

St Oscar Romero Parish

Seaforth and Waterloo

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA | ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY | ST EDMUND OF CANTERBURY

Parish Music Review

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching
and admonishing one another in all wisdom,
singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

Colossians

August 2022

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With thanks...

We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this work. We are grateful for their openness and willingness to engage with us throughout the process.

Charlie Corkin

Ben Dolan

Summary

This Parish Music Review has been commissioned to consider how best music can play an active part in worship at St Oscar Romero Parish. The review has focussed on current practices, structure, people's involvement and has taken a practical approach in recommendations.

The Parish has had to endure a fair amount of change in a small period of time and one of the positives to this is a strong bond between music and musicians at both churches.

Feedback, both verbal and from the responses, are highly positive and there is a strong consensus that the music offered at both churches within the Parish adds an extra dimension to services and the Parish community.

The headline recommendations are:

- To form a Parish Music Team, led by the musicians, in collaboration with the Liturgy Group
- To build processes and workflows that allow music to be properly resourced within the Parish
- To ensure consistency between musical selection in both churches, including exploring new music and settings
- To factor in specific rehearsal time to increase the quality and familiarity music used

Terminology

- Musicians - where referenced throughout this document, the term musician(s) includes anyone who is actively involved in music ministry, this includes singers and instrumentalists
- Lead musician(s) - this is the person who is responsible for the planning and the operation of music at any given service or event, outside of this document they may be referred to as Organist, Director of Music, Deputy Director of Music
- Services and events - this includes any act of worship or prayer, concert or event, where the Parish musicians are present
- Parish - the Parish of St Oscar Romero, made up of the communities of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, St Edmund of Canterbury and St Thomas of Canterbury
- Church - the building/site, not the Parish

Background

St Oscar Romero Parish serves the communities of Seaforth and Waterloo and is made up of Our Lady, Star of the Sea church and St Edmund of Canterbury church. The Parish was formed in 2020 with the amalgamation of two parishes, which sadly resulted in the closure of St Thomas of Canterbury church.

The churches of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, St Edmund of Canterbury and St Thomas of Canterbury have links dating back years. St Edmund of Canterbury parish was formed to relieve the numbers of people attending Mass at St Thomas of Canterbury and eventually the church was built in the 1950s.

From 2007 - 2015, Rev Fr John Cullen was appointed Parish Priest over St Thomas of Canterbury in addition to his role as Parish Priest at St Edmund of Canterbury (from 1997 to 2020). In 2015, Rev Fr Dominic Curran was appointed Parish Priest over St Thomas of Canterbury until its closure in 2020.

The Parish is forward thinking and has governance structures in place that do not necessarily match a traditional Roman Catholic parish. There is a Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee. Stemming from the Parish Pastoral Council is the Liturgy Group, of which music sits under.

Music is used at both Sunday morning Masses and alternative Saturday evening Masses, following the decision to introduce a quiet Mass.

Both churches have active musicians, including no fewer than four people who can play the organ and/or piano, a number of instrumentalists and more than 10 regular singers.

Our Lady, Star of the Sea church has a Grade II listed historical organ and a keyboard to support the musical accompaniment. Music at Our Lady Star of the Sea has been led by Ben Dolan for 20 years and predominantly consists of traditional hymns with organ or piano accompaniment. There are a handful of musicians who support Ben as lead musician on a Sunday morning.

Music selection at Our Lady, Star of the Sea is done by the hymn-picking committee, which is made up of parishioners from the church.

St Edmund of Canterbury church has two digital pianos and a digital organ, which was installed in 2019. Music has been led at St Edmund of Canterbury by Charlie Corkin since 2017, and prior to this Martin O'Boyle who founded the choir in 1997. Sophie McQueen has supported, deputising for Charlie since 2019. Music consists of a mixture of traditional organ accompanied hymns and piano / guitar / flute combinations. There are usually around 10 musicians each Sunday.

Planning for music at St Edmund of Canterbury has historically been done by the lead musicians and done at various stages during the year based on the church's year.

There is a nice link between the music of St Edmund of Canterbury and Our Lady, Star of the Sea in that both Ben and Charlie have served as organists at St Thomas of Canterbury church.

Scope

Music ministry is at the heart of worship within the church buildings of Our Lady, Star of the Sea and St Edmund of Canterbury. There is so much richness within the musical communities and it was the view of the Parish that we would want to make sure that music continues to grow, develop and work in harmony.

It was apparent from that the way things work at Our Lady Star of the Sea, St Thomas of Canterbury and St Edmund of Canterbury are different from each other.

The leadership within the Parish has a strong belief that both church buildings should be better united and work together on various areas, including music, to help strengthen the work and growth of the Parish. Following discussion at the Liturgy Group meetings, it was agreed to take time to look at the music provision as a separate area to evaluate what we currently offer and how it can be further developed.

This review would allow the musicians of the Parish to take a step back, look at what each church does, analyses the different ways of working and learn from each other to help shape how music could be planned, improved and how to put it into practice. The collection of feedback and responses would allow the musicians of the Parish to reflect and plan for the future as one Parish Music Team.

How the review was structured

It was important that the people of the Parish were engaged in the review from the beginning and multiple options were given over a four-week period to collect and collate responses from Parishioners and the community.

Parishioners were spoken to at Mass and forms, both physical and electronic, were shared for people to complete with the option of being anonymous. Parishioners and musicians also had the opportunity to discuss in person or via telephone to give feedback. The review consisted of five simple questions:

- What do you love about music in the Parish?
- What frustrates you about music in the Parish?
- What would you like to say about music within the Parish that you haven't been able to?
- Are there any areas that you think you'd be able to help with?
- Do you have any other feedback for our music team?

Whilst it was important to ask our parishioners and musicians their thoughts and feedback, it was also vital to look outside the Parish and find out how other Parishes manage their music provision. This allows us to look at what we do in context to other parishes. Questions were put to a number of external musicians, through the UK Catholic Organists and Choir Master online group to gather a greater understanding on the structures of music and liturgy in other parishes.

Findings

General overview

The survey was completed by 34 individuals, made up of parishioners and those actively involved in music ministry. 14 responses came in from other churches across the UK to make comparisons to other music ministries across the UK.

