life and very significant work is needed to restore it.

Given the large number of redundant organs – many of them of superb quality – in churches throughout the UK, I started looking to see if a suitable instrument could be identified for relocation to St Mildred's. After two potential instruments (one local and one in Scotland) proved unsuitable, a magnificent instrument was identified, again locally. It also needs a lot of restoration work, but would then be an organ of great significance.

It was built in 1906 by Lewis & Co. Thomas Lewis was one of the most eminent builders of the late Victorian period, and although he had retired in 1901 this organ is very much of the same quality. It would sound exceptional in St Mildred's, and if

we are able to acquire it the proposal is that all but the Lewis pipework (1,406 pipes in total!) will be new. The instrument will therefore be future-proofed and good for many decades to come, with an overall lifespan in the hundreds of years.

The existing copper façade at the West gallery will be retained – there will be no visual impact from the changes made as everything is out of sight from the nave, but you will most certainly notice the difference in sound, and St Mildred's will have an organ that is an instrument of great significance, worthy of our long and distinguished musical tradition and one of the defences that will safeguard its future.

I will be continuing to update the congregation regularly as this project moves forward, and would welcome any questions – please feel free to stop me at church and ask!

## **5. Why do we need two organs at St Mildred's and how do the two organs work together?**

St Mildred's has used the two-organ system for many years because there is insufficient space at the East end of the church for an organ of a size to perform all that is required musically in the liturgy we practise.

This layout, with a large organ at the west end and a smaller instrument at the chancel, is tried and tested in many churches throughout Europe where similar requirements exist.

The small East organ, which we are currently using exclusively, was added in 1987 to replace the previous choir organ lost in the 1985 fire, which was on the same site. It was specifically designed for choral accompaniment in the knowledge that the West organ was also there to provide more robust support for the congregation for singing hymns and settings, as well as larger scale voluntaries, for example at weddings.

The East organ is a beautiful and useful Instrument, constantly enhancing worship at St Mildred's. But it was never designed to be the main instrument at St Mildred's and is not sufficient to fulfil that function. I am currently playing all the

verses of the hymns on full organ to provide all the sound I can, but, even so, much is lost as you get to the back of the nave.

The new West organ will be an entirely separate instrument, although played from the same console. It will provide all the liturgical functions required and will also be a wonderful solo instrument for recitals and concerts. Its extraordinary palette of colours will provide the perfect backdrop for every occasion in every service. The combination of the two organs will be ideal for practice and teaching. It will be built to last for many decades before any significant work is required, and have a lifespan of hundreds of years.

The East organ will continue to provide accompaniment for the choir, helping to secure our wonderful and distinguished choral tradition for the future.

With the two very different organs performing these disparate roles, St Mildred's will continue to provide high quality music for the long term.

**Richard Mander was talking to Jane Ward**

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