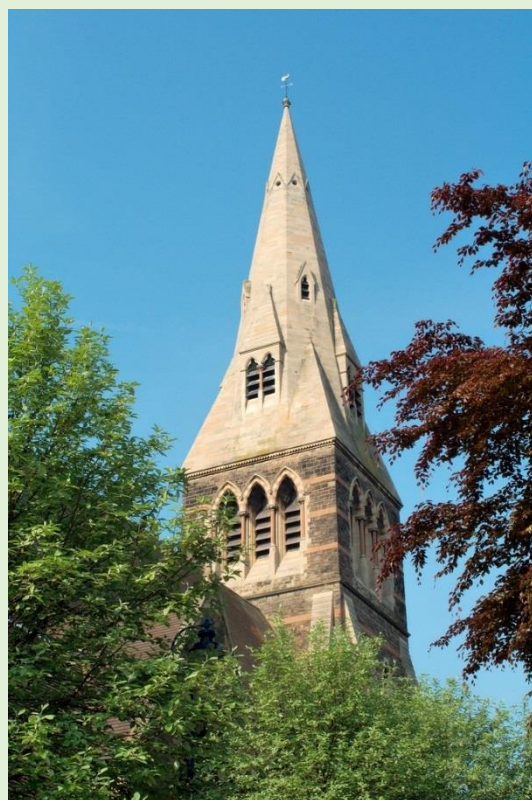


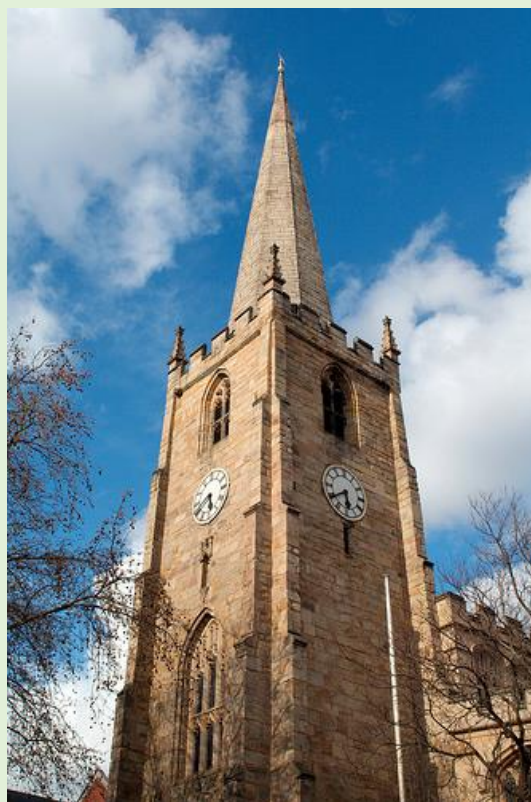


# ST PETER & ALL SAINTS NOTTINGHAM



June 2020

## Parish Magazine



*This magazine is provided free of charge,  
but donations are invited to help cover costs;  
please use the donations boxes in the churches.*

