

## The Parish Church of St John-at-Hampstead

### Music Notes ~ July & August 2022

It has been a pleasure to welcome our new organ scholar Joe Hyam to the music team recently. His first set of voluntaries on a Sunday will be played on 3rd July at Evensong - music by Bach and Karg-Elert. Visiting organist Tim Wakerell, who has played for us regularly this last year, will swap places with me at a couple of services, so he will conduct the choir at Evensong on the 17th and at Communion on the 31st July. In August, there will be no choir on Sunday mornings as usual, but at Evensong our services will be sung by two singers, either soprano and alto or tenor and bass. Another of our regular visiting organists, Paul Plummer, will be at the helm for two of these services whilst I'm on annual leave. The music for these services will be varied as usual, but sung in unison or as duets, including a quasi-operatic *Ave Maria* by Donizetti and a series of duos in Latin by Lassus as Introids. The form of plainsong Preces & Responses used in the services will be those published shortly after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 by Edward Lowe of Christ Church, Oxford.

In July, our Preces and Responses will be from a new edition of the Preces by Orlando Gibbons together with the Responses after the Creed by John Barnard. This combination was first made in the 1970s for an OUP edition which cunningly juxtaposed a set of Preces by Gibbons - who sadly did not leave us any Responses after the Creed - alongside music from the Preces and Responses by Barnard published in his mammoth printed collection of *Church Musick* in 1641. Barnard's Preces are rather peculiar in nature, and one of the responses has a feast-specific text rather than the usual words. In my new edition I have re-visited the problems of making Barnard's music fit well with the normal text, and since Barnard did not provide a polyphonic Amen after the third Collect, I have taken the music from another set of Preces by Gibbons to invent a new Amen for the conclusion. The classic 'Amen' by Gibbons that has often been used as a Final Amen in modern times, taken from his anthem *Great King of Gods* will be sung at the end of the services.

Without a regular Organist in post, the number of 'verse' anthems and services for voices and organ performed this year has been rather low. However we are managing to provide two this month, Battens' Fourth Service and Tomkins' Fifth, in which introductions on the organ, various combinations of solo voices, and the *tutti* ensemble are heard in alternation. Amongst the other early music this month the least well-known composer is probably the Catalan baroque master Francisco Valls (c.1670-1747), whose 5-part Mass we sing on 10th July. The Mass is unusually scored in that a solo soprano voice is heard against a homophonic SATB group. Valls was director of music first at the Church of Santa Maria del Mar and then the Cathedral in Barcelona, and wrote much imaginative church music for both large and small forces. Bach's chorale-motet *O Jesu Christ meins Lebens Licht*, which we sing during Communion on 17th July (the last Sunday for our Junior Choir before their summer break), was originally composed for outside performance at the graveside, accompanied by wind instruments. Bach was clearly pleased with his efforts for he later re-scored it for use in church with more regular forces, though we shall use an arrangement for organ. At Evensong on July 10th we will hear two contrasted approaches to setting the canticles: Palestrina's *Magnificat Primi Toni* is through-composed for double choir, whereas Victoria's *Nunc dimittis Tertii Toni* is for four voices in alternation with plainchant.

The more modern music for July doesn't include anything more recent than Herbert Howells, and features a number of classics: from the 19th century we sing Fauré's *Cantique*, motets by Bruckner and Rheinberger's *Abendlied*, and from the 20th we have *Like as the hart* by Howells and *Faire is the heaven* by William Harris. Any Cambridge graduates present may be pleased to hear music by composers from three Cambridge colleges, Gonville & Caius, Trinity and St John's, at Evensong on 14th July. The many settings of the Canticles by Howells that he composed for various institutions following his initial set for King's College, Cambridge, are commonly known by the name of the place that commissioned them. However, Howells's *Evening Service in B minor* (which we sing on the 31st) bears no such name, though it does relate to an institution, the Church Music Society; it was commissioned to celebrate the Society's 50th anniversary in 1956.

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