

ANNUAL REPORT - MUSIC PROGRAM in 2020 - *Karen A. Hindenlang, Director of Music*

In early 2020, our pipe organ received a complete cleaning and re-tuning. The long-planned maintenance / repair project was finished on time and under budget by Parsons Organ Co. Their results exceeded our expectations, revitalizing previously unusable pipes and establishing new clarity and improved tone color — while removing an almost unbelievable quantity of dead bugs.

Soon after completion of this massive project on February 27, our services moved online. Though our physical proximity was suspended on March 22, the music program continued to serve St. John's in worship throughout the remainder of 2020.

Initially, the director of music provided music and tech assistance to the rector as she sang livestream hymns from home. After offering some recorded music for our Easter Vigil with Cornell, I began working remotely with a choral scholar to provide music for our first St. John's video service on the Feast of Pentecost.

That led to the development of our experimental cyber choirs, which started in June and offered hymns through the summer. Then, in September, Cyber Choir began zooming together weekly and began providing anthems, service settings and 60+ hymns for our online worship.

Singers new to our program, new to Ithaca, and new to choral music (!) joined long-time choir members and occasional guests in the steep learning curve of this labor-intensive new venture. Nearly 30 participants bravely recorded themselves singing at home with organ accompaniments that I created, edited, and distributed — often with practice files, recorded sing-a-long buddies, or conducted videos to help each singer. Weekly, I collected, reviewed and edited each singer's individual contribution and mixed their voices together by section and as an ensemble. The audio files then had to be joined with images to create videos for live-stream or video worship. All this was done with my own personal, unsophisticated tech equipment and no prior experience.

Our program also provided 4 cyber hymns for November's Diocesan Convention service, gave the parish a full service of Advent Lessons & Carols, and was chosen for inclusion in the Bishop's Christmas Eve service. Trumpeter Charlotte Hoekenga played with me remotely in several services, and I recorded many pre- and postludes showcasing our newly refurbished organ.

We've been fortunate to obtain permission to use professionally recorded music in some online services. In this way, our worship has been enriched by the performances of substitute organist George Damp on various organs, and choral compositions by assisting conductor Crawford R. Thoburn, sung by a variety of ensembles. We also received permission from St. James Music Press to use their recordings of music by Mark Schweizer and others.

I am very grateful for the help, support and encouragement of our congregation, cyber singers, vestry and rector. It has been a privilege and joy to ensure that even while separated, St. John's still offers the sound of voices joined in song, raised together in worship, prayer, and praise.