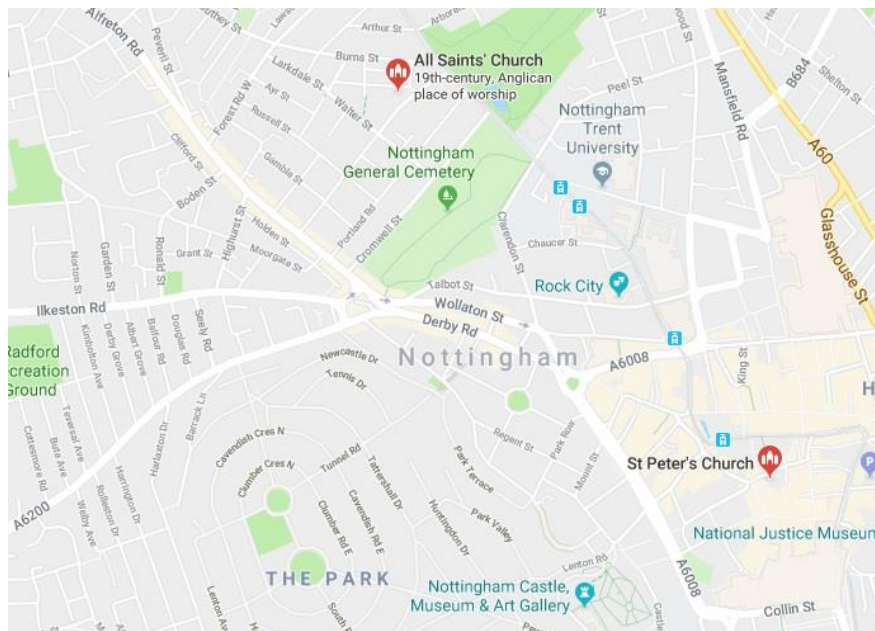
# THE PARISH OF ST PETER AND ALL SAINTS, NOTTINGHAM



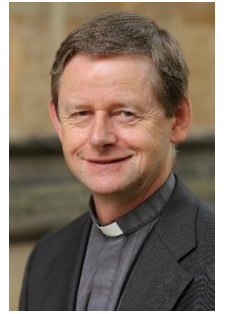
<b>PARISH CLERGY</b> Rev. Christopher Harrison, Rector Rev. Dr Richard Davey, Associate Priest Rev. Dr Helen Hall, Associate Priest Rev. James Saxton, Associate Priest	<b>PARISH READERS</b> Laurie Crawforth Clarence Rickards
<b>CHURCHWARDENS</b> Julia Atkins, Lorraine Smedley – All Saints' Laurie Crawforth, Brian Dunn – St Peter's	<b>PARISH OFFICE STAFF</b> Alan Franks – Parish Manager Adele Siepmann – Parish Administrator
<b>DIRECTOR OF MUSIC</b> Dr Peter Siepmann	<b>WORKPLACE CHAPLAIN</b> Rev Jo Tatum
<b>PARISH TREASURER</b> Peter Moore	<b>PCC SECRETARY</b> Keith Charter
<b>MINISTRY ASSISTANT</b> Liz Marsh	<b>HEAD VERGER</b> Lee Chapman

## CHURCHES

St Peter's Church, St Peter's Square, Nottingham NG1 2NW  
 All Saints' Church, Raleigh Street, Nottingham NG7 4DP



It is now more than two months since our churches were closed, and there is still very little indication, if any, as to when our doors will be open once again. There has been a suggestion that places of worship may be able to be open as from July, in line with places like cinemas, pubs, and hairdressing salons, but this remains speculative. A high-level 'Places of Worship Coronavirus Taskforce' is examining all the issues and will no doubt make recommendations in due course; the Church of England is part of this body.



Even if our church buildings are able to open within the next few weeks, no doubt with a range of social distancing and other safety measures in place, it is hard to know when it will be possible for services of worship to resume in church. Difficult decisions will need to be made on the basis of scientific understanding which is constantly evolving; to what extent, for example, does Covid-19 spread more rapidly in places which are not well ventilated, or where activities like singing can arguably propel the virus over wider areas than is the case with normal breathing? It is also quite likely that even when we do get back to our church buildings, we will naturally be inclined to be cautious in matters such as sharing the Peace and in the way we come together for Holy Communion. It is also going to be very difficult for us to decide how the Coffee Room can operate safely while the risk of infection from coronavirus remains significant, as well as all the various activities which take place in our churches each week, which are mainly in quite confined spaces.

Whatever may eventually happen regarding our coming together once again in our churches, it is very likely that we will not want to lose those things which we have gained during this period of lockdown. There are indications that more people have been listening to our webcast services than attend an average Sunday morning service; some of these live far from Nottingham, including overseas, and there are also those who are now too infirm to come to services in church. We may wish to give thought as to how we continue some form of online worship options even when we are back in church, although I am very aware that this takes considerable time and expertise. Various other church activities have also moved online, such as the Celtic prayer group, the theology discussion group, and some meetings; we have also started a 'Zoom' Bible Study group led by Liz Marsh and a Bible text sharing WhatsApp group.

It has been wonderful to see how our church members have been supporting one another during these difficult times. Some have found this time of isolation especially demanding, however, and there have been those whose work caring for others – at work or at home – has been particularly stressful. Many of us probably know of people who have or have had Covid-19 and will be aware just how serious and indeed life-changing this can be. In this regard I commend to you the article in this magazine by the Rev'd Michael Allen, a retired priest who attends services and events at both All Saints' and St Peter's, whose account of his experience of Covid-19 is as remarkable as it is unsettling.

I am also delighted that the work to renew the lead on large areas of the St Peter's church roof is now able to begin, following our successful application for a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This will take place over the next few months and be carried out by Midland Stonemasons. In some ways it is no bad thing that we are not using the church building at present, as the work is quite likely to create a considerable amount of dust in the church.

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, Pentecost (Whitsunday) we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. The following Sunday is Trinity Sunday, when we remember that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. However much we may miss our church buildings and long to be back there, this is a good time to remind ourselves that we are all connected with one another not just through places constructed from stone, brick and glass but by the power of the Holy Spirit, the breath of God who brings God's love to us. So come down, O Love Divine, enable God's presence to dwell within us, that in times of sadness and distress as well as in moments of praise and joy we may be united as members of Christ's body and renewed in his service; to the glory of His Name. Amen.



## 'To Church on Sunday...'

Cynthia Charter

I have been asked to write the first in this series of articles by members of our congregations, thinking back to our childhood at Church, so here goes...

I was born in New Sawley near the present Long Eaton Station (formerly Sawley Junction) and my earliest memory of Church was at the age of 3 or 4 and being with my parents at St Mary's Chapel of Ease, which wasn't far from where we lived. St Mary's is one of the last surviving 'Tin Hut Tabernacles' still used for regular worship in Derbyshire. It was 'loaned' by Heanor Parish in 1912 and is situated midway between St Laurence's, Long Eaton and All Saints', Sawley parish churches to allow people to attend services without having to walk several miles. When it was built, the long-term plan was to replace it with a brick building, but then 'The Great War' happened!



