

GROSVENOR C H O R A L E

30TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS WITH CAROLS



SAINT COLMCILLE'S CHURCH, BALLYHACKAMORE

18 DECEMBER 2023

DIRECTOR : EDWARD J. CRAIG
ORGANIST : STEPHEN HAMILL


grosvenor



Welcome to our thirtieth Annual Festival of Nine Lessons with Carols; a form of worship which we first held together in Down Cathedral and have since enjoyed years in St John's Orangefield, St Peter's Antrim Road and most recently here in St Colmcille's Ballyhackamore. The service follows the plan laid down by Eric Milner-White, Dean of King's College Cambridge, over 100 years ago for Christmas Eve 1918. The music was directed by Arthur Henry Mann, whose harmonization of the opening hymn '*Once In Royal David's City*' we continue to sing. Almost immediately the structure of the service spread across the country as many churches adapted the service for their own use.

The service provides a time for both choir and congregation to reflect on the '*development of the loving purposes of God...*' seen '*...through the windows and words of the Bible*'. The carols and anthems are subservient to the words of scripture providing an opportunity for a response to the texts through traditional and contemporary music. The Bidding Prayer encourages us to reflect with gratitude to God for '*all those who rejoice with us but on another shore and in a greater light*'. The centre of the service is still found by those who '*go in heart and mind*' and who consent to follow where the story leads.

The choir will lead the service which includes many traditional carols and we encourage you all to join with us for the congregational hymns. The lessons are read by representatives of the choir and those with whom we have worked throughout this past year. The choir will also weave carols old and new between the readings. As old favourites return we are looking forward to singing some new pieces this year including '*O Radiant Dawn*' by James Macmillan and '*Great Our Festivity*' by Andrew Carter.

The permission of Father Conor McGrath and organist Colin McShane to hold the service in this beautiful building dedicated to Saint Colmcille is very much appreciated by the members of the choir. A retiring offering will be collected as you leave this evening and proceeds will go toward the local work of the Samaritans.

We hope that you all find comfort, hope and inspiration throughout the service and we look forward to seeing you all again in the near future. Finally, please do join with us for refreshments in the Parish Hall at the close of the service.



GREAT OUR FESTIVITY

*Great our festivity, welcome the morn:
Greet His Nativity, Jesus is born.
Veni nunc Domine, Viva cum homine,
Patris in nomine, Jesus is born, Jesus is born.*

[Come now, Lord, live with mankind, in the name of the Father.]

*Cradled in modesty, laid in a stall,
Christ in His majesty waits for us all.
Rex adorabilis, Rex tam amabilis,
Salus mirabilis, Jesus is born, Jesus is born.*

[A King so adored, a King so lovely, wonderful salvation.]

*Here in serenity, see His divinity,
Here in tranquillity kneel in humility.
Come to Him prayerfully, follow Him peacefully,
Honour Him cheerfully, worship Him joyfully.*

*So sing we merrily, loudly and long,
So make we melody, thankful our song.
Pleni nunc gaudio, laeti cum angelo
Laudamus Domino, Jesus is born, Jesus is born!*

[Now full of joy, rejoicing with the angels, we praise the Lord.]

This text was written by Andrew Carter and William Grant and set to music by Andrew Carter, a composer whose music the choir have often enjoyed performing. Composed in 2009, the music manages to be both suitably celebratory and intimately reflective as we sing it just before the reading of the Ninth Scripture Lesson as a celebration of thirty years of singing together as Grosvenor Chorale.

ORDER OF SERVICE

INTROIT THIS IS THE TRUTH SENT FROM ABOVE

HEREFORDSHIRE CAROL
ENGLISH TRADITIONAL
Music Arr., R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

¶ The congregation will please stand and remain standing until the end of the Invitatory. All are invited to join in the singing of this hymn from the fourth verse.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

Choir ONCE in Royal David's City
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

Choir He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

Choir And through all his wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms he lay;
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as he.

All For he is our childhood's pattern,
Day by day like us he grew,
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us he knew;
And he feeleth for our sadness,
And he shareth in our gladness.

All And our eyes at last shall see him,
Through his own redeeming love,
For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above;
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.

All Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars his children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

Words, C. F. ALEXANDER
Melody, H. J. GAUNTLETT
Harm., H. J. GAUNTLETT and A. H. MANN
Descant v6, DAVID WILCOCKS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

BIDDING PRAYER, LORD'S PRAYER & INVITATORY

¶ Then the Bidding Prayer is led by Rev Mervyn Burnside, Minister of Castlereagh Presbyterian Church, after which all together pray:

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
In earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.

INVITATORY: CORDE NATUS EX PARENTIS

¶ Verses 1 to 3 is sung by the choir only.
The final verse is sung by the congregation.

Sing, ye heights of heaven, His praises;
Angels and archangels, sing!
Wheresoe'er ye be, ye faithful,
Let your joyous anthems ring,
Ev'ry tongue His name confessing,
Countless voices answering,
Evermore and evermore.

Words, M. A. C. PRUDENTIUS
Translation, R. F. DAVIS
MELODY, DIVINUM MYSTERIUM, SANCTUS TROPE, 11TH-CENTURY
Harmonisation & Descant, DAVID WILLCOCKS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

FIRST LESSON & CAROL

READER: Kaz Robinson (New Choir Member)

*God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise
and that his seed will bruise the serpent's head.*

GENESIS 3 : 8-15

AND they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: I WONDER AS I WANDER

Words, G. R. WOODWARD
16TH-CENTURY FRENCH MELODY
Music Arr., MACK WILBERG
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

HYMN

¶ Sung by all, standing.

All O COME, O Come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lowly exile here,
Until the Son of God appear:

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Men O come, thou Rod of Jesse,
Free thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.

Women O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight:

Choir O come thou Key of David,
Come, and open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery:

All O come, o come, thou Lord of Might,
Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height,
In ancient times did give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe:

Words, ANONYMOUS 12TH-CENTURY
Music Arr., ANDREW CARTER
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

¶ The congregation sits.

SECOND LESSON & CAROLS

READER: Peter Turner (Founder Choir Member)

*God promises to faithful Abraham
that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

GENESIS 22 : 15-18

AND the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Thanks be to God.

CAROLS: STILLE NACHT

Words, JOSEF MOHR
Trans., JOHN F. YOUNG
Music, FRANZ GRUBER
Music Arr., RONALD LEE

TOMORROW SHALL BE MY DANCING DAY

Words, ENGLISH TRADITIONAL
Music, JOHN GARDNER
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

THIRD LESSON & CAROL

READER: Nicola Turner (Friend of Grosvenor Chorale)

Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah

ISAIAH 9 : 2, 6 & 7

THE people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: O RADIANT DAWN

Words, ANTIPHON FOR 21 DECEMBER
Music, JAMES MACMILLAN
BOOSEY & HAWKES MUSIC LTD

¶ Sung by all, standing.

See amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below;
See the tender lamb appears
Promis'd from eternal years:

*Hail, thou ever blessed morn,
Hail, redemption's happy dawn;
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.*

Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim:

Sacred infant, all divine,
What a tender love was thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this:

Teach, o teach us, Holy Child,
By thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble thee,
In thy sweet humility:

Words, EDWARD CASWELL
Music Arr., DAVID WILLCOCKS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

¶ The congregation sits.

FOURTH LESSON & CAROLS

READER: Fiona McGoldrick (Loughview Integrated P.S. Choir)

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.

ISAIAH 11 : 1 - 4, 6 - 9

AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Thanks be to God.

CAROLS A GREAT AND MIGHTY WONDER

Words, ST GERMANUS I

Words Trans., J. M. NEALE

Music, MICHAEL PRAETORIUS

Music Arr., JAMES WHITBOURN

CHESTER MUSIC

THE LINDEN TREE CAROL

Words and Music, C.1420 GERMANY

Words Trans., GEORGE R. WOODWARD

Music Arr., EDWARD CRAIG

CLEFT MUSIC

FIFTH LESSON & CAROL

READER: Laura Salt (Secretary, N. I. Concert Band)

The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St Luke 1 : 26 - 35, 38

AND in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: GABRIEL'S MESSAGE

OLD BASQUE CAROL
Words, SABINE BARING-GOULD
Music Arr., EDGAR PETTMAN
B. FELDMAN & Co., LTD

THE ANNUNCIATION

Soloist: Brian Keenan

Words, ST LUKE
Music, CHARLES J BRENNAN

¶ Sung by all, standing.