There is an overwhelming sense of satisfaction and gratitude for the musicians and music leaders across both churches. The musicians over the years should be proud of the work they have done in using music to add vibrancy and reflection to the Parish.

Some of the comments included:

“It is so joyous; just makes you feel so good.”

“It lifts everyone’s spirits up.”

Of course, there were also some criticisms of some areas of work. Frustrations came from people in particular where the hymn-picking committee at Our Lady, Star of the Sea church was concerned. This was also referenced in the feedback from other musicians that were consulted. The people and musicians were also keen to be better equipped for new music through rehearsal time or lyric handouts. There was also concern about the introduction of the quiet Mass and how this came about.

There was also a lengthy response that proposed some practical suggestions which feed well into the construction of a terms of reference for the Parish music team and structures being put in place.

The musical structure at Masses is very similar to other churches across the country. There is some work to do to iron out similarities and mirroring of some work between our churches to ensure unity and consistency.

What do you love about music in the Parish?

“The sense of community and the musical dimension we add to worship.”

There is a general feeling that music in the Parish has a positive impact on Parishioners and musicians alike. Many respondents comment on the balance between traditional and contemporary music being right and appreciate this. The respondents also believe that music uplifts or enhances the liturgy. The gratitude from parishioners is clear and those involved should be proud of the impact they are having on the community.

Some respondents mention about the involvement of children and how this adds something to their worship.

What frustrates you about music in the Parish?

There is a sense that the way structures surrounding music selection is causing friction within the Parish, particularly in relation to the hymn-picking committee at Our Lady, Star of the Sea. Parishioners and musicians appear to be apprehensive about new music without rehearsal time or without appropriate materials to help support the introduction of new music.

Musicians find it frustrating that there is no consistency between numbers of people at Mass and would like to find a solution that increases the number of people singing or playing an instrument.

Some respondents are not happy about the introduction of the quiet Mass and are unsure how this decision was made.

Other areas of note:

- T-loop at St Edmund's
- More advance planning for special services

What would you like to say about music within the Parish that you haven't been able to?

Praise and thanks is given to the lead musicians (including an honourable mention to Martin!) and the music they create.

There are a couple of conflicting messages around music selection. One respondent says that the music leaders should be trusted to work out music choices and another says that musicians should not dominate and dictate. It can only be assumed that the latter is around music selection.

Are there any areas that you think you'd be able to help with?

The majority of respondents did not answer this question or left it blank. Some respondents are musicians already and this was noted.

There was feedback about organising systems and processes to make better the experience and planning of music within the Parish.

Do you have any other feedback for our music team?

There was an overwhelming response of thanks to the musicians for the time, energy and work that they do.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

To form a Parish Music Team, led by the musicians, in collaboration with the Liturgy Group

The natural first place to look for how we can cement an effective cross-parish music provision, and this is by forming a group that's sole purpose is music. The over-arching recommendation is to define parameters, roles and responsibilities of the musicians **by forming a Parish Music Team.**

At Our Lady, Star of the Sea the hymn picking committee has created barriers for the musicians, meaning that music is not being properly managed within that church. Whereas, at St Edmund of Canterbury, where there is a large outreach programme, roles are not clearly defined between the outreach work of SEMusic and the Parish music, causing difficulty with overlap.

Whilst there is communication between the Lead Musicians currently, there is no real structure in place that aligns together or defines roles and responsibilities. A team that has a soul focus of music for both churches would be a solid starting point for ensuring the longevity of the music ministry within the Parish.

The team would need to be clear about its function and structures, such as a terms of reference, standing agenda and clear objectives, would create parameters for how it operates.

The overall purpose and aim of the team should be to strengthen and carry out the vision of the Parish through music ministry, designing dynamic and meaningful services and events that nurture and enhance experiences for the people of our communities.

From the feedback of the Parishioners and of the wider musical community of organists and choir masters in the UK, it is vital that the Parish Music Team should be led by musicians of the Parish. However, a format for open discussion, collaboration and input with Parishioners should be devised by the team as one of its first priorities. Meetings should be strategically structured throughout the year to ensure that there is enough time for planning and rehearsal ahead of various seasons and events. Recommendations two, three and four expand on the outcomes and priorities of the Parish Music Team

In addition to future planning, adequate time should be built into meetings to assess progress and evaluation of previous months. The Parish Music Team should work with and advise the Liturgy Group on all aspects of music, including changes to liturgy and events by embedding music throughout worship, services and events.

Actions

- Launch a Parish Music Team, led by the Lead Musicians and made up of those actively involved in music ministry that are empathetic to the needs of the Parish and community
- Discuss and agree Terms of Reference in collaboration with the Liturgy Group (an example Terms of Reference can be found in Appendix 1)
- Ensure clarity between the work of the Parish and SEMusic and identify areas of appropriate overlap
- Agree a timeline for the upcoming year for meetings to be held, in between Liturgy Group meetings (see draft schedule in Appendix 1)
- In collaboration with Communications Team, create a communications plan to share the outcomes and changes to Parish Music

Recommendation 2

To build processes and workflows that allow music to be properly resourced within the Parish

To sit alongside the Parish Music Team, certain processes and workflows need to be put in place to **allow the team to operate in the most efficient, fair and practical ways.**

Event planning

Music for events should work within the same timeframes as the Parish Music Team meetings for the year (draft meeting timeline in Appendix 1). This allows appropriate thought, discussion and decision on pieces for upcoming events, special services and occasions. It also allows adequate time for rehearsal of pieces with the musicians.

This additional time allows for rehearsals to turn into performance, or leading the congregation, and to allow the congregation to learn new music in a quicker way.

Booking musicians for funerals and weddings

There has been some inconsistency in how musicians should be booked for both funerals and weddings. The Parish Music Team and the Liturgy Group should agree standard operating procedures for the booking of musicians for funerals and weddings.

The Laudate Singers had a reputation for supporting loved ones during times of loss at funerals and memorial services. Their work was a great comfort to so many. Many of the people who were part of the Laudate Singers are still around within the Parish and it doesn't make sense not to make use of their time and talents.

