

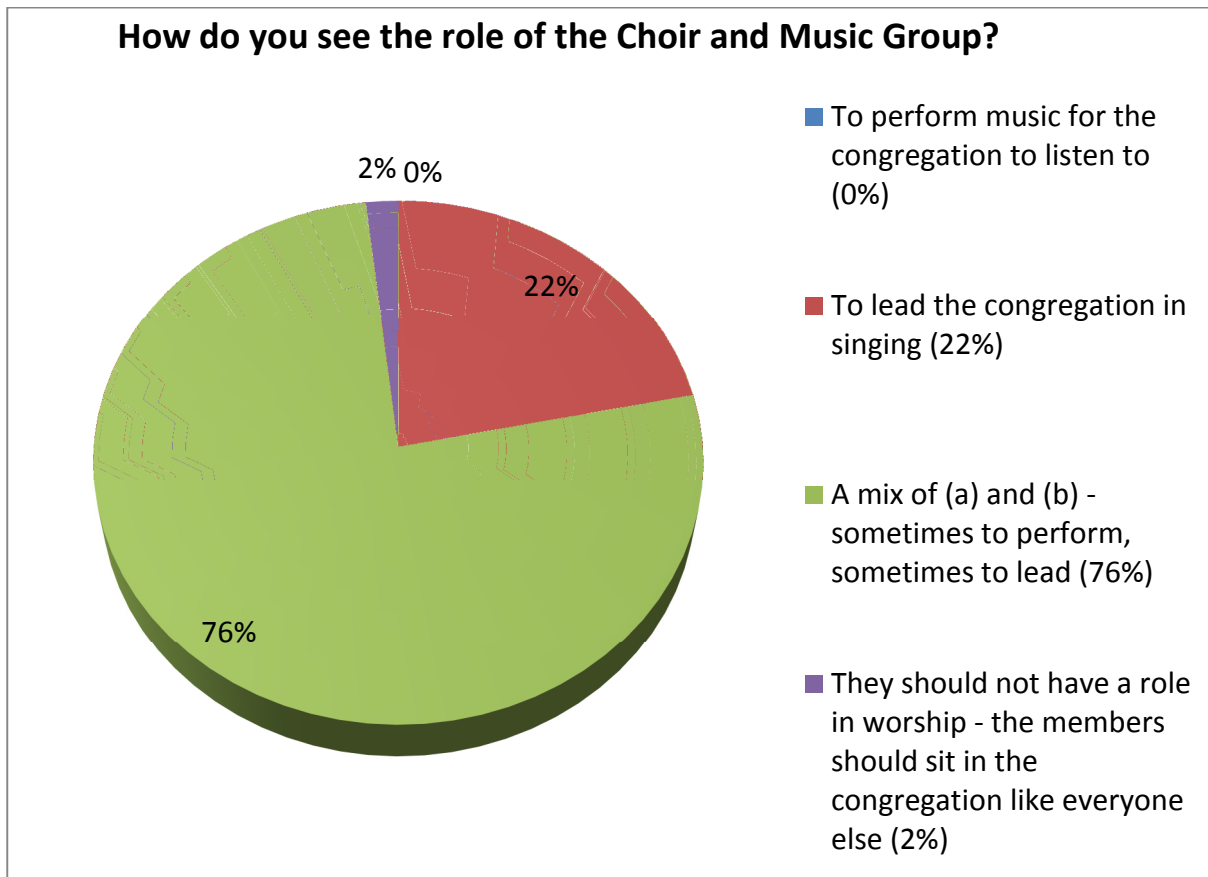
East Harling Parish Church

Music Survey

Spring 2013

In the spring of 2013, members of the congregation were asked to complete a short questionnaire on the use of music in worship in our Church.

55 responses were received, which represents around 75% of the electoral roll.



