

MUSIC STILL STRONG IN CHURCHES BUT CAN GROW FURTHER: EASTER SURVEY.

An extensive survey of churches in part of southern England has revealed that music still plays a key part in worship, but that there's room for further growth. The survey, carried out by the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) in the area covered by the Guildford Anglican Diocese, gives a contemporary snapshot of the strength of church music, including the number of choirs and music groups, and the type of instruments used.

Almost 90% (188) of the Anglican churches in the Diocese were surveyed. Of these, the proportion of traditional organ/piano accompaniment (as opposed to organ and/or music group) is more or less evenly balanced at 48% and 44% percent respectively. 118 churches (63%) have a choir that sings regularly, while 97 (52%) make use of a music group, playing anything from flute and guitar to a rock band, with 14 churches (7.5%) using a music group or band exclusively for their worship.

When it comes to younger people, the provision and support is not so strong; whilst a number attend junior church sessions (3676), only 53 churches (28%) as yet run junior choirs, with a total of 422 young singers. Commenting on this aspect of the survey, Lindsay Gray the RSCM's Director says, *"I am intrigued that while there are good numbers attending junior church we do not maximise that potential in terms of involving them in choirs and music groups."*

The survey also reveals interesting statistics about the number of singers and the average size of choirs. There are nearly 1,900 choir singers and 850 musicians in music groups and worship bands. The average size of an adult choir is a dozen singers, and 8 for junior choirs. 15 churches (8%) possess choirs with fewer than six singers, while 24 (13%) have no choir or music group. *"The results of this survey give us plenty of food for thought about the training needs of churches in the area,"* says Ian Church, a member of the RSCM Council and survey author. *"We have an excellent programme of events and workshops; this survey will help us to do the job better for those churches that join us."*

About half of the Anglican churches in the area are affiliated to the RSCM. Churches were also asked to draw up a "wish list". Responses included an accessible list of deputy organists, more singers, more choir trainers, organists willing to take on a permanent position, and musical training

for clergy. There were also requests for the RSCM to run local workshops on a range of topics including how to run a junior choir, and how to recruit young organists.

“If what is happening in the Guildford area is replicated in other areas around the country, then there is much here that is encouraging, but quite clearly there is potential for further growth,” says Lindsay Gray, Director of the RSCM. *“I am also very keen to address the serious need for musical training of clergy. Our training programmes such as Voice for Life, Sacred Music Studies and our brand new Church Music Skills are all helping individuals, schools and churches to produce engaging and exciting musical results in church.”*

Ends

8 April 2009

Notes for Editors

Lindsay Gray, the Director of the RSCM and Ian Church (survey author and RSCM Council Member) are available for interview. See below for contact details.

This survey was carried out by the Guildford Area committee of the RSCM, which organises a wide range of local events for church musicians, ranging from choral festivals to workshops. The population of the area is estimated at 960,000. There are 102 Anglican churches in the Guildford Diocese affiliated to the RSCM, 11 churches of other denominations, 9 schools/independent choirs, 47 individual members and 40 Friends. www.rscmguildfordarea.org.uk

The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) is an educational charity that promotes the best use of music in worship, church life, and the wider community. The RSCM also publishes music and training resources, and organises courses, short workshops and activities. With over 8,500 affiliates, members and friends in over 40 countries, it is an international network, supported by over 750 volunteers and a small team of staff based throughout the UK. More at www.rscm.com

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