The Parish should reform a group of people willing to support during daytime funerals, a mixture of those who were in the Laudate Singers and any new members who may wish to support. The list should be sympathetic to those who use technology and can access Choir Manager and those who will require telephone contact.

The regular musicians (including singers) for each church should receive first refusal on the booking of a funeral or a wedding.

Should a wedding couple wish to have additional musicians or musicians instead of the Parish musicians, this should only be in agreement with the Parish Music Team. The Parish Music Team should take a sympathetic approach to decisions around additional musicians.

A workflow (see appendixes 2 and 3) should be used to clearly illustrate who, how and when musicians should be booked.

Regular service planning

In addition to event planning, lead musicians should ensure in advance the planning for musicians at weekly services. It is recommended that lead musicians should remind those who are regularly involved in music ministry to use Choir Manager as an app for recording upcoming attendance and share information about upcoming services and rehearsals.

'Quiet Mass'

In January 2022, an alternating quiet Mass began to take place on a Saturday evening. Following discussions with musicians and with parishioners, there was no real consultation about this being implemented.

The decision around the 'quiet Mass' should be evaluated. Much of the feedback shared explains how music adds something to the act of worship. A review of what a 'quiet Mass' consists of and whether these are necessary should take place, consulting lead musicians, musicians and Parishioners.

The Liturgy Group should take the lead on this piece of work with the Parish Music Team suggesting alternative solutions to what a 'Quiet Mass' consists of.

Additional materials

Following from Parish Music Team meetings, Lead Musicians should begin to collate new music into one place to form a 'St Oscar Romero Parish hymnbook' that contains all new music and settings. This should be available as an online document as well as printed materials for the congregation.

The Parish Music Team should regularly make recommendations to the Liturgy Group and Parish Finance Committee on any additional equipment, maintenance and keep a log of any recommendations or actions.

Actions

- Parish Music Team to agree timeframes for event planning to allow for music selection and rehearsal
- Parish Music Team and Liturgy Group to agree standard operating procedures for the booking of musicians for funerals and weddings that are consistent in both churches
- Lead musicians to actively ensure that all services, rehearsals and relevant details are shared with musicians with adequate notice
- The Liturgy Group should review the 'Quiet Mass' and how this is working in practice
- The Lead Musicians should begin to create a physical and digital bank of new music
- Parish Music Team to make recommendations for developing infrastructure that enhances the music within each church building

Recommendation 3

To ensure consistency between musical selection in both churches, including exploring new music and settings

By creating a system and planning ahead, new **music can be synchronised across both churches.**

Music selection

Music selection should lie locally with the lead musicians. It is not necessary to have a completely mirrored approach to hymns and music choices; each church has different needs, styles and resources. The Lead Musicians should work together to ensure a music programme that is vibrant and takes into account different styles, including new music and musical heritage.

Lead musicians should take time to communicate with each other regularly and agree certain consistency in music choices. For example, when a new piece of music or Mass setting is being introduced this should be done at the same time and both churches should take the same approach of how to introduce this.

A top priority of the Parish Music Team should be creating a forum for parishioners to be able to input appropriately into music choices. During the Parish Music Team's first meeting, due attention should be given to discuss and create suggestions and appropriate input on music.

Musical structure

The Parish Music Team should agree the points in the Mass which are sung and when instrumental music should be played. Particular focus should be given to how music impacts Holy Communion and when a hymn should be sung.

New music

The Parish Music Team, on the advice of the lead musicians, should agree new pieces of music to be introduced per season. This could consist of brand-new hymns that do not feature in the hymn books we use, new arrangements of hymns we currently use and secular music that can be used in a sacred context.

When looking at the church's calendar year, the Parish Music Team could introduce a new piece of music for each 'season'. This would mean that there would be a minimum of nine new pieces can be used throughout the course of the year at:

- Advent
- Christmas
- Ordinary time
- Lent
- Holy Week
- Easter
- Ordinary Time
- Christ the King

Careful planning would allow for music to be used in multiple ways. For example, new music for Advent and Christmas could be used at SEMusic's Christmas events which would allow for additional rehearsal time.

New music should be introduced over a three-week cycle in the church, where possible. The first week should use time before Mass or during Communion for an instrumental version of the piece, the second week should have a musicians-only led version of the piece, during communion or offertory procession, and the third week should include it as hymn for all the congregation.

New Mass settings

The Lead Musicians should work together to decide on the Mass settings for any given season. Mass settings may be new arrangements or arrangements that have previously been used. However, the choice of Mass setting should be used across both churches for the same time period.

For ease, consistency and familiarity, new Mass settings should be introduced by season. For example, Advent and Easter would have a different Mass setting and the Mass setting for ordinary time could be split by Lent if agreed.

Not only is it vital for the musicians to have had rehearsal time ahead of a new setting being introduced, but the lead musicians should also work together to teach the congregation the settings on the day of its first use. This would require a lead musician to use the moments before Mass begins to go through the relevant responses to the setting. It is recommended that simple settings are used that can be picked up easily.

Actions

- Lead musicians to plan first 'season' of music, taking into account new music and new Mass settings that are consistent across both Parishes
- The Parish Music Team should discuss and create suggestions for appropriate input from parishioners
- The Parish Music Team should discuss and make a recommendation to the Liturgy Group about the structure of music around Holy Communion

Recommendation 4

To factor in specific rehearsal time to increase the quality and familiarity of music used

Through making use of planned rehearsals, Lead Musicians can take time to **grow a repertoire of new music** that can be used throughout the Parish

Rehearsals

The majority of musicians involved in the Parish join together on a Sunday evening for concert and event rehearsals with SEMusic. The Lead Musicians have begun already to plan in particular rehearsal time for Parish music that does not interrupt concert and event rehearsals. Dedicating this time to Parish music will only enhance the experience for the musicians and congregation at services.

There would be, on average, a Parish music rehearsal every four weeks with additional rehearsals at pinch points such as Holy Week and the Oscar Romero Week of Prayer.

The rehearsals should include new music, refining current pieces that we use and new Mass settings. Lead musicians should rotate the running of this rehearsal either on a piece by piece or rehearsal by rehearsal basis.