There is a place in worship for music to be offered as a gift to God. Sometimes this can be an entire congregation uniting in a hymn, and at other times a specific group of individuals may present a prepared offering of their skills through a performance of an anthem or instrumental piece.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

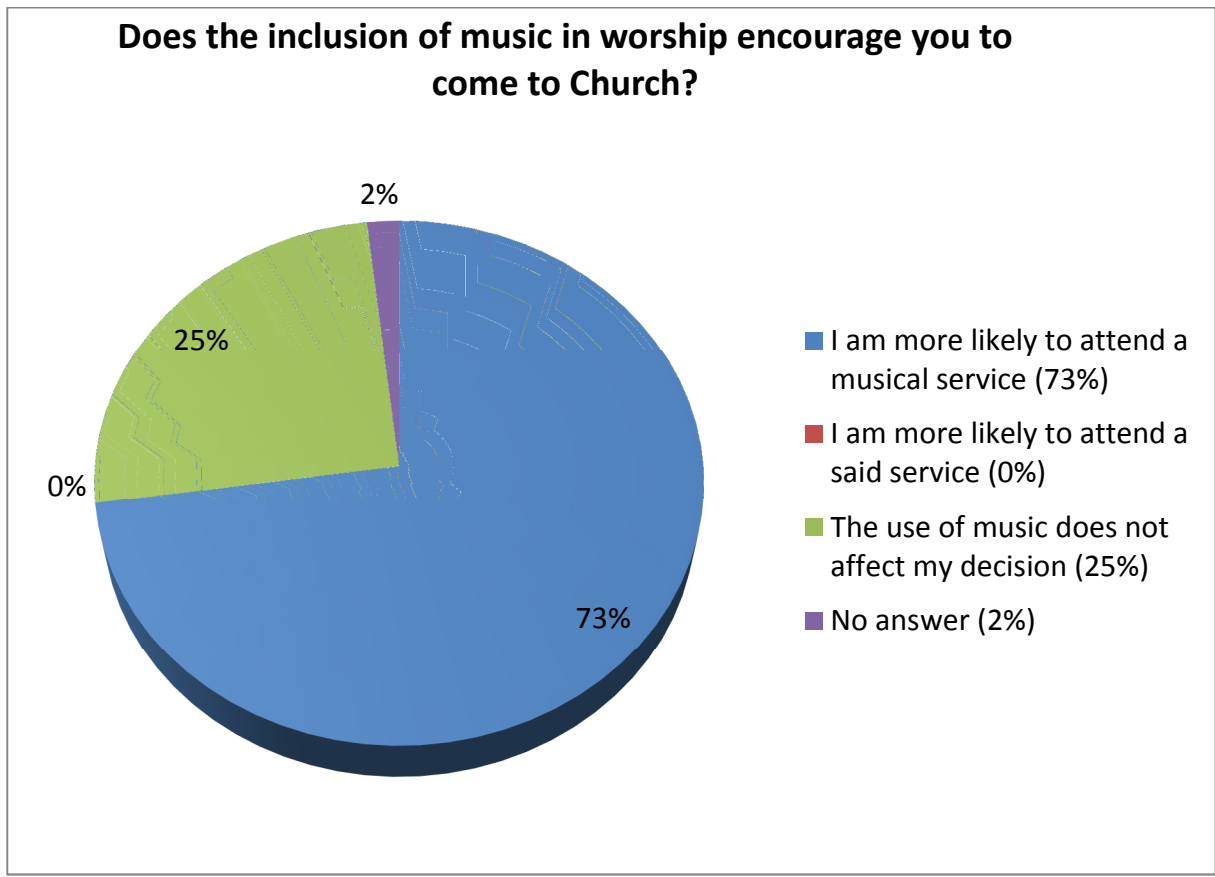
"Mainly lead but there is a place to support worship with things to listen to and reflect"

"The choir/music group should be there to augment the (unfortunately) dwindling congregation. They should not be there to put on a performance for the audience"

Conclusions

A clear majority of 76% agree that a balance of these two roles should continue, however we should note that a significant minority of 22% feel the weight should lean more towards leadership than standalone performance. Only one respondent felt that the musicians should not have a role in worship.

We will continue to focus primarily on leading good hearty congregational singing, while also presenting some prepared performances e.g. anthems, instrumentals, organ voluntaries.



Music is only one ingredient in the rich variety of resources on which we draw in order to enhance our worship, and may not necessarily be a compulsory element in some approaches to worship.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

"Although I do enjoy the monthly said communion (we have best of both worlds)"

"Music does not affect my decision to attend, BUT it helps if done well!"