All O little town of Bethlehem,
 How still we see thee lie!
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
 The silent stars go by:
 Yet in thy dark streets shineth
 The everlasting light;
 The hopes and fears of all the years
 Are met in thee tonight.

Choir How silently, how silently
 The wondrous gift is given:
 So God imparts to human hearts
 The blessings of his heaven.
 No ear may hear his coming,
 But in this world of sin,
 Where meek souls will receive him,
 Still the dear Christ enters in.

All O Holy Child of Bethlehem
 Descend to us, we pray;
 Cast out our sin, and enter in,
 Be born in us today.
 We hear the Christmas angel
 The great glad tidings tell:
 O come to us, abide with us,
 Our Lord Emmanuel.

Words, P. BROOKS
ENGLISH TRADITIONAL
Music Arr., R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
Verse 2 Arr., PHILIP LEDGER
Descant, T. ARMSTRONG
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

¶ The congregation sits.

SIXTH LESSON & CAROLS

READER: Wesley Taylor (Samaritans Charity Representative)

St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

St Luke 2 : 1, 3 - 7

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Thanks be to God.

CAROLS: IL EST NÉ

Words and Music, TRADITIONAL FRENCH CAROL
Music Arr., JOHN MACLANE SCHIRARD
EXCELCIA MUSIC PUBLISHING

WHAT SWEETER MUSIC

Words, ROBERT HERRICK
Music, JOHN RUTTER
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

SEVENTH LESSON & CAROL

READER: Edward Craig (Director of Music)

The shepherds go to the manger.

St Luke 2 : 8 - 16

AND there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: QUEM VIDISTIS PASTORES

Words, 3RD RESPONSE FROM CHRISTMAS MATINS

Music, FRANCIS POULENC

EDITIONS SALABERT

Shepherds, tell us who you have seen; who has appeared to us on earth?

We have seen the new-born and the choir of Angels together praising the Lord.

Tell what you have seen and announce the birth of Christ.

We have seen the new-born and the choir of Angels together praising the Lord.

HYMN

¶ Sung by all, standing.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

“Fear not,” said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind,
“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.”

“To you in David’s town this day
Is born of David’s line a Saviour,
Who is Christ the Lord:
And this shall be the sign;

“The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed.
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.”

Thus spake the seraph;
And forthwith appeared
A shining throng of angels praising God,
Who thus addressed their joyful song;

“All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease.”

Words, N. TATE
Music, WINCHESTER OLD, ESTE’S PSALTER, 1592
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

¶ The congregation sits.

EIGHTH LESSON

READER: Rosalind Ellis (Choir Committee Representative)

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.

St Matthew 2 : 1 - 12

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Thanks be to God.

CAROLS

CAROLS: DECK THE HALL

Music, TRADITIONAL WELSH CAROL
Music Arr., DAVID WILLCOCKS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

GREAT OUR FESTIVITY

English words, ANDREW CARTER
Latin words, WILLIAM GRANT
Music, ANDREW CARTER
BANKS MUSIC PUBLICATIONS

¶ The congregation will please stand for the reading of the Ninth Lesson and remain standing until the end of the service.

NINTH LESSON

READER: Father Conor McGrath (St Colmcille's Church)

St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

St John 1 : 1 - 14

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Thanks be to God.

O COME, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem:
Come and behold him,
Born the King of angels:

Choir ***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,***
All ***O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!***

God of God
Light of Light,
Lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb
Very God,
Begotten, not created:

Choir ***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,***
All ***O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!***

Sing, choirs of angels
Sing in exultation
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above,
"Glory to God
In the Highest."

All ***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!***

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesu, to Thee be glory given,
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:

All ***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!***

Words, 18TH-CENTURY LATIN, ADESTE FIDELES
Trans., F. OAKELEY
Melody, J. F. WADE
Music Arr., DAVID WILLCOCKS
Descant v4, DAVID HILL
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRAYERS

¶ The Prayers are led by Father Conor McGrath:

COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

Let us pray:

O God, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only son, Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him, when he shall come to be our judge; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

All: Amen.

BLESSING

May he who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, grant you the fullness of inward peace and goodwill; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

All: Amen.