Bringing the congregation up to speed

New music should be introduced over a three-week cycle in the church, where possible. The first week should use time before Mass or during Communion for an instrumental version of the piece., the second week should have a musicians-only led version of the piece, during communion or offertory procession, and the third week should include it as hymn for all the congregation.

For a new Mass setting, the Lead Musicians should work together to introduce this to the congregation before it is first used. This should be done from the front of the church, most likely in a call-and-response way. By doing this, the congregation get the chance to understand the music better.

Actions

- The Lead Musicians should share the rehearsal schedule with musicians when agreed
- The Lead Musicians should plan and schedule when new Mass settings should be introduced

APPENDIX 1: Draft Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

The Parish Music Team will strengthen and carry out the vision of the Parish through music ministry, designing dynamic and meaningful services and events that nurture and enhance experiences for the people of our communities.

The role of PMT is to:

- Develop a vision and aim that reflects the Parish and the wider community
- Work together to develop guidelines, processes and systems for music ministry within the Parish
- Identify moments of unity across the Parish and how music can take a central role in this
- Recognise, encourage and nurture music leadership and music ministry including training of new musicians and singers
- Work with the Parish Pastoral Council and Liturgy Group to embed the wider Parish mission in music programmes
- Regularly evaluate and reassess the goals of the music provision in light of the needs of the Parish
- Keep the congregation informed of music activities and programmes
- Discuss and offer possible music related problems
- Monitor financial needs for the music programme

The role of the lead musician(s) is to:

- Lead music at regular services
- Plan in advance music choices, that are relevant and liturgically appropriate, and share with relevant musicians
- Support the PMT to develop and broaden the music provisions at St Oscar Romero Parish through new music and new events or services
- Train musicians and singers in new and existing repertoire

Structure and governance

- PMT reports to the Liturgy Group and to the Parish Priest
- There is no dedicated 'chairperson' for the group, it is an open forum for active feedback and discussion from the team
- PMT should comprise of the lead musicians, other musicians and members of the Parish or wider community up to a maximum of eight
- The meetings should be open to all to attend and should rotate by venue where possible.

Notes

- PMT is not the place to decide hymn choices; it can be used as a place to suggest and share new repertoire for performance across the Parish, but hymn selection should lie locally with the lead musician at each service
- PMT is not a place for rehearsing, this should be done separately in line with the rehearsal schedule

Meeting Structure

There should be at least four meetings per year, built around the church's calendar year:

September

Looking at Advent, Christmas and Ordinary Time until Lent

January

Looking at Oscar Romero feast day, Lent and Holy Week

March

Looking at Ordinary Time until end of August

July

Looking at Ordinary Time until Christ the King

There may be need for additional meetings throughout the year as necessary.

Sample agenda

Welcome and prayer

Apologies

Matters arising from the previous meeting

Recommendation action points

This could consist of any ongoing issues, particular discussion or decision points