"Does not affect my decision to attend, but prefer with music"

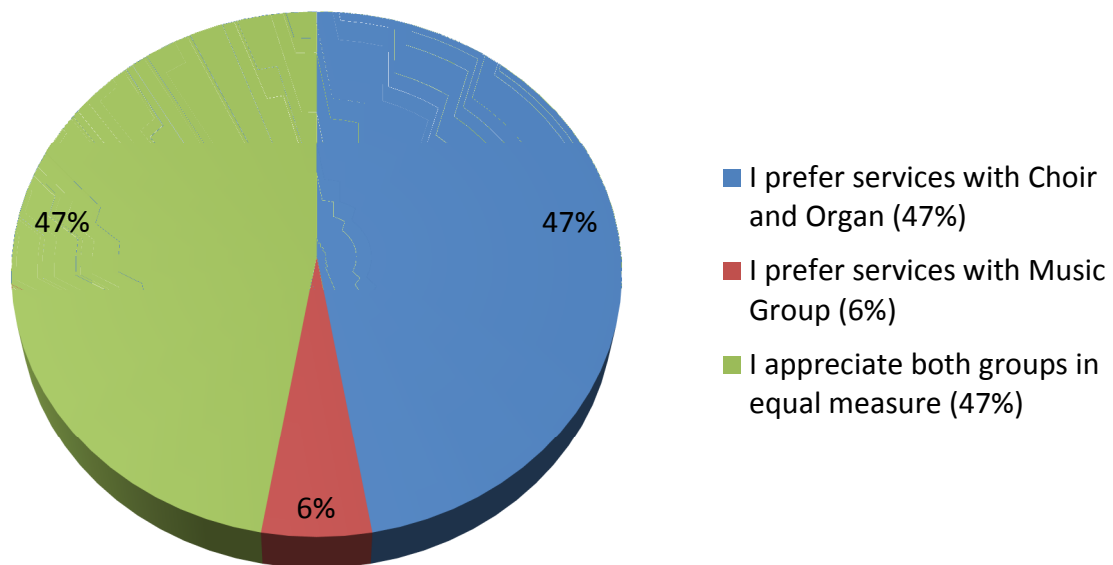
"I do quite like sometimes having a said service but the music is of great importance to me"

Conclusions

A clear majority of 73% would prefer to attend a musical service than a said service, on the whole, although some respondents appreciate the variety of having both kinds of service on offer. Nobody preferred services without music.

We will continue to offer music in the majority of services, while maintaining variety and choice through the weekday said services.

Do you have a preference between Choir/Organ and Music Group?



Services are led by one of two musical teams, distinct in their style, general leaning towards certain musical genres, and level of formality, but united in the common pursuit of high quality leadership in musical worship. At present the Music Group leads two services per month, while the Choir leads three services per month plus all occasional offices and festivals. The two groups collaborate on two or three occasions each year to produce a musical spectacular for occasions such as Harvest Festival and Easter Day.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

"Depends on the type of service"

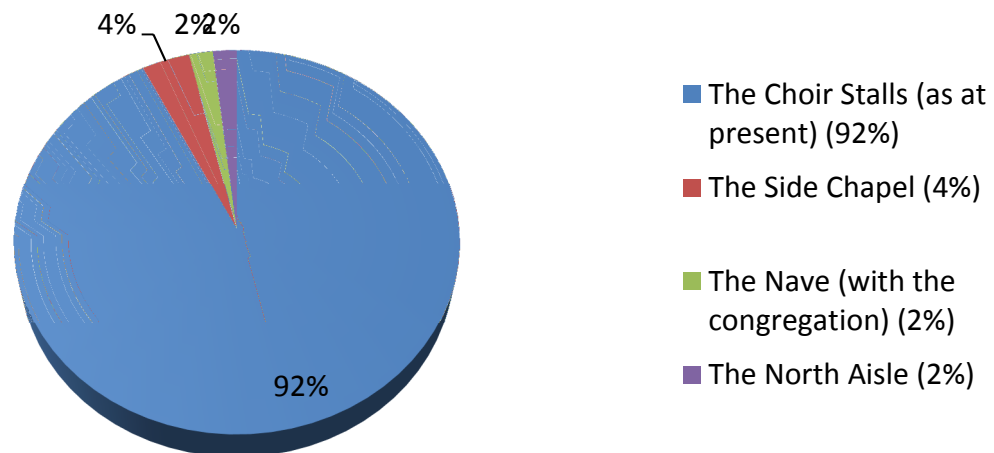
"I appreciate both groups but not in equal measure"

Conclusions

This was an interesting response. Surprisingly few (6%) prefer the Music Group, while a significant 47% prefer the Choir and Organ. However, it is most pleasing to see that an equally significant 47% appreciate both groups equally.

