

## OUR FIRST YEARS REPORT!



As our wonderful children's choir is now a year old I thought it would be a good idea to give you a report of everything we have achieved throughout our first year.

Helen and I are extremely proud of all our singers and cannot quite believe how lucky we have been to have such lovely youngsters join our choir. They have all shown commitment, enthusiasm and flexibility and surpassed our expectations at every level.

As to the future, well we are going to go from strength to strength as far as I can tell. We will be getting more technical and intend to introduce the Voice for Life badges, which are an accreditation from the Royal School of Church Music. This will mean some focussed work on technique so will involve some Saturday workshops. These workshops will also give us an opportunity to go over past repertoire with new members and those who have changed group since first joining the choir.

We hope as time goes by we will have more opportunities to sing with our church choir and also with other choirs and musicians.

In the beginning....

Our first rehearsal saw 14 children walked through the 'devil's door', which was heart warming.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011 Semiquavers had their first service at Christchurch Gravesend. The term continued and we learned amongst other things The Carol of the Children by John Rutter. At the end of November the Semiquavers tee shirts were in production ready for the Christingle service.



The choir went on to sing at our first concert on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2011 when we were joined by flautist Becky Jewis who played a duet with Helen. The 'Cat' duet also mewed it's way into the programme. With refreshments afterwards in the hall, this concert was very well attended and raised over £200 for the choir funds.



Semiquavers then took part in two great annual events at Christchurch, the Christingle Service where they provided a 'loop' of music whilst children created their own Christingles in the hall, and then helped to lead a huge congregation with carols. It was then our job to sing at the Christmas Eve Cribb Service. This is always a beautiful service, and the singing this year

more than added to the celebrations.

Happy new year! Hallelujah!

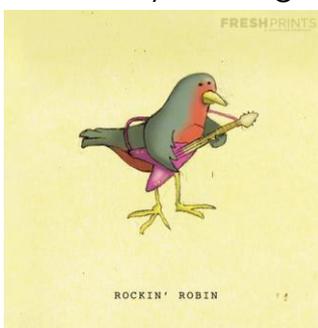
2012 started with some HARD work from the children. We had entered the Gravesham Arts Festival and had a competition to prepare for! We took two pieces to the festival, Hallelujah by Lenard Cohen and All Things Bright and Beautiful by John Rutter. This involved learning the pieces to a very high standard, which for a new choir with inexperienced singers was a big ask, but the singers all rose to the occasion. We had some very constructive and positive comments from the adjudicator and were awarded a merit. This was a very proud moment for all of us, especially those parents and members of the congregation who came to support them at the girl's grammar school. Our first soloist ever was Eleanor Williams who had made great strides with her singing since joining semiquavers. Eleanor has gone on to sing solo with us at a concert and is one of our most hard working and loyal members. Thank you Eleanor.

Those two competitions plus the Disney Medley had an airing at a last minute concert we were invited to perform at for the Medway Brass band at Saint George's church Gravesend. Although we were a few down due to illness and tickets to see Bear Grills the choir sang beautifully. We then realised we may need to invest in an amplifier for singing outside our home.

After the competition Helen and I went on a charm offensive at Holy Trinity School and Kings Farm School. We visited both and did some singing with Key Stage 2 at Kings Farm, and the whole school during worship at Holy Trinity. The Head Teacher of Holy Trinity asked us to come back with the choir to sing again, which we did later in the year (more of that later!). We gained some extra members from these visits, we certainly know our profile was raised in the community and we made some good links for Christchurch.

Christ is arisen indeed!

Easter Sunday was a red letter day for us as we joined with the Christchurch Choir and the Music Group to sing an anthem to celebrate Easter "Christ is arisen indeed" which is arranged for full choir and children's choir. Everyone sang beautifully and it gave us a picture of what we can do when we work together.



Preparations then went on for the Spring concert featuring our competition songs along with Rockin' Robin and Here Comes the Sun. This started a trend which one of our mum's has pointed out to us, that Marks & Spencer have a habit of

using the songs we are singing to advertise their products! I think we should ask them for some kind of donation!

The Spring concert introduced three more soloists from the ranks in Emily Portway, Tanya Hills and Samuel Carter. All three sang beautifully Emily singing Morning has broken, Tanya singing Amazing grace and Samuel taking on the persona of Fagin in the ensemble piece Pick a pocket or two. Both of these girls have lovely strong voices and I am sure we will be seeing much more of them in the future. Samuel is our only Baritone and although he is now at college is a very loyal and committed member of the choir. It is always a pleasure to hear him sing. We were also joined by Noriko Shorney who accompanied us and also played the organ. Noriko is extremely talented and can make everything she plays (effortlessly) sing and dance! Thank you Noriko for your time and talents. Over 130 people came along to this concert, and once again a goodly sum of money was raised to keep us going.