Evaluation of music from previous season

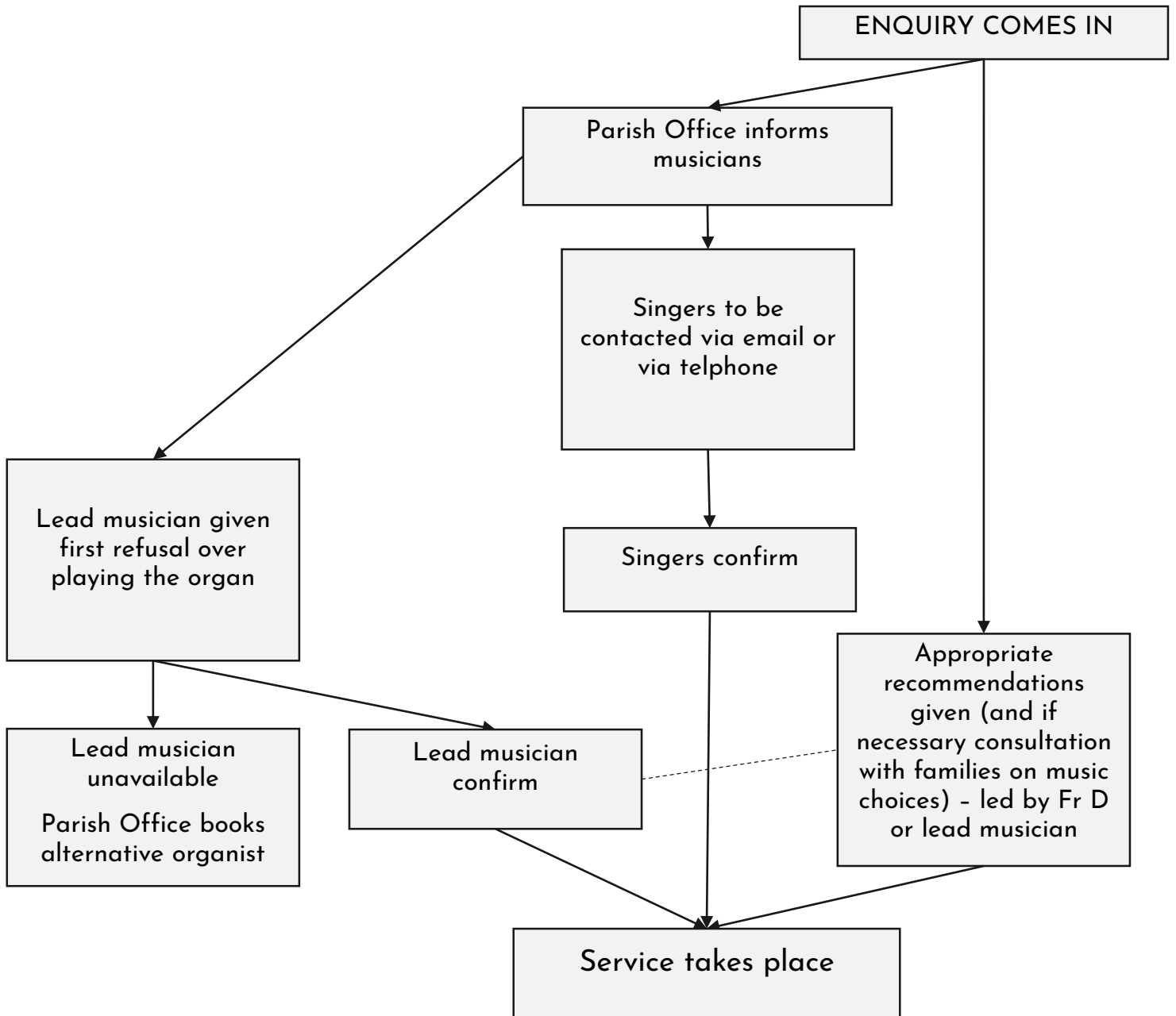
- What went well
- What didn't go well

Looking ahead at music for next season

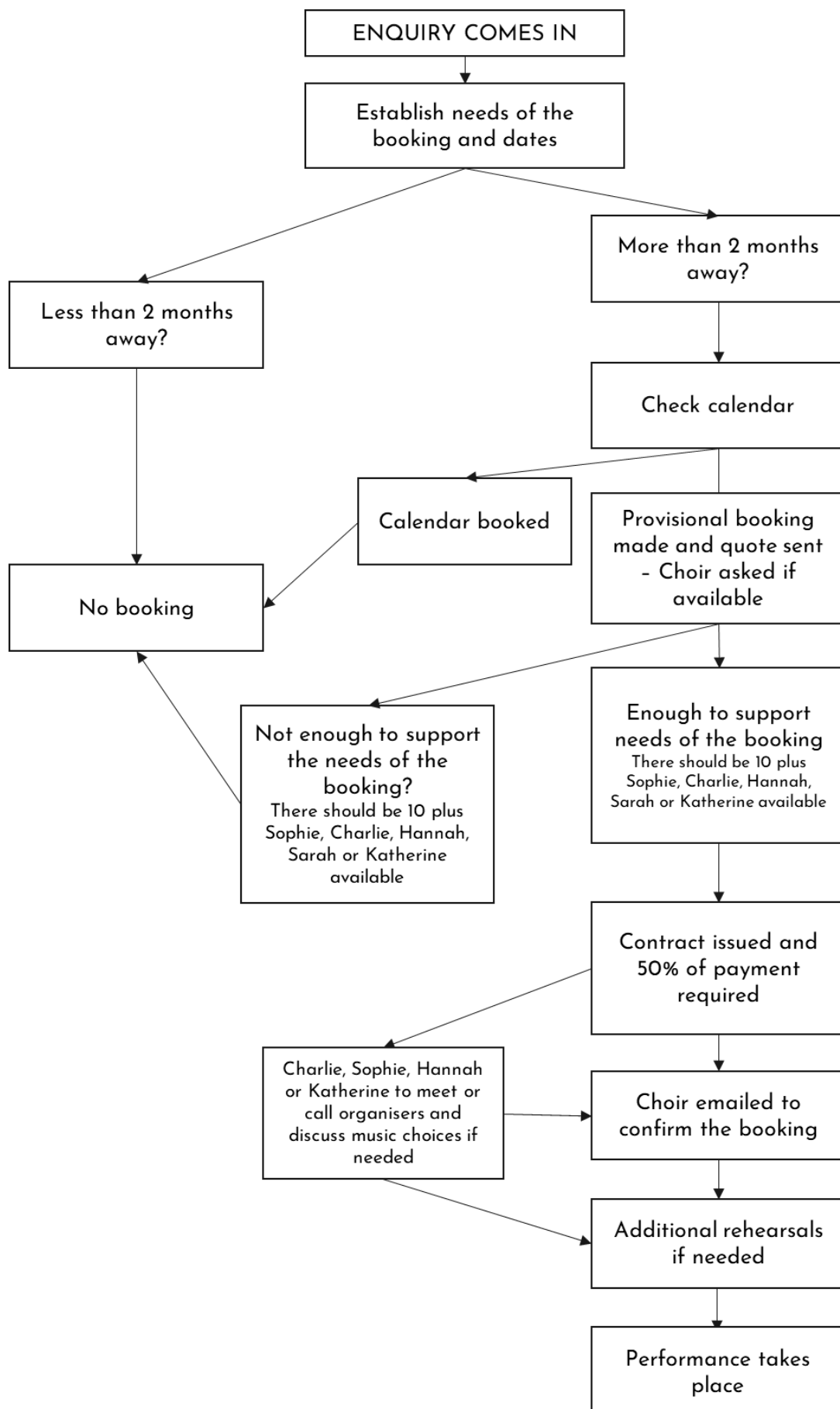
- Mass settings and new music plans
- Upcoming events

AOB

APPENDIX 2: Workflow for musicians at funerals (and lead musicians for weddings)



APPENDIX 3: Workflow for booking SEMusic for weddings or events



APPENDIX 4: Feedback from Parishioners

What do you love about music in the Parish?

There's a mutual love of music in church that binds us together both in the choral aspect and also with our combined faith and religious beliefs.

What I love about music at St Oscar Romero comes down to a few things. We are able to come together and make music with people we care about.

When we get things right, we can make a wonderful sound in a variety of styles that uplifts and appropriately accompanies services and masses across both churches.

Those leading the music make people feel involved and this in turn makes an added dimension of making a difference.

Already answered this.

Vibrancy, reflective.

I think music is an important part of the ministry and I love that the music enhances the meaning of the mass.

I genuinely think that music is not only a decoration to worship; it is an expressive way to enhance a service whether a general Mass, a wedding, a funeral or other occasion. Music has the opportunity to change the entire tone of a service, to uplift someone in a moment of darkness and for people to be touched by the Holy Spirit in a way that words alone cannot.

We have something special in our Parish that we should be grateful for - it is something I am grateful of. We have a small number of musical leaders with different strengths but one goal; to make music accessible for all. This includes children's liturgy through to UCM and through to larger choral numbers at appropriate times.

I think generally there is a good balance of styles of music at Mass and with some additional organisation, there can be more symmetry between each of our churches each week. Things like agreeing the Mass setting for a period and teaching it in advance, agreeing key hymns for particular moments, agreeing Psalm settings will only add to the experience that people have.

It is great that we have begun to see crossover of musicians in each of our church's, this only adds to the idea that we are one Parish with One Parish Music Team.