We will continue to present a balance of Music Group and Choir/Organ in our regular worship, while retaining the lean towards the traditional Choir and Organ for major festivals.

Where should the musicians be positioned during worship?



In the grand scheme of things, this is an issue which is really of very minor significance to the overall quality and impact of worship. However, many have clear views on their preference and how this affects the ability of the musicians to lead the congregation, without distracting from the act of worship.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

"Remove some pews to create a space at the front so becomes less separate"

"Stalls for Choir, but Nave for Music Group"

"Close to the organ"

"Should face the congregation"

"Choir stalls at all times for formal worship; Nave for informal services by music group only"

"Keep musicians in the body of the Church – cannot hear them when pushed to side chapel"

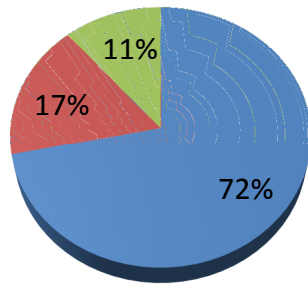
"Music Group, if only a few, should stand and lead from the step"

Conclusions

A very clear consensus is apparent here, with 92% of respondents voting to continue the use of the Choir Stalls as the musicians' base.

We will continue to sing and play from the Choir Stalls for most services, while remaining open to experimentation and variation from time to time. We could look again in the long term at re-designing the choir area to create a more open and flexible space for a variety of worship activities and concert performances.

In communion services, where should the Choir be positioned to sing during the distribution?



- The North Aisle (as at present) (72%)
- The Choir Stalls (as for the rest of the service) (17%)
- No answer (11%)

Again, this is a relatively minor issue, but one which often arises in discussion with members of the congregation and choir. The reason for moving to sing in the North Aisle had traditionally been to avoid people feeling intimidated as they walk through the stalls to receive communion. However, an equally valid argument is that the noise of the choir moving around the Church is an equally unwelcome distraction to the act of receiving communion.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

"Should not sing during distribution at all",

"I would prefer silence following communion rather than the choir singing (and moving about)"

"I do not like the choir singing during the distribution. Quiet organ music is acceptable"

"Please can we have quiet straight after communion so that congregation and choir can pray"

"The singing should not be obtrusive. It most certainly should not be used to demonstrate the vocal cleverness of the choir."

"At communion, music should be quiet and worshipful - would some instrumental music be less obtrusive to some – with an anthem after communion"

"I would prefer the choir not to sing during the distribution but if they must then the choir stalls. I find their moving to the North Aisle most disturbing"

"North Aisle – no, don't like this"

"Choir stalls, but would be better if conductor stood to side during communion"

"Do not like the Choir moving around during the distribution"

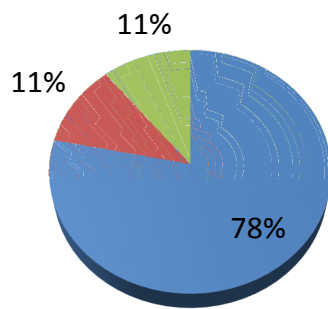
"I much appreciate the anthems, some most difficult and the extensive rehearsals involved"

Conclusions

The majority (72%) prefer to maintain the current arrangement of singing the anthem from the North Aisle – however two issues were raised – (1) the desire to enjoy silence during the distribution, and (2) the noisy distraction caused by the choir moving to the North Aisle.

This is an issue which merits further consideration and debate.

How do you rate the current variety of hymns/songs used in worship?



- A good mix of traditional and modern - about right for my taste (78%)
- Too many old-fashioned hymns (11%)
- Too many modern songs (11%)

We maintain a wide repertoire of traditional hymns, and an increasing list of more recent songs. Everyone has their own thoughts on the relative merits of different genres of music in worship, but many identify a clear distinction between 'traditional hymns' and 'modern worship songs'.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

"Thinking of music on the scales: Traditional/Modern. I love both; however I think that we should have just slightly weighted more to the modern. After all this will become the traditional in the future!"