Hark! the herald angels sing:
'Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!
Joyful, all ye nations rise!
Join the triumph of the skies!
With the angelic host proclaim:
'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'

*Hark! the herald angels sing:
'Glory to the new-born King!'*

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord:
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell:
Jesus, our Emmanuel!

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Words, C. WESLEY AND G. WHITEFIELD
Music, J. L. F. MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY
Descant, DAVID WILLCOCKS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

ON behalf of the choir I would like to thank you all for joining with us this evening to celebrate our thirtieth Festival of Nine Lessons with Carols. The initial aim of forming a choir of past pupils of Grosvenor High School was to perform a Christmas Concert in memory of our late music teacher and Choir Director, Ronnie Lee MBE. This we staged in the Assembly Hall of Grosvenor High on 30th December 1993. Such was its success that enough of those who performed that evening decided to stay together as Grosvenor Choral Society, later to become Grosvenor Chorale and really just ‘Grosvenor’ to all of us over the years.

From those early days we took part in music festivals, the first being a trip on a Flexibus to Coleraine, and a few other concert and broadcasting opportunities soon came along. But it was through the Christmas Music that we knew we had to do something special. We persuaded the late Canon Brian Mayne to allow us to sing in Down Cathedral and in December 1994 we held our first Festival of Nine Lessons with Carols. We sang there for many happy Christmases and recorded our first album “Sing We And Chant It” there. One particularly snowy Christmas in 2010 the BBC outside broadcast van couldn’t make it up the hill at Down, so at the last minute we relocated through the snow to St Peter’s on the Antrim Road. We continued to hold our service in St Peter’s and latterly St John’s, Castlereagh for many years. Following the disruption brought about by Covid-19, Saint Colmcille’s were kind enough to allow us to use their beautiful building to begin spaced out rehearsals and for the past few years we have enjoyed holding our service here in the heart of East Belfast.

The choir have been incredibly fortunate to have had the finest organist to accompany them since that first Christmas concert in 1993. Stephen Hamill, who has recently been appointed as Assistant Organist of Saint Anne’s Cathedral, has very much been a central player in the life of the choir and a much-trusted listening ear to every nuance at each concert and recording. We appreciate his support very much.

Everyone will have their favourite memories of the services over the years. To some it will be the reading of the familiar words of scripture and others prefer the familiar congregational carols with their thrilling descants. Many treasure the little choral gems that have appeared regularly over the years and yet others look forward to what new repertoire might appear each year. Every single one of the thirty services has been special in its own way, but perhaps most of all for who took time to come and be part of our congregation; many now “rejoicing upon another shore and in a greater light.”

May you have a peaceful Christmas, and a happy New Year filled with musical experiences together.

Edward J. Craig

As Samaritans turns 70 this year, they are building on everything they know about listening to people when they are struggling to cope and in times of crisis, continuing to adapt and innovate so that they can be there in the right way for people who need them most. Samaritans' purpose, to be there for people who are struggling to cope and in times of crisis, is as vital as ever.



Samaritans continue to adapt and innovate, to provide a safe space for all of those who will need us in the coming decades. To achieve their vision that fewer people die by suicide, we also need to do more to broaden their impact in society, working with others to make change that saves lives. These main priorities for the next five years are: Access; Reach; Impact; Capacity and Sustainability.

With 22,000 amazing volunteers in over 200 branches and locations across the UK and Ireland, they are already at the heart of local communities, working with schools, workplaces, railways, prisons and hospitals, delivering training, providing support and helping people turn their lives around as part of their suicide prevention work. But there is more that we need to do.

In the 12 months to the end of March 2023, the local Bangor and North Down Branch of Samaritans provided emotional support to over 15,000 callers. Such support was made available in a confidential and non-judgemental manner with volunteers giving up 3,300 hours of their time in the process.

They strive to make sure that anyone struggling with difficult and overwhelming emotions know that their volunteers are there, ready to listen in the way that feels most comfortable for them at any time of the day or night.

We invite you to join them on their journey by contributing to a collection this evening as you leave. If you have enjoyed all that you have heard and benefitted from our time together, we would appreciate a suggested donation of £10 each to help them continue this essential service locally.

PERFORMING IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, STORMONT : OCTOBER 2023



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Committee 2023 - 2024

ROBERT BELL : ROSALIND ELLIS : ANDRU KYLE : SARAH ROGAN

