

Parish of S. Silas the Martyr with Holy Trinity, Kentish Town

The Parish and its Music

Introduction

The post of Organist becomes vacant with the resignation of Edward Hewes. The Parochial Church Council therefore now wishes to make an appointment of an Organist from January 2021.

S. Silas and Holy Trinity Churches

Our congregations consist mostly of local people together with some who come some distance to worship here. There is a wide range of ages and backgrounds. At the 9.30am Sunday Mass at Holy Trinity there are normally about 70 people in Church, which often includes over 20 children. The children go into the Sunday School or Crèche during the Kyrie and return just before Holy Communion, though once a month they are in Church all through Mass. At the 11.00am Mass at S. Silas, there are normally about 80-90 people in Church, including about 10 children, who go into Sunday School during the Introit Hymn and return at the Offertory: once a month, the children are in Church all the way through the Mass and play an active part in it. On weekday Feasts there is a Solemn Mass at S. Silas, usually at 7.30pm. The Ceremonies of Holy Week, the May Devotion and the Patronal Festival are solemnly and fully observed. There are two Tridentine Rite Masses per year, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart and an Anniversary Requiem in November. The worship is firmly in the Catholic Tradition and we take a pride in doing things well: there are a number of visitors from all over the country for the major Festivals.

The Parish Priest

Fr Graeme Rowlands has been the Parish Priest at S. Silas since April 1989: he became Parish Priest also of Holy Trinity in 1993. He teaches music in our Church Primary School, where he is also Chairman of the Governors.

Organs

In 2020, a new organ was installed in the west gallery at S. Silas. It is a Hauptwerk system using samples from the Cavaille-Coll organ in Saint Etienne, Caen. It has a very fine console in the French style made by Noorlander, and including all modern playing aids. There is also a chamber organ in the nave, dating from 1771, by Jonas Ley, which is used on smaller occasions.

At Holy Trinity, off the Chancel, there is a grade II listed organ by Bevington and Sons with tracker action, dating from 1850.

S. Silas has a particularly good acoustic and is used for sound recordings on an occasional basis.

The current musical tradition

At the Parish Mass at 11.00am at S. Silas there is normally a quartet of singers, who perform parts of a Mass Setting and sing the Propers of the Mass. The singers are paid for their services. The Director of Music is responsible for securing singers and countersigning invoices for paying them, on a monthly basis. The Introit, Alleluia and Communio Verse are normally sung in Latin to plainchant

from the Graduale Romanum and the Responsorial Psalm in English to plainchant. All these are accompanied except in Advent and Lent. Other parts of the Ordinary are sung to accompanied Plainchant, antiphonally with the congregation: the traditional Plainchant (Orbis Factor, Lux et Origo, De Angelis etc.) has been set to the new English translation of the Missal. The choir also sing a Motet during Holy Communion. There are normally four hymns, from the New English Hymnal or the English Catholic Hymn Book. The continuity of the Mass is very important, with appropriate fanfares and fillings. The choir for the 11.00am Mass rehearse before that Mass and sometimes during the week.

At the Parish Mass at 9.30am at Holy Trinity, a four part choir (of 15 people) normally sings once a month, with a Motet at the Offertory and during Holy Communion: on the other Sundays, the music is currently entirely congregational, with a congregational setting of the Ordinary/Plainchant Responsorial Psalm etc. Currently, the Parish Priest rehearses the choir for Holy Trinity, fortnightly on a weekday evening.

When there are no singers, the organist both sings and plays for the Plainchant at both churches.

On the Principal Feasts, a larger paid choir sing at S. Silas, with strings and trumpets and a full Mass setting etc.

The organist also plays for the Solemn Masses for School, which are normally at 9.45am on or near the principal Feasts, ranging from 3 in the Autumn Term to 6 in the Summer Term, which are paid in addition to the salary.

Occasional Offices

These are fairly infrequent, with the occasional parish funeral in Church, and sometimes a Funeral Mass with Mass setting, singers etc. for departed members of the congregation.

The Potential

The current Director of Music has continued to develop the choir and the musical repertoire at S. Silas: we are keen that this should continue and develop further. There is a regular choir of four professional singers which is extended for feasts. There would be scope also for further work with the choir from Holy Trinity. The school has a strong emphasis on the arts, and the Parish Priest also trains the school choir, of some 60 children, every week. There are a number of potential contacts with professional musicians, through recordings etc.