I love the combination of sacred and secular music the choir manages to enjoy. It makes for a vibrant, inclusive community, and that community demonstrates and lives out the values of respect and tolerance throughout all the activities that occur. This makes for a great atmosphere whatever music is taking place, and wherever it is taking place. Thank you, mainly to Charlie, for the mental and spiritual direction that we enjoy. But thank you everyone! That direction creates the wide range of music we can all enjoy, and it colours the culture of our musical life here. Thank you!

It is so joyous, just makes you feel so good. For me a big part of Sunday mass.

Singing on a Sunday was one of the reasons I joined the choir. I always wanted to join in with the singing in Mass on a Sunday, but not many of the congregation joined in.

I finally took a big step and asked about joining and was warmly welcomed.

The quiet masses and the odd occasion when the small choir sung together

The fact that there is music in the parish - live music - and the thought which goes into it for each and every Mass. I love the way the Choir rallies for every big occasion - it really is something special. I think certain parishioners (like myself) appreciate it a lot, but I also think that others don't truly value what they have. However, if it was taken away, they'd certainly notice!

Such good choirs

Relatively casual.

It allows people to sing at the Mass therefore making everyone including the children feel more for the actual celebration taking place.

It's very uplifting. Also like the children being involved.

It has a mix of older and newer hymns

That we always have some music

It enhances the Mass and people are grateful that they have it compared to other parishes who don't.

Good mixture, good choirs and musicians

Each week we are fortunate to have musicians at our Sunday masses and they make a joyful noise.

The balance of hymns is really good and the range of instruments v styles is done very well.

I mostly attend Saturday evenings and the feeling of the service is slightly more calm and stripped back. It would be good to have a few more singers at this Mass to help lead but keep the same mood. We are fortunate to have pro-active musicians and choirs in both churches who make a great contribution to the liturgy. Music gives you a lift.

I love hearing the organ being played and the choir singing. I like hearing traditional hymns I know the words to and especially the hymns relating for Our Lady, Star of the Sea.

I love being able to sing along with the hymns I know.

It's lovely to hear the organ playing and the variety of hymns, particularly the modern hymns

It adds so much and especially so much joy

I love the fact that the music is of a really high quality so it enhances our experience of Mass and prayer and worship.

I like the use of traditional and modern hymns

I personally prefer the more modern music but I know we have traditions too. I particularly love Sunday children's Mass when the music is lively and gets people clapping. It feels like a big celebration and engages the children. I also prefer keyboard to organ

It always perfectly sets the mood for whatever the occasion

Music is a shared joy and comfort in sad and difficult times

Always uplifting and reflective

Varied and relaxed but always excited by the standards we reach in concerts. Enjoy participation at church on Sunday mornings.

Mix of modern and traditional music. Informal, friendly approach.

It lifts everyone's spirits up

The sense of community and the musical dimension we add to worship.

What frustrates you about music in the Parish?

There is a sense that the way structures surrounding music selection is causing friction within the Parish, particularly in relation to the hymn-picking committee at Our Lady, Star of the Sea. Parishioners and musicians appear to be apprehensive about new music without rehearsal time or without appropriate materials to help support the introduction of new music.

Musicians find it frustrating that there is no consistency between numbers of people at Mass and would like to find a solution that increases the number of people singing or playing an instrument.

Some respondents are not happy about the introduction of the quiet Mass and are unsure how this decision was made.

Other areas of note:

- T-loop at St Edmund's
- More advance planning for special services

I think we could do more than just sing congregational hymns.

Feedback regarding the hymn picking committee that has been shared with me has made me feel like people involved in the music do not get as much of a say as they would like when it comes to choosing the hymns. This doesn't make people feel involved. It would be good to have more notice of special services and build in more rehearsal time for this. It would be good to have rehearsals of new music to help us familiarise ourselves with it before being thrown in at the deep end although we do pick stuff up

I think I may have already responded to this.

Nothing yet

None participation of congregation or singing same hymns over and over

I have been saddened to hear that there are a particular group of people who dominate musical conversations at Our Lady Star of the Sea. I think that there are ways to engage with people for active participation in planning but this should be led by musicians with input from others. There is a strong amount of liturgical and musical knowledge from our musical leaders and they should have the final say on pieces. This isn't to say that every choice should be made by them, but they should be the final decision maker on music depending on the service and the church.

Sometimes, things take a little too long to happen and communication is not great. It would be good to understand the parameters of the roles and responsibilities of the music team, particularly where funerals and weddings are concerned. It would be good to revive the Laudate Group (in a form!) in order to be able to support at life events.

To try and schedule music for special events, we need a little bit more time to plan around concerts and events. This doesn't mean that one or the other take precedent but to allow overlap and appropriate rehearsal time for all events and services.

For example, we should be considering dates for Family Masses for 2022/23 now as well as Week of Prayer 2023 to allow for better planning. Having these ball park dates allows us to plan without things creeping up and work either being wasted or rushed.

The sound system in both St Edmund's and Star of the Sea churches. The sound in St Edmund's, even having undergone renewal and updating is still poor. I can no longer hear the homily which is one of the best things to listen to! I had hoped there would be a fancy new loop type of method, or blue tooth magic, so I could maybe use my hearing aids to hear clearly, but I don't think that's happening. Sometimes a little unsure of the hymns we don't sing that often, and worry will sing the incorrectly but Charlie and Sophie lead us through.

Lack of involvement in choice if not able to play an instrument.

The limited choir competing with each other

It can be frustrating when after a Christmas or an Easter, the numbers of musicians reduce to single figures. You go from having a big sound with harmonies to the standard. Yet, the standard of music in the Parish is far higher than anywhere else around.

Personally I don't find many traditional/older hymns helpful but I know many people do like them so I am quite happy to accept a mixture of old and newer (i.e. post Vat2) However sometimes there is a predominance of the older ones at mass (I usually go to St Edmunds on a Saturday)

Pretty near to recent liturgical composition/s.

Only if we as a choir don't know the piece immediately before singing then we don't sound as good as we do normally.

Nothing

That there is only an organist every other Saturday.