Photograph: Courtesy of All Saints' & St Mary's, Sawley



The next thing I remember was going to Sunday School at St Mary's with my sister Barbara, who is 10 years older than me, and was running the Sunday School with two helpers. I remember the Harvest Festival and Prizegiving and we had joint events with the Sunday School at All Saints' such as a Sports Day and tea, plus a Christmas Party at St Andrew's Room, another corrugated iron building like St Mary's - long since demolished - at that time used solely as a church hall for the whole parish!

However, the highlight of the year was the Sunday School Anniversary held every summer when we all marched behind the Long Eaton Silver Prize Band from St Mary's the two miles to All Saints' picking up at St Andrew's on the way. After the service, we marched back and some of the parents invited two band members each home to tea. Mum always put on a wonderful spread, with trifle, for our guests! Barbara and I had new dresses for the Anniversary and new white shoes, Barbara wore gloves and a hat too, of course. The Sunday School girls wore a white mob cap until they were confirmed when they wore a fine white cotton veil, these all being secured with many hair grips. I've no memory of how the boys dressed, I'm afraid!



When I was about 9, I joined the choir at St Mary's where my sister also sang. We were a robed choir, the girls/ladies wore a black cassock with a black collar, white surplice and a four-cornered black hat with one of the four corners sticking up on top. I also clearly remember ringing the single bell with the rope in the vestry. There were up to 20 people in the choir and Mr Smedley was our organist.



Photograph: Courtesy of All Saints' & St Mary's, Sawley

Aged 12, I transferred to All Saints' choir at Sawley, which seemed a huge church after St Mary's, the oldest part being 9th century. Quite quickly I became a bell ringer and carried on with both of these activities for a number of years until Keith and I were married there and I joined St Peter's, where Keith had already been in the choir for 12 years.

This has been an interesting walk down memory lane for myself and my sister. I hope that you have enjoyed reading it!

## Parish Office

The work of the Parish Office continues, albeit not in the building itself. We are able to respond to answer phone messages (0115 9483658) or email – [office@nottinghamchurches.org](mailto:office@nottinghamchurches.org) (Adele) / [admin@nottinghamchurches.org](mailto:admin@nottinghamchurches.org) (Alan).

Please be assured that we are doing all we can to keep the parish running as smoothly as possible. We will still produce a monthly magazine, which will be online rather than printed - so please send any material to Adele by 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, as usual. Any enquiries, or concerns, please get in touch – we're here to help!

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## Parish WhatsApp group

Over the past few weeks, a new parish WhatsApp group has been sharing Bible texts each day, along with comments on these and sometimes also photos. This has been a wonderful way for us to stay rooted in Scripture and to walk alongside one another in spirit. Even though not all members of the group knew one another before the group was set up, this has not been a problem and we have become closer to another, through our daily exploration of Scripture, as the days have progressed. If you would like to know more, or to join the group, please do contact me by means of my mobile number, if you have it, or via the office email

[office@nottinghamchurches.org](mailto:office@nottinghamchurches.org)

*Christopher Harrison*

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## Coronavirus 'Daily Hope' phone line

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has launched a free national phone line as a simple new way to bring worship and prayer into people's homes while church buildings are closed because of the coronavirus. 'Daily Hope' offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

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## Online Prayer & Bible Study

Liz Marsh has set up weekly online Bible study (Thursdays) meetings, at 2pm, and all are most welcome to join. We are following the lectionary readings, each Thursday discussing the readings for the Sunday just gone. This is a great opportunity for us to connect and share with one another while we cannot meet together in person.

We are using Zoom for this, which is an online video-calling app that is easy to set up and use. For those without the right equipment, it is also possible to join Zoom meetings by phone. Liz is happy to help out with getting set up if needed - it's easier than you might think! Please contact her at [liz.marsh@nottinghamchurches.org](mailto:liz.marsh@nottinghamchurches.org) if you are interested in joining the meetings.

## Overseas Committee

Dorothy Mountford

### 100 years, 100 people, 100 laps

Have you been inspired by Captain Sir Thomas Moore? Well USPG has its own centenarian, Father Douglas Davies, who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 15<sup>th</sup> May. Canon Douglas Davies, a priest in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, has been supporting USPG all his life. He has always given to others and been at the heart of his community.



Claire Shadbolt, USPG Fundraising and Volunteering Manager, first met Fr Doug in October when he was planning his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday fundraiser for USPG. Of course, plans have changed a bit since then: social distancing has prevented his fundraiser being held in the way that was planned in his local rugby club. However, in a new form, Fr Doug's fundraiser is now something that we can all become involved with.

Fr Doug's '100 years, 100 laps, 100 people' fundraiser is now going to be an 'Isolation Amble'! We're asking that you walk a lap of anything: your garden, your house, your local park, or wherever may be convenient to you! If you can please video it and post it on his Facebook Event -

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1180956308769175/>

Also, if you are able, please donate to Fr Doug's Just Giving page -

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/fatherdavies100th>.

All of the funds raised will be given to USPG.