"Would like a few more modern"

"Sometimes too many modern in our services"

"Getting better on the modern ones"

"I like the mix and choice of things we sing"

"Too many old hymns, but has improved, and choir very good on some of the newer songs. Would like to include more of the new worship songs – there is some good music out there – but must not lose some of the really good older hymns"

"New songs are vital but need to be taught and repeated often to make them stick. Some modern stuff is as bad as the worst old stuff"

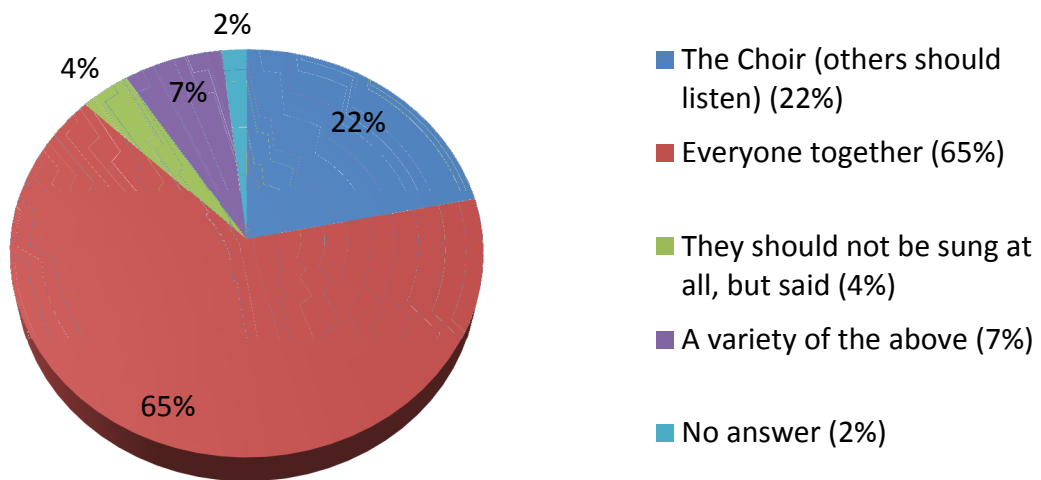
"For Easter and Harvest, keep traditional hymns – not modern songs nobody knows"

Conclusions

It is most interesting to note that the same number of respondents preferred traditional music, as those who preferred modern music – this serves to remind us all that we have a diverse but equally important set of preferences! However, a clear majority of 78% are happy with the current selection presented, therefore there is no clear requirement to change the current arrangements.

We will continue as we are – however, we will now pledge to include at least one modern song and one traditional hymn in every mainstream Sunday morning service, where possible.

Who should sing the sung settings in a communion service (Gloria, Eucharistic responses etc)



In generations past, and still today in many 'higher' Churches and Cathedrals, the expectation is that the choir offers parts of the service to God, on behalf of the congregation as a whole, in the same way that intercessions are read on behalf of everyone present. More recent thinking suggests that congregations should be included in as much of the service as possible.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

"Please check music and service sheets as the words for the Gloria and Holy Holy Holy are not always the same for congregation and choir"

"I think, sometimes it is appropriate to substitute the set response with a song or hymn which reflects the same words/sentiments. E.g. The Gloria can be done in a variety of ways"

"Words in the service sheet should match what we have to sing"

"Sometimes when the choir sings (e.g. Gospel Acclamation) it is very difficult to understand the words"

"The words in the booklet should match words being sung – or is this the choir taking over singing?"