Nothing really

More attendance from all of choir

How can this be achieved? My apologies for not always being available but have attended several funerals and will attend a future wedding date (attended past weddings) as well as services at my own Parish Church but my loyalty

has always been to St.Ed's/St Oscar Romero.

Don't know why there is only an organist every other Saturday

I understand that there was a request from parishioners about having a quiet Mass but I'm unsure where this has come from. If it's to do with not being able to find an organist, then I think that's okay but personally, I don't think most parishioners want this

It would be good to have more of a mix of modern and traditional hymns.

Hymns/singing not on the board and whose words I don't know. Oscar Romero hymn is elusive and there are occasionally pieces of singing that I have no idea where they are in the hymnal ie no corresponding number on the hymn board. But these are minor frustrations - you do a great job.

The Latin but at the end of Mass whilst we are all waiting for the hymn. Please leave it out, it adds nothing, and people don't know what the Latin means anyway.

Disappointing of no music at Mass (even taped music)

Time to move on from old Victorian and triumphant hymns

Nothing

Nothing

I wish people wouldn't be shy and sing!!

Not a consistent number of singers always, no time to rehearse new pieces

Would be good to change the holy holy and alleluia. Very repetitive and boring now.

Very little

Nothing

Generally I am happy

Honestly not a lot at all! I think some rehearsals for special services would be good, to practice music we could sing for the occasion.

What would you like to say about music in the Parish that you haven't been able to?

Praise and thanks is given to the music leaders Ben, Charlie and Sophie (and an honourable mention to Martin too!) and the music they create.

There are a couple of conflicting messages around music choices. One respondent says that the music leaders should be trusted to work out music choices and another says that musicians should not dominate and dictate.

Would rather not say here.

The experts in music for masses is the organists and choir directors, they should be trusted to work out hymn selection

Will have to think more about this!

Nothing

N/A

n/a

We need to get rid of old obsolete equipment - just get rid of it! eg the old organ console that takes up so much space and causes such problems to be able to seat ourselves around. I know that was not possible when Fr John was priest, and I understand the historic and practical difficulties of moving from one organ to another. But we now need to do it. And although this point isn't strictly to do with the music of the parish, the environment affects the music - so it is relevant!

I really enjoy the fact that there is now more instruments played during mass. I feel this engages the young during mass.

I like the fact there is always someone there to take the lead, Sophie, Charlie always feel more confident singing when they are there.

It should be there to lead not dominate and dictate

Nothing negative. If I had something to say I'd have told Charlie or Martin!

I think I'd like to thank everyone for what they do, how they contribute.

Could you introduce some new hymns - maybe it would need a short practice before mass starts. Some of the Iona/Wild Goose music is great with words that are very meaningful and relevant to everyday life.

Nothing.

Only that some of us who don't read music sometimes need a bit more help and patience

Nothing

I do enjoy it, we need to get more people to sing. I'd like some more modern ones at evening mass with a more joyful feel.

It's difficult but would be nice if more people could commit me too .

I would like it if now and again we

included Gospel Singing. Love the drum beat too as with African Music..lively

Nothing

just thanks to the people involved and for being brave at asking the people what they want

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I think it is vital that we encourage parishioners to join in, and it doesn't come across as 'we are the choir, just listen to how good we are.' (Sorry but I do sometimes feel this way!)

I enjoy it all, it's good to get the young children involved

.

Just a big thank you for the ministry you provide. It makes a huge difference to the celebration of the Mass

I like the fact it feels like a community is providing the ministry. The extra concerts add to this

How grateful I am to have such a valuable resource for everyone to enjoy

Thank you, it's beautiful

Thank you for the hard work to Martin, Charlie and Sophie at St Edmund's and Ben at Our Lady's Star of the Sea

Nothing

Nothing I feel able to talk about music at any time

Maybe arrange of folky or more upbeat eg reggae rendition from time to time

Thank you for all that the music team does. It's amazing to see what we achieve and it's thanks to you guys giving up your time. It's really appreciated.

Are there any areas that you think you'd be able to help with?

The majority of respondents did not answer this question or left it blank. Some respondents are musicians already and this was noted.

There was feedback about organising systems and processes to make better the experience and organisation of music.

Not sure about this at the moment.

n/a - I already sing with the group

Already hope that I am helping!

Funerals

N/A

I would like to propose a number of guidelines to allow us to work better together:

- Parameters for booking musicians for additional services for office staff, to allow planning around rehearsals, events and services
- Timescales and workflows for additional events (considering all planning not just music)
- Workflow for booking musicians for funerals/weddings again taking into account in-house musicians before external musicians

It makes sense to have either a termly or quarterly music team meeting, with a focus on upcoming seasons. For example, a Lent/Holy Week discussion should take place before general choir music is printed before Christmas and for Christmas, this should be planned when planning Christmas events (concerts etc). This means that the music can be used for dual purposes and will often mean more rehearsal time.

In addition to Music Team meetings, for the forthcoming year (we plan Sept-August and around term times) we should include a rehearsal based around Parish music every month. Practically, it makes sense to plan this immediately before a general adult choir rehearsal on a Sunday evening and take place at St Edmund's - this is just much clearer for communications and logistics - but should be run in a cycle of Charlie/Ben/Sophie. This can give the opportunity to rehearsal upcoming Mass settings, new hymns etc

This must sit separately to Music Team meetings which should be used as a place for discussion, decision and action so that appropriate time is given to planning and rehearsing.

The Parish should consider fairer remuneration for musicians - the current set-up that the 'lead' musician should be paid doesn't work when two people are doing a very similar job. This isn't a ploy to get more money out of the Parish but to ensure that those doing certain roles are being paid to do so. I am involved, and thoroughly enjoy it! I hope I can help organise the filing of music - when we arrange time to do this together.

Things seem to be covered, but I will help if I can.

Not at the moment but possibly in the future

No.

Sorry can't think of anything.

No.

N/A

Playing the tambourine 😊

I can sing in the choir a bit more now, as we are only only stewarding once a month. Giving out hymn books to encourage people to sing along.

To attend more regularly

At the present time, I am not able to help due to a very recent health problem, but this could well change.

In the earlier days of the choir, I did host quite a number of concerts and more help was given. Terry has always supported the choir too over a period of 25 years enjoying the music and ensuing friendships.