Source: USPG

### Advent to Ascension

How much has changed since members of the Overseas Committee gave out tubes of Smarties to eager participants in December. Most of you, who kindly took a tube to take part in the Silver Smarties Scheme will have emptied them their sweetness long since. Many of you are asking what to do with the 'silver' which has replaced the Smarties now that Ascension Day has passed.

If you are eager to clear your shelves of twenty pence pieces and the committee are very eager to receive your gifts then please email Keith Mountford at [keithmountford2@gmail.com](mailto:keithmountford2@gmail.com) and he will contact you about the next steps.

Thank you all so much for your support. This is our third year of 'Silver Smarties' and it grows in popularity each year. We hope and pray that by Advent Sunday this year life may be a little more back to normal.

### Mercy Ships

Another huge thank you to everyone who has generously donated to the Easter Appeal which replaced the traditional parish Easter Breakfast at the home of Lina and Wilfred Morgan. We are delighted to report that an amazing £250 has been sent to Mercy Ships.

The global COVID-19 situation has made it impossible for Mercy Ships to continue to carry out their surgical programmes to the required standards while protecting against the possible spread of the virus. Although the *Africa Mercy* is a medical ship, it is essentially a surgical specialist unit and it is not suited to provide care for patients with highly contagious respiratory diseases. The current unprecedented situation has presented a unique operational challenge. With the global air transport shutdown, volunteer professionals were unable to come and serve on the *Africa Mercy* and many of their medical volunteers have been asked to assist with the COVID -19 crisis in their home countries.

Currently, *Mercy Ships* are now expediting the annual routine maintenance for the *Africa Mercy*, with the aim to be back in Africa as soon as possible, and once the global COVID-19 situation allows, continuing our mission to bring hope and healing to the forgotten poor. Teams continue to evaluate the COVID-19 situation globally and search how they can best stand together with partner nations, crew and staff in these challenging times.

A Message from Mercy Ships:

*We are encouraged by the good results we have realised through direct surgical care for patients and by training local healthcare professionals. Today these healthcare professional we trained in the past, are now frontline worker in the battle against COVID-19 in their respective countries. As we face these challenging events, we would like to thank you for your ongoing prayers and support to our mission to bring hope and healing to the world's forgotten poor.*

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## Online Giving

Since it is not currently possible to make your offerings to St Peter's and All Saints' churches during worship, please consider making a donation by means of the online giving facility which can be found at <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/7870#!/DonationDetails>

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## Prayers for June

*Liz Marsh*

Let us pray for all those affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. We pray especially for those who are sick with the virus, and for those close to them that you will bring healing and a swift return to full health. We remember also all those whose health is vulnerable, or are suffering from other conditions or illnesses; may their needs not be overlooked.

We pray for the people of countries where the virus has been particularly devastating, especially Russia, the USA and Brazil, and for all those living in places without access to good healthcare or proper testing. May you bring light and hope in the midst of darkness and despair.

In these uncertain times, as millions around the world face anxiety about their jobs, finances and futures, we pray that you will bring peace and comfort. May we come together in our communities to support one another, offering help where we can and graciously accepting it when we need. As we move into the next phase of our response to the virus, grant wisdom and integrity to the leaders of this nation, so that they may make good decisions about the economy and public health.

In this season of Pentecost, we pray that we will know the Holy Spirit among us. May we know your presence intimately in every moment of our lives: in our relationships, in our work and service; in our waking and our sleeping; in our joy and in our pain.

We give thanks, O Lord, for those who have departed this life, remembering especially those who we love and all those who have lost their lives to COVID-19. For those who mourn, and those who are close to death, we pray. May they know your peace and presence with them in this hour of need.



## Book of the month

By 'Bramcote Book Worm'

### 'The Hospital by the River. A story of hope'

By Dr Catherine Hamlin with John Little

This image and the opening paragraphs of Catherine Hamlin's obituary on April 13<sup>th</sup> more than captured my interest, it touched my heart.

*When the obstetrician Catherine Hamlin, who has died aged 96, first arrived in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia in the late 1950s, she knew she wanted to make a difference. She just did not expect it to be through decades of successful treatment of a type of birth injury she had assumed was an academic rarity, first at a general government hospital, then at a small hospital built by herself and her husband, Reg, and eventually through a national network of six hospitals, 80 midwifery clinics, the Hamlin College of Midwives, and a rehabilitation centre.*



*Obstetric fistulae occur in women who endure obstructed deliveries, for all the myriad reasons that these occur the world over: because the baby is breech, or too big, or tangled in the umbilical cord, or, if the mother is too young, because her body is unready. If there is no midwife or hospital, the labour continues for days, until the baby dies, shrinks and can be expelled; the pressure of labour tears the woman's bladder, vagina, uterus, and often rectum as well. She finds herself incontinent, sometimes doubly so, and then, in many countries, shunned; women in this state can live alone and rejected for decades. These days, obstetric fistulae are almost entirely avoidable and usually straightforward to fix, with life-changing effect. Catherine and Reg, both devout Christians, believed moreover in trying to heal the whole woman: "We don't just treat the hole in the bladder," as Catherine once put it, "we treat the whole patient with love and tender care, literacy and numeracy classes, a brand-new dress and money to travel home. The Guardian, April 13<sup>th</sup>*

A later mention of 'A Hospital by the River' was enough to start an internet search for the book and more information about its author.