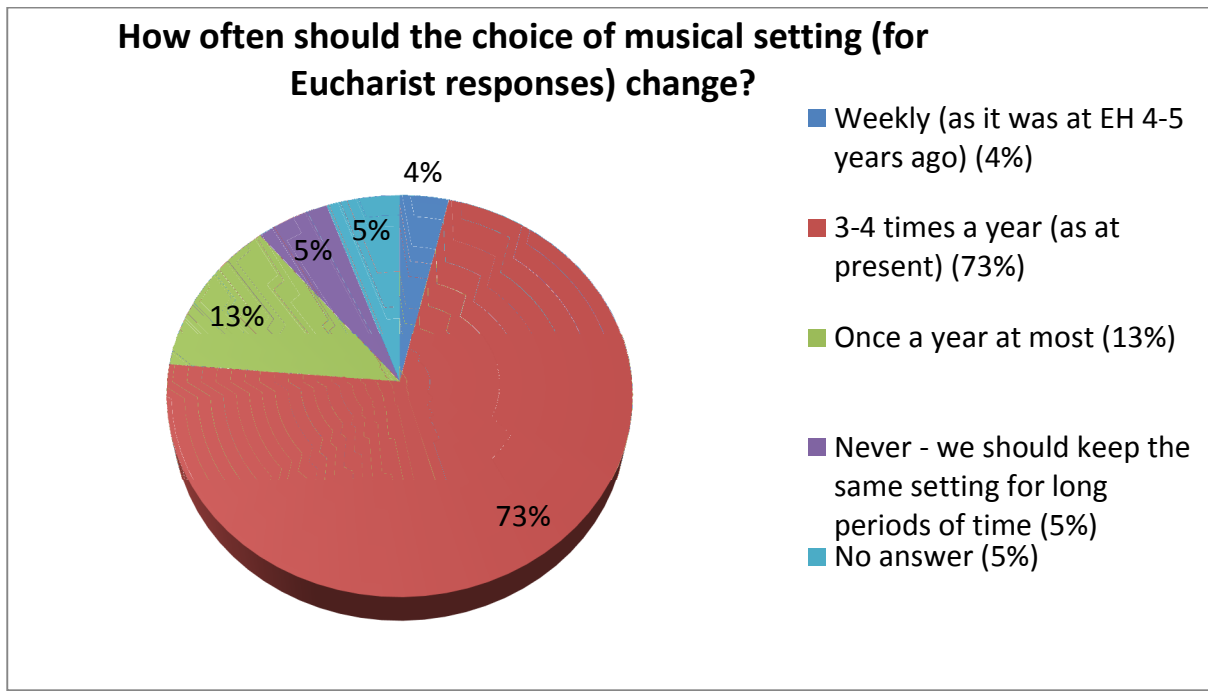
"Joining in adds greatly to the meaning/feeling of a service"

"By anyone who feels comfortable, including the congregation"

Conclusions

A clear majority of 65% prefer everyone to sing together where possible.

We will continue to encourage congregation participation in the sung settings.



In offering musical worship to God, we should aim to present the richest musical variety possible. However, this must be balanced with the need to keep the workload manageable for the musicians, and to encourage participation by the congregation. In previous years the East Harling choir has presented a wide range of settings which changed on a weekly basis, while more recently we have reduced this in order to facilitate congregational participation.

Respondents' comments relating to this question

"Difficult to answer – if one is an intermittent attender it is sometimes difficult to pick up the new music. I like the 'comfortableness' of knowing the tunes so I can participate. However I do understand if the choir may want to change more regularly so it doesn't become boring."

"Once a year or maybe twice – maybe it's worth considering unchurched people who may attend on major festivals only – do sung responses exclude them? It's a tough one because at festivals, 'regulars' may especially enjoy heartily sung responses."

"If choir only – as and when time for practice permits"

"Depending on the Church calendar/varying with the season"

"Should be easy to learn"

"So we can get used to it"

Conclusions

A clear majority of 73% are happy with the current arrangement of changing settings 3-4 times a year, broadly in line with seasonal themes.

We will continue with this arrangement, and will consider how best to meet the additional needs of occasional attenders at Christmas and Easter services.

Hymns

Many respondents commented that they simply could not choose just one favourite hymn! The multiple choice question was inconclusive because over half of all respondents did not answer. 12 respondents thought their favourite was sung often enough, while 15 respondents thought theirs was not. (Interestingly we had both YES and NO answers for the same hymns).