No

No sorry - tone deaf!

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I enjoy singing without a mask but don't know how I could help particularly

I would consider joining but not sure about time commitment

Not really

I'll take my mask off and sing louder!!

no

As up to now. Happy to contribute to Mass on Sunday, and funerals and weddings when able and available.

Well, that depends on what is. I can tidy the choir loft after mass maybe?

Just providing ideas

Singing

Do you have any other feedback for our music team?

There was an overwhelming response of thanks to the musicians for the time, energy and work that they do. (16 respondents)

We only have a small number of people who attend Star of the Sea church choir. With a few more numbers I feel we could be more ambitious and sing choral pieces now and then on our own as a small choral ensemble.

Would like to express my gratitude to Ben and Charles and Sophie and the choirs for all their work

I think there should be more child friendly hymns/songs when there are Christenings or Sunday school children present in the church.

No

No

I am blessed to be part of an incredible music team that feels more and more in-sync each time we do something together.

Gratitude, gratitude, gratitude !

I am so privileged to be able to be involved with such brilliant music - the best, after a lifetime of church music! Thank you!

Jacky Williams x

Just want to say thank you to you all for giving your time. I really appreciate everything you do Thank you.

Try to include the parishioners in the pews

No. Just thanks.

I thought the singing at the Evensong in the Romero week of prayer was wonderful, such a shame so few people were there.

No.

N/A

No

Nope.

Doing a great job and the people of the parish really appreciate it .

Not as yet but would like to know if financially this became viable for the choir.

Thank you to Emily's partner for taking the photos and the Support Team for their amazing help.

No. Thanks to the musicians

would be nice to see some of the great concerts at Star of the sea now that we're a combined church

You're doing a great job. Lovely harmonies. Less organ, more piano

I like us having the hymn choosing meetings - more notice of the future dates would be helpful.

Well done on what you do for us.

You all do a great job with the music

I am in awe of your commitment. A strong group like this can only come from dedicated leadership so thank you to the leaders for sharing your time and talents so generously

Our parish community is blessed to have thus quality of music ministry

Keep on doing what you're doing

It's wonderful

Could we reinstate singing the our father? It was always a special moment for me

Great people and great plans for integrating wider community into parish life but sometimes feels like too much of time/energy is given to concerts than church

Loved our most recent concert. Great feedback from family and friends.

No. If anything occurs, I always feel confident about discussing. I appreciate that may not be very helpful but it's true.

No

Thank you again!

APPENDIX 5: Feedback from other church musicians

Survey shared with the UK Catholic Organists and Choirmasters group

In my church, we have...

Multiple choice question.

An organist	14
A pianist	5
Instrumentalists (other instruments than organ/piano)	6
A small group of singers (up to 5)	5
A medium group of singers (up to 9)	5
A large group of singers (10+)	6
Other	3

Singers and musicians across our recently reconstructed deanery

Paid music scholars and organ student

15 singers across two masses, rehearse together

In my church, the music is chosen by...

The Parish Priest	0
The organist/choir director	12
A committee or team	0
Other	2

Parish priest for one service / Choir director the other

A nun (she's good!)

How often are music choices made?

Weekly	5
Monthly	5
Quarterly	3
Yearly	0
Other	1

Use is made of the guides in the hymnbook, SSG journal, and a historic record

How many regular services feature music?

All, including weekday services	0
Most, some weekday and all weekend	4
Only weekend, but all weekend services	5
Some weekend services	3
Other	2
2 out of 3 weekend Masses, plus 2 Masses each Holy Day	
Every Sunday plus Holy Days	

Please tick which music is regularly used at your church:

Processional hymn	14
Gloria	13
Responsorial Psalm	11
Gospel Acclamation	14
Offertory Hymn	12
Sanctus	13
Memorial Acclamation	12
Agnus Dei	11
Hymn during Communion	9
Anthem or motet during Communion	6
Music played during Communion	7
Hymn after Communion	10
Recessional Hymn	14
Other	6

We are working towards singing the Psalm and Our Lady's Antiphon at the end of Mass

Communion antiphon

Occasional motet

Angelus

Introductory and communion antiphons

Entrance and communion processional psalms (not just hymns)

How often is new music introduced?

Weekly	5
Monthly	2
Seasonal	5
Yearly	0
Never	0
Other	2

occasional new hymns, at the moment sticking to mostly tried and testing as we pick up again

As often as chosen but not too much at one time

How often do you change Mass settings?

Weekly	3
Monthly	2
Seasonal	7
Yearly	0
Never	0
Other	2

we have two glorias, which go 2/3 weeks at a time, two regular Sanctus and the Chant one for Lent/Advent, other parts fixed; the music group is looking at moving away from playing the same as the organ

Weekly, but it's just a cycle of 3-4 settings

Other feedback or things to note

Don't change the setting too often, to allow for familiarity. If possible have some form of numbering on the hymn board to guide congregational memory

We do our best! We've gone from Parish, to Pastoral Area and now back to Deanery. In terms of music, we have lost a great deal but we also have potential to sing as a choir again. I have to admit that our congregations sing with great gusto.

The current model you have may not be sustainable. It's not for a committee to decide the music offered. Resentment could run high eventually and the church is at risk of losing the music provision that they seem to run.

"Tread lightly over the hot coals" when introducing changes (bitter experience has taught me this) - diplomacy and being willing to play the slow/long game is paramount; Be careful of the "1 person complaining to the priest" about this or that (that 1 person could bring down decades of hard work and enjoy doing so!) - you will always find them, wherever you go. Good admin! I work with a spreadsheet over a 3 year cycle. Saves so much time when choosing hymns. Leaves a little extra time to consider other music, i.e. Motets, etc

Answers based on my previous post in U.K. and I now live abroad

Choosing music by committee is a recipe for disaster. You need to empower a single person with vision. If there is no one with vision, you might need to consider paying someone to be the overall parish music director, co-ordinating all the resources across both churches and implementing a policy that will lead to long-term growth and formation of the whole parish community. Whoever makes the choices needs to have good liturgical knowledge and good pastoral instincts. It's not enough just to be a competent musician.