*The Times Newspaper only allows the reader a brief glimpse of the opening sentences of their online articles: When one of Oprah Winfrey's producers told her about the work of Catherine Hamlin treating the young women who visited her hospital in Ethiopia, the television presenter thought that no "soccer mom" in America could stomach hearing about it while making dinner. However, Catherine did appear of the OW show where she described herself and her husband as professional beggars:*

*'There is still a need for me to make fundraising trips and to try to break the hearts of millionaires. I feel I could do this only if I could get interviews with such people of wealth, but that is virtually impossible as they are always well shielded from beggars'.*

*Hamlin's obituary in The Economist gives a real taster of Catherine's life:*

*The ad in the Lancet called for a gynaecologist to set up a midwifery school for nurses in Ethiopia. In the end they got two for the price of one – Catherine, who had grown up in a wealthy Sydney family, and her husband, Reg, from New Zealand. She was reminded of her homeland as soon as she saw the rugged, biblical landscape. It looked a bit like New South Wales, with its armies of gum trees arrayed along steep hillsides as in the Blue Mountains. She liked the lemony light of early morning when she would start the day with a cup of tea on her veranda and a passage from the Bible. But in other ways it wasn't like home at all.*

And the aforementioned Lancet's powerful and appropriate quotation sums up:

*The full extent of Hamlin's work, Tesfaye said, went beyond obstetric fistula repair to developing a holistic model of care that integrated counselling, physiotherapy, and skills training. "You cannot find this elsewhere", Tesfaye said. "It is compassionate and love-driven care for her patients." According to Alison Morgan, Hamlin's niece and an Associate Professor at the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, the University of Melbourne, Australia, "One of the classic things is that she would draw the women close to develop a human connection. There was a real people-centredness to her work."*



Last Words, Radio 4's obituary programme of 8<sup>th</sup> of May, headed up that edition with Catherine and a mention of her book. This is available on 'listen again' for a year. It is well worth tuning into.

Catherine's own words are quoted on the back of 'A Hospital by the River':

'These are the women most to be pitied in the world. They are alone and forgotten bearing their injuries in silent shame'

Catherine Hamlin's love for and commitment to these women is encapsulated in its subtitle, 'A Story of Hope'.

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## **The National Lottery Heritage Fund Bid Update June 2020**

*Dorothy Mountford*

As a parish we are still rejoicing over the fact that the application we submitted to The NL in November of last year resulted in funding of £211,000 towards the £340,000 cost of the capital work and Heritage Outreach Project.

Like the rest of the world, those of us who gave a huge sigh of relief in March when we received this much longed for news have now had to address major changes to proposed plans.

As promised in the May magazine here is an update of what is happening. We were delighted that our contractors are now able to start work. Once an initial check has been made to ensure that no bats have moved into St Peter's exploratory work will begin on our magnificent 15<sup>th</sup> century Nave roof. Anxiously we await the results. If there has been considerable water ingress then significant repairs will have to be made to those oak beams donated by Sir Nicolas de Strelley in the 1480s.

All of the exciting associated outreach activities, the 'something-for-something' agreed with the Lottery, like most things in our lives, have been impacted by Covid 19. Every one of them was interactive, interpersonal and based in the church building. Church closures and social distancing are the order of the day and The Lottery needs to know how we intend to honour our commitment while abiding by these restrictions.

The photography tutorials facilitated by Jagdish Patel of the Nottingham Photography Hub were due to begin in and around church and the city centre this summer. Ever pragmatic, Jagdish assured us that he would be able to deliver a somewhat reduced, but equally productive, tutorial session for a group of homeless people over the summer. Jagdish will explore the potential for working online with the participants in order to produce an artefact to display their engagement with our heritage.

Neither the plans for the Oral History work with The Gateway group and members of St Peter's Congregation, nor the Curriculum Days for Victoria School are now realisable in their original format. The Investment Manager from the lottery is advising us to look at ways of digitalising these activities. Sadly, the lovely school visits we had in September 2019 and March this year will not be repeated this autumn nor next spring.

On a positive note our wonderful band of volunteers are looking at ways of bringing some of the joy the children experienced on their visits to the church to a range of fun activities which they can access from home or the classroom.

Students from NTU have worked on a guidebook as part of their final year assessments and this will contribute to the work Alan, our Parish Administrator, has done in populating the Touch Screen Kiosk. This will have the important role of interpreting the heritage of our church to visitors.

Once again very many thanks to everyone for their support.

## Armchair Gallery from City Arts

*We have been invited to take part in the following exciting ventures by Suzannah Bedford. She organised the wonderful 'Glowing Older' photography exhibition which we hosted in St Peter's last autumn. That now seems a lifetime ago and in another world.*

### Armchair Gallery from City Arts

Local charity City Arts have created an app, Armchair Gallery, to help older people enjoy and benefit from art. The free app brings world-class art & culture into your home. It is available for iPad and Android Tablets and can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

The app features items from the collections of world-class museums and galleries including Chatsworth House, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, The Lowry, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Pitt Rivers Museum, Mr Straw's House & Newstead Abbey. For each venue you can enjoy a video tour, an expert talk about some of the artworks and artefacts they display, and playable activities that let you engage with those artefacts. You can colour a Canaletto, create your own Hepworth, take a selfie with Lowry and much, much more.