Those respondents who did answer, chose the following hymns (several were listed by more than one respondent):

- *Angel voices ever singing*
- *As the deer pants for the water*
- *Be still for the presence of the Lord*
- *Colours of day*
- *Dear Lord and Father of mankind*
- *Father God I wonder*
- *Guide me O Thou great Redeemer*
- *How great thou art*
- *Holy Holy Holy*
- *I cannot tell how he who angels worship*
- *I vow to thee my country*
- *King of kings, Majesty*
- *Lord I come to you*
- *Lord of all eagerness*
- *Lord of all hopefulness*
- *Lord the light of your love is shining*
- *Love divine all loves excelling*
- *Make me a channel of your peace*
- *O for a thousand tongues*
- *O Jesus I have promised*
- *Praise my soul the King of heaven*
- *There is a Redeemer*
- *Tell out my soul*
- *The day thou gavest Lord is ended*
- *The Father's song*
- *Thine be the glory*
- *Anything by Matt Redman or Stuart Townend*
- *Songs by Simon Brading and Stuart Townend*

I would suggest that almost all of these hymns are regularly included in our worship. We will continue to include these hymns in future.

Suggestions & requests made by respondents (my responses in bold)

- *If we never sing new songs, we'll never get to know them. When the old hymns were written, they were once modern!*
- *Music for Gloria etc to happy clappy. Please go back to the old type of music (preferably change the hymn book as they are far too heavy anyway. Thanks)*
- *To sing some of the more popular psalms before we forget how to!*
- *To sing the same words as are printed in the service sheet as under ALL*
- *'God be in my head and in my understanding' usually sung by choir alone, I would like it sung by the congregation as well.*
- *Choir only for some hymn verses. Less organ power for some verses, anthems, etc.*
- *Present hymn books awful! Pages too thin, bad binding. Much too heavy to carry, not a very choice of hymns. Dreadful colour cover. Looks cheap. Not a good representation of the Church to newcomers especially.*
- *The orange hymn book has too many changed words and full version is far too heavy*
- *I don't think we sing enough or regularly enough the classic well known hymns – Dear Lord & Father, Great is thy faithfulness etc – the top 10 in Songs of Praise*
- *I would like us to be a bit more adventurous – Taize, Wild Goose, some easy Gospel. As long as it is easy for congregation to join in. I feel disenfranchised when the music is too complicated to join in. HOWEVER, I enjoy listening to a well sung ANTHEM – which is a time for the choir to excel.*
- *Would like to see choir and music group combine more regularly and practice together regularly*
- *Would be good to introduce new songs at regular intervals which could then become known*
- *The music and choice of hymns should reflect the different stages of the communion service. Strong uplifting entrance – quiet, reflective communion – rejoicing exit.*
- *I do not like the choir processing in or out, or having to bow (God is not located in one place)*
- *Please announce or publish (perhaps on noticeboard) more details of anthems and organ solos – **the music list for each month is already published on the noticeboard by the Church door, and on the website***
- *It would be good to encourage participation in the choir and the music group – youngsters in music group?*
- *Younger persons are needed in both the choir and congregation.*
- *I would love to see a children's choir occasionally.- **we did have a children's choir but this folded due to lack of numbers – a situation which is unlikely to improve now that Sunday club has also folded***
- *As a youth I enjoy the Soul Café services once a month as they are more lively and I enjoy them more. I also think that there should be more songs for the youth to enjoy – more lively and more songs for the children to enjoy – more songs with actions. Personally I like the more modern songs – e.g. led by guitar and drums – **if there are any budding guitarists or drummers out there, please join us!***

General comments on the music provision

- *We are privileged to have a choir and a music group and so many talented musicians and an organist who really cares about the content of the worship. It's an impossible task to please all of the people all of the time but the fact that you are running this survey shows us all that you strive to get as close to that as is possible. Thank you for your loving commitment.*
- *Some of the pieces in communion are really lovely and add to personal worship and reflection*
- *To me personally music is worship. Let's pick the best from all styles and ages and make a joyful noise unto the Lord*
- *Music is uplifting and inspiring. We need it.*
- *I love the choir and I am really glad we have such wonderful music in the Church*
- *I am quite happy with the way things are going and am happy with the choice presented*
- *Carry on as you are*
- *I feel this questionnaire is somewhat irrelevant as music as a whole should not be in question!*
- *We're lucky with our Choir and Music Group. Keep it up.*
- *We are so lucky to have such a large, committed choir and a dedicated and extremely competent choirmaster/organist. Their leadership adds to the atmosphere of the services, which is greatly missed (by me) when the Music Group performs.*
- *We are very lucky in Harling to have such a good organist and choir*
- *I thoroughly enjoy the music and hymns – also the music played so ably at the end of the service – well done – your hard work is much appreciated*
- *We are most impressed with the music at East Harling*