### Olympic efforts

The summer was fast approaching, and with it the Queen's jubilee and the Olympics! We began to learn the London Medley by Gareth Malone in readiness for this momentous occasion.

We returned, with the choir, to Holy Trinity School. They were the last school in the borough to break up for the summer, so on their first day of holiday our singers met at church and walked down in a crocodile to Holy Trinity. They sang well to the whole school (who weren't out on school trips) and then we walked back. They sang THE ENTIRE WAY HOME regardless of onlookers!

The choir sang at two outside events; firstly at the Eleanor Lions Hospice event at Saint George's School called Twist and Shout. I was unable to attend with this so Helen flew solo! All reports are that the singing was wonderful, even though we were not at fully strength, due to holidays, and we used our newly purchased amp purchased from our semiquaver funds and church funds. The amp came in very useful as the Eleanor Lions Hospice sound equipment was not working so they borrowed ours for the remainder of the afternoon. This event was not as well attended as they organisers had planned but this did not deter us. We hope to be able to sing for the hospice again in the future. The second outside event was at Cascades leisure centre for their Olympic picnic. This was on one of the hottest days of the year and very well attended. The choir sang well and the organisers were very pleased with them. This was a real community event and it was great to be included.

### We're all going on a summer holiday

We broke up after a summer party in the hall and pleasure including games, food and singing. Thank you to all the parents and friends who came along to this. The summer break gave us a chance to take stock and prepare for the new term. We came back full of vigour and learned our first piece in Latin to sing at the Organ Restoration Concert. The singers learned this piece off the page very quickly and performed it beautifully. They gave a rousing performance of the

Queen Medley. We discovered that the stage blocks give a very satisfying bang when you stamp on them!!

The autumn term has come upon us quickly and we are preparing for an Autumn concert. This concert will feature more solos from within the choir and give you a chance to hear some of our summer repertoire.

Thank you

There are many people we need to thank for making our first year so enjoyable and productive.

Firstly I would like to thank the children in the choir. Some have come and gone, and we enjoyed their company whilst they sang with us. They will always be welcome at Christchurch at any time and we hope they go on to sing in the future. Most of our original singers who came through the 'devil's door' are still with us. They are extremely generous with their time and energy and are all very talented young people.

Secondly the parents and carers, friends and family of our singers, who have encouraged their children, ferried them to church on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays and supported us at all our events. We hope they feel part of the Christchurch family, which we feel they most definitely are.

Thirdly thank must be given to the PCC and clergy at Christchurch in supporting our ideas and accommodating us in all our ventures. This was a new project for the church and one that came somewhat out of the blue. Sue and Jo have been extremely supportive and so have the congregation as a whole. Some people have been surprised at the standard of the singing, not expecting, especially from such young singers, such a wonderful sound, and that they sing everything "off the page" i.e. from memory.

Fourthly I would like to thank our team of chaperones and helpers. Chaperones allow us to get on with the music and not worry about the adminstrivia like registers and drinks and are an extra pair of hands on stand by, and often an extra voice to help the singers learn their part. We would like to thank Gill Campbell for all her help and support. Gill organises the rota of chaperones and keeps all our administration up to date, creating letters for parents and organising everything from 1<sup>st</sup> aid kits to squash supplies for rehearsals. Without her help Semiquavers would not run half as smoothly. Gill makes our jobs easy as we can concentrate on the music knowing that everything else is under control, especially selling of tickets in church! Thank you Gill.

Finally I would like to thank Martin Carling and Noriko Shorney who have accompanied us on the piano and organ at our concerts. This has been a great benefit to us as we rehearse with recorded music through the laptop and klavinova. Your playing is always wonderful and we hope we can call on you again in the future.

## The future

The future is bright! We have some collaborations coming up with the church choir and music group at Christmas time and in the new year we will be holding some Saturday work shops. This will be to take the singers through the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) Voice for Life scheme, when they will be awarded special RSCM badges, which are transferrable should they join a robed choir, to the choristers medals that are worn. We will also then have a chance to look at technique and go over past repertoire. There will be another Gravesham Arts Festival in the early part of 2013 and we would also like to be involved next summer in the Gravesend Big Day Out and are investigating this at the moment. If you have any suggestions of events where Semiquavers would be able to sing please do let us know by sending us an email or messaging on facebook. Also if you have any friends or relatives that you think would enjoy singing with us, please do encourage them to come along. The more the merrier!