Based in Hockley, City Arts run a number of art projects for people aged 55 and over. If you would like to hear more about these projects, sign up to their mailing list at: <http://eepurl.com/yyqKL>

### A Poem for Nottingham

'We would be very grateful if you could share the opportunity directly with those people you have in mind. The information about it is here: <https://city-arts.org.uk/add-your-words-to-a-poem-for-nottingham/> deadline for submissions 29th of May. It is fine for people to email me their ideas or email me if they have any questions. Joe Pickjoe@city-arts.org.uk

*Although the deadline was 29<sup>th</sup> May this invitation went out to the Thursday fellowship group, among others. Several of them have already taken part and it will be good to look out for their contributions in the Poem for Nottingham.*



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## Webcast Services

You will be able to access an online Webcast Service every Sunday until we are able to resume our normal church gatherings. The service will be available from 10.00am.

To access these services, and the archive of previous ones, simply visit:

[www.nottinghamchurches.org/webcasts](http://www.nottinghamchurches.org/webcasts)

# The Reality of a Virtual Choir

Peter Siepmann

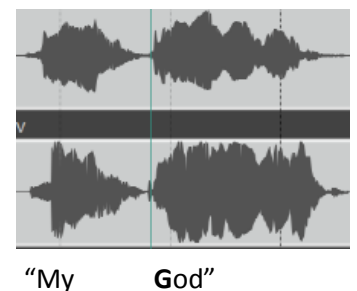
I am writing this on the tenth Sunday that we have had to rely on recorded 'webcast' services ([nottinghamchurches.org/webcasts](http://nottinghamchurches.org/webcasts)) in place of public worship. For each of these ten weeks, a dedicated and talented group of singers from the church choir have recorded themselves singing their part of that week's chosen piece of choral music; they then send their recordings to me to combine into a 'virtual' ensemble performance. Sometimes I provide a computer-generated backing/click track (though usually with the pulse slightly manipulated so it doesn't sound entirely robotic!), sometimes I provide an organ part that I have recorded at home using the astonishing Hauptwerk organ simulator software (worthy of another article in itself), sometimes I video myself conducting and/or playing the piano.

Those singers who have participated in the Virtual Choir seem to agree on several aspects of the process. Firstly, most seem firmly united in their dislike of the sound of their own voice! I do not share their view, of course – I am used to hearing these fine people sing on a regular basis; the issue is one of perception – as one chorister said "it's nothing like what I hear in my head." This has a very rational explanation, however: when we hear people speak or sing, the sound waves they create set our ear drum vibrating. But when we hear ourselves speak or sing, the waves travel up through our own skulls before setting the ear drum vibrating, and their passage through bone has a noticeably distorting effect. It's certainly not unpleasant, I reassure the singers, it's just *different* to what you think you sound like!

Furthermore, hearing their voice alone, with no others and no accompaniment (for that is what the track choristers send to me comprises) means it is all too easy to obsess over imperfections – as one chorister said "why can't I get enough breath, keep the pitch at the end of the long notes, vary the dynamics better and so on." Though this can be dispiriting (and a certain confidence is required to participate in these projects, I think), it is important to take the positive from this experience, so imagine my delight on hearing that "the virtual choir project has made me more critical of my own singing and determined to keep practising!" Another chorister reflects that the process is "incredibly good discipline. When you listen to the playback, you hear all the imperfections, whether of pitch, timing, tone or vowel sounds and you have to try to correct them. I may not be able to correct them all but I can correct some and it's good fun trying to improve." I think this period of lockdown is teaching us all a lot about ourselves (musically and otherwise). Most striking of all was this observation (from the same chorister): "since I am sure that everyone else is doing the same, the choir may well be even better once we are able to sing together again." Well! I had envisaged the virtual choir project as being a way to keep choral music alive in our weekly worship and, anxious about what significant time away from singing might do to members of the choir, to keep our singers engaged during this period of lockdown; but never had I imagined that the self-appraisal inherent in the process might actually mean that the choir is even *better* on that glorious day when we do return to the stalls!

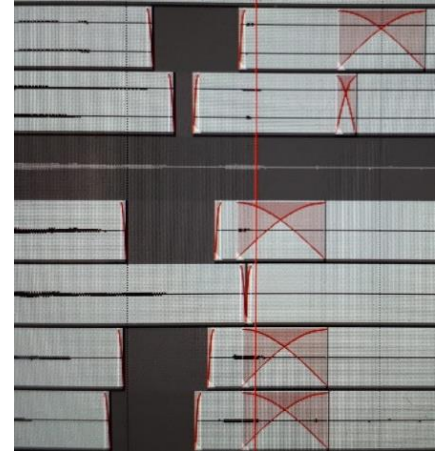
The singers also seem agreed that the virtual choir project gives a much needed outlet for their singing at a time when little else is available. It has provided a way of staying connected (musically), with one another, with one chorister going as far as to say that it has been "an emotional mainstay during the lockdown." For some, it has enabled them to take part in the choir when they would not ordinarily have been able to do so, given the recordings can be made at any convenient time during the week. I am delighted that singers also seem agreed that the results of our weekly projects are of a high quality. Many of them seem to attribute this to some sort of miraculous technically wizardry; the truth, of course, is that the success of these projects is really down to the skill and conscientiousness of the choristers themselves.

Putting these projects together has certainly been a fascinating experience for me as a choir trainer and conductor, as so many of the technical steps involved have a clear parallel in 'real life' choral work. Once all the singers have sent me their recordings, the first step is to align the tracks such all the singers are singing at the same time. Interestingly, this is often most successfully achieved *visually*, aligning the waveforms of a hard consonant (i.e., one with a clear start like a D, G or T), as shown here. That I use visual cues to ensure the singers are together might come as a surprise, but in fact the very same thing applies in 'real life', where making sure every member of the choir sings together is, of course, a much more communal, interactive experience:



Though watching the conductor's beat ensures the choir follows a single musical *intention*, the conductor clearly does not actually make any sound: the most effective way of ensuring the choir is singing together is for the singers themselves to watch each other, making sure they see their counterparts on the other side of the chancel put that 'G' of God on at the same time they themselves are. This has been a key part of our mutual development over recent years, and it is a wonderful thing to see in action; indeed some of my very favourite moments of choral direction are those when I can step back, and watch the singers watch each other, keeping the music together without any 'interference' from me.

I suppose we must consider the topic of errors – we all make them! In real life, they are easily addressed in rehearsal and then in performance, if the occasional error does appear (and by this I don't mean just wrong notes, which are rare, but more subtle imperfections such as a terminal consonant or diphthong coming a bit early or late, or a slight rushing or dragging of the pulse, or a slightly out of tune note, etc.), it happens and in a moment it is gone and (usually!) forgotten about. In a recorded setting there is no such luck, but the other side of the coin is that we have the ability to do some subtle editing. If (and I stress this is a rare occurrence!) a mis-pitching or mis-timing appears, I can slice out the half-second (or whatever it is) of the track in question; or, as shown in the example here, tracks can be split and very slightly re-aligned, to ensure a consonant (positioned near the vertical red line) occurs together. It is worth remembering, I think, that professional recordings may have been edited to be a combination of a large number of takes, and can give us a false sense of perfection to live up to when performing live!



Perhaps the most interesting part of the process, however, is ensuring that the constituent voices are balanced and blended within each part so the soprano section, for example, sings with as unified a tone as possible. It is impossible to recreate the blend we are able to achieve in real life (where a carefully planned seating arrangement and the response of the building itself both play crucial roles), but by gentle manipulation of the volume levels of each singer, we can try and get as close as possible. Naturally, some singers' recordings will be louder than others (some voices are louder than others, some people record closer to their phones than others, etc.), but there is also a more subtle element to this process, and that is that some voices are simply more 'distinctive' in timbre than others (a choir is, after all, a collection of individuals). In real life, this fascinating process can usually be reasonably successfully addressed through our seating plan in the choir stalls and/or through some subtle words of encouragement (or otherwise...) from the conductor; in the virtual world, this process is rather simpler and can be manipulated to a much greater degree, as shown by the varied positions of the volume faders below:



Once the constituent singers in each part have been balanced to one another, the final stage is to ensure the different parts are themselves also balanced (so, for example, the altos are the same volume as the tenors) and to add in some artificial reverberation (would that we had *that* facility in 'real life'!).

Before concluding, it is important to note that there is one further point on which all the participants in the Virtual Choir are agreed: the process I have described above is not ensemble music making. The joy of choral singing is the interaction between singers. I mentioned above the importance of singers watching each other, but of course they are also assiduously *listening* to each other too, to ensure the tuning is unified, the vowel sounds are matched, to hear how the building responds to the sound and to adapt as appropriate, etc., etc. When this is working well, we see the real power of choral singing: that people can bring out the best in each other, creating a result which is so much more than the sum of its parts (whereas, by its nature, a virtual project is *precisely* the sum of its parts). For me as a conductor, witnessing this ultimate demonstration of collegial collaboration, having singers to work with who will respond (whether consciously or not) to the gestures I make whilst conducting, catching the glint in a singer's eye as a particularly enjoyable part of their line is coming up, realising something new about a piece of music thanks to how someone sings it - all these things are a constant inspiration and a joy, and something I miss very greatly indeed.



Whether or not churches can re-open for private prayer in July we do not know, nor do we have any indication as to when public worship and/or choral singing can resume, but we are reassured to know that the Church of England and the Royal School of Church Music are working hard to plan for this uncertain future. The scientific community (clearly annoyed by so much conjecture amongst the public and the media!) is not ready to say how singing may or may not be related to the transmission of the virus (the 'droplets vs aerosols' issue is still a big unknown) though it sounds like smaller choirs with distanced, possibly masked singers will probably be an initial step. I was pleased to hear that the Church of England is conscious of the importance of including consideration of musicians in the advice it will give, not just about singing, but also organ playing and practice. The Church further recognises that music plays an essential, indispensable part of worship, and that *making* that music can be crucial for the well-being of the musicians themselves. The one thing I think we can say with any certainty is that we will see a gradual return to what will be a new normality. Until then, the Virtual Choir will continue to do what it can to keep our singers singing and to ensure choral music remains an integral part of our weekly services.

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## Some reflections on Coronavirus

*The Reverend Michael Allen*

Coronavirus infection can be unpleasant and mild; for some it means dying prematurely; for many, me included, it wrecked body and mind. For more than a week there were uncontrollable fever spasms, wondering if it's like Jacob wrestling with God in a dream and being terrified (Gen. 28.10f.) Courage fails, just as Jesus cried, 'My God, My God why have you forsaken me?' (Psalm 22), with the hope at the end of that psalm being too dim. Then the attack on major organs of the body, not only but especially constrictions of the lungs, maybe the last breath. Again courage fails, but I draw support from Jesus' disciples, often afraid and 'locked in' out of fear (John. 20.19). Jesus is our Shepherd but still I journey fearfully through the valley of the shadow of death. The Bible estimates that we should live for 70 years, so in my early 80s I should be content to depart. But I did think God still called me for my larger than biological family and for society after 57 years as a priest. How does the Bible help me live now? It is difficult because the biblical writers saw everything as directly caused by God, so where do we, with different knowledge and experience, see God amidst coronavirus causing premature deaths of 30,000 in just this country?

We pastor many people with cancer and families with child disabilities. My response has become that of seeing that our Creator God is involved in the evolution of our world, which is a risky process. Our God is a risk taker, as in the sending of his Son amongst us, and calls us into the process of creating and healing. This virus is one of the risks, for which if anybody is to blame it is God, but God would also use people as his co-workers to save us - God's angels in hospitals, supermarkets etc.

25 years ago with the AIDS pandemic, some saw it as an opportunity to express a view that it was God's condemnation, blaming the victims - as had been the usual Church response (as in parts of the Bible) over the centuries. Today about 1 million people in the world die each year of AIDS. Jesus, when asked (John 9.3) 'Who had sinned to cause a man's blindness?' says his blindness has nothing to do with his or his parents' sin. We should, rather, keep doing God's work, as Jesus outlined in his first sermon: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind...to set free the oppressed...' thus saving his people. Such is our calling. That is what it's worth coming back from near death for - a society changed in that way. Our sins as individuals, Church, and Society can cause mayhem but that does not account for all the trauma of our world. Jesus calls us to judge NOT.

It matters for people who can't believe in God that we can realistically teach of a loving, risk taking God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we are called to play our part in God's work, as our Archbishop and the Pope called us to do in their Easter messages. As our response to the pandemic, will we contribute to healing and to making our society run through more with God's justice, so that our world ultimately becomes a better place than when it began?

The Church prayer that journeyed with me during my illness is: 'Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.'

# St Peter's Church Family Service

Those who attend the monthly Family Service are really missing seeing each other, learning and doing crafts together. So, we have put together a collection of photos to show you what we normally get up to every second Sunday morning!



Easter decorations...  
... done at home this year.



A special visit from Bishop Paul



# Regular Activities in our Churches

*All currently suspended during the closure of our church buildings*

## All Saints'

- Community Coffee Morning (part of the Places of Welcome network):  
Tuesdays from 10.30 am – 12.30 pm
- Women of Faith activities and lunch, first Thursday of every month from 11.00 am – 1.30 pm
- Mothers' Union: Third Saturday of every month, 10.00 am – 12.00 pm
- The All Saints' Drama Club meets from time to time to prepare and present short dramatic items
- Series of 'Saturday Matinee' film showings take place at 2.00 pm from time to time
- The Nottingham University Society of Change Ringers (Bell Ringers):  
Tuesdays in term time, 7.00 – 8.30 pm
- The Nottingham Enlightening Word Church (Chinese) meets in All Saints' Church on Sundays from 2.00 - 4.00 pm and on Friday evenings from 7.30 pm.
- The Bridge Community Gospel Choir meets for rehearsals on the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month from 5.00-6.30pm.

## St Peter's:

- Rough Sleepers' Drop-in: Mondays (women only) from 10.30am – 12noon;  
Wednesdays from 11.30 am – 12.30 pm
- Gateway Drop-in for anyone with particular mental health needs:  
Wednesdays from 1.30 – 3.30 pm
- The Thursday communion service at 11.00 is followed by coffee and fellowship
- Bible Study group: Thursdays from 12.15 – 1.00 pm
- St Peter's Bell Ringers: Thursdays 7.00 – 9.00 pm

The Parish Overseas Committee meets every other month; the Caring for our Common Home working group also meets on a regular basis. Please contact the Rector if you would like to know more about these. Our churches also support the work of the Mount Zion foodbank at Bobbers Mill; collection boxes for gifts of food are available in the churches.

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