

CHURCH MUSIC SURVEY 2010/2011

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The RSCM Wales Church Music survey was carried out during 2010, and was the second of its kind. It posed a broader range of questions, including the type of Sunday service, whether there were sung services in Welsh, the make up of choirs and music groups, the number of children, as well as details of hymn books and other music sung. Questions were also asked about the church's provision for young people and whether there were links with local schools.

With a view to responding to the needs of affiliates, questions were also asked about the use of RSCM courses, magazines, publications and local events. The survey questionnaire was sent by email to all RSCM affiliates, members and friends who have supplied email addresses, with copies sent by post to all others. The questionnaire was also made available online through the RSCM website. In all there were 94 responses, most of them (given the bulk of our membership) were from the Church in Wales.

The full version of the summary is available on request, but the main points can be summarised as follows:

- The most common form of Sunday morning service is the Eucharist with nearly half the respondents claiming congregational numbers between 50 and 100.
- Nearly 70% of respondents hold a service in Welsh; for most the musical content consists of hymns. Nine churches hold celebrations of the Eucharist in Welsh.
- 60% of respondents hold an evening service on Sundays; 15 churches refer specifically to Choral Evensong.
- The organ is still the main instrument of musical accompaniment (97%).
- Just over two thirds of respondents have a church with a choir. Most have an adult membership; the shortage of men is alarmingly apparent. Of even greater concern is the lack of young people; only two churches claim to have between 11 – 15 children in their choirs. The most common numbers are up to five youngsters – in 29 churches (65.9%). 50 churches skipped the question about young people altogether.
- A quarter of respondents have a music group of some kind.
- 52 different communion settings are used; the most popular seem to be those written a few decades ago such as Richard Shephard's *Addington Service*.
- As far as singing of the psalms is concerned, a quarter of churches do not sing them at all. Where psalms are sung, the most popular form is Anglican chant (as one might expect).
- The choosing of hymns and songs for services is mostly left to the organist (42%)
- 80 per cent of respondents make use of the RSCM's *Sunday by Sunday* lectionary to choose hymns and other music appropriate to the readings set for each week.
- 10 churches reported that their organ was in need of some renovation, with four churches reporting some fund-raising effort is underway. 13 churches use a digital organ; one reports that they're about to replace their digital instrument.
- Most churches reported having a regular organist and pianist to lead music at their services. This might be expected from churches which invest seriously in their music. Respondents were also asked to describe the supply of organists in their surrounding area; the general consensus is that the supply is not good. The RSCM offers training in its *Church Music Skills*

programme, and several areas have held piano to organ sessions for those who find themselves sitting on an organ bench of a Sunday morning.

- Several questions were asked about churches' provision for young people. Just over 70% run a Sunday School. Although we didn't ask, there does not seem to be any "career progression" from Sunday school into the church choir. 80 % of respondents have some form of contact with their local school(s) but only five mention visits to schools for recruiting purposes.
- Respondents were asked to make a wish list for additional music resources. Many wanted more men in the choir and an improved organ. Other comments included "practical recruitment and retention packages" for the recruitment of youngsters and adults.
- Respondents were also asked to list training needs for their church musicians. Many asked for chorister, organist and conductor training; the RSCM offers training programme to cover all these. There are many wide-ranging comments here; initially it would make sense for RSCM affiliated churches and members to discuss their training needs with the local area committee or contact the Wales Coordinator srobinson@rscm.com.

COMMENTARY.

Quite clearly there is still considerable diversity in the music being performed in churches throughout Wales. If you've read this all the way through (well done, by the way..!) you may have been pleasantly surprised to find that music still plays an important part in church worship, and is a vital expression of faith for many. And there are some pleasant surprises; psalms are still widely sung, and perhaps more than is the common perception. Many RSCM-affiliated churches have a satisfactory supply of organists and singers, and there is still a wide range of evening services taking place.

Even in these very difficult times, it is heartening to see that churches go to considerable lengths to make music a key element of their church life. Church music can seem to be a thoroughly uneconomic activity, but many – both performer and listener – will know of the power of music to express deep emotions and sentiments. It is so encouraging to see that many churches throughout Wales consider it worthwhile to invest considerable time, effort and money to make music in praise of God – even if only a few are gathered in His name.

It is clear though that there are issues which churches, both at local and national level, should consider. The number of young people singing in choirs seems to be low with only two churches claiming to have to between 11 and 15 in their choirs. 50 respondents skipped the question about young people in its entirety. The recruitment of young people into choirs has continued to be a topical issue for RSCM affiliated churches. There are several examples of churches which have been successful, and much has been written and reported on these in the RSCM's own publications. Many churches report links with local schools, but alarmingly few made any mention of any recruitment initiatives. It has to be said that each church needs to devise a recruitment plan, and devote proper resources not least in terms of time and individual dedication. There are plenty of training materials to help such as the RSCM *Voice for Life* scheme. Child protection matters must be addressed of course, but no-one should be put off doing this; the process isn't necessarily as complex as one might think. Young people are the Church of Tomorrow, and what better way to involve them from a young age, by giving them something active to do; singing from the choirstalls rather than passively sitting in the pews. If your church is affiliated to the RSCM and you would like to discuss recruitment in relation to your own church, please contact the RSCM Wales Coordinator, in the first instance.

Music groups (although few in number) are flourishing in those churches where they operate, although the organ is still the key instrument of worship. There is a wide range of communion settings sung on a Sunday morning.

The shortage of organists in Wales was reported in the press, on radio and television when this survey was launched last year. It was said that many churches were having difficulty in finding organists, and while this is indeed true in some places, many RSCM affiliated respondents indicate that their situation is satisfactory. However there is no room for complacency here, and the RSCM is committed to helping its affiliates address this issue in several ways, such as the *Church Music Skills* programme, publications such as *The Complete Organist*, as well as piano-to-organ sessions.

So what happens now? This survey has given us a series of snapshots of music making throughout Wales, which sum up only a national picture. The church music scene in Cardiff is different from that in Pembrokeshire (though not necessarily that dissimilar...!) The RSCM will be devising a strategy for committees in Wales to adapt and pursue according to the specific needs of RSCM affiliates in their area. I am grateful to all volunteer committee members who work so hard to organise local events around Wales. Details of all events throughout the country are included in *The Network* – published four times a year. Local committees are also in touch with affiliates and individual members direct.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE RSCM.

If music is important in your church, and it is not affiliated to the RSCM, please consider joining. RSCM membership is open to everyone. You can join as an Affiliate, or Individual / Student member. There are a range of benefits including:

- Programmes such as *Voice for Life*, *Church Music Skills*, *Foundation Degree in Church Music*
- Training days and workshops for organists, choir leaders
- Local events around Wales, including Choral Festivals, workshops and training sessions
- The opportunity to enter RSCM Bronze, Silver and Gold singing awards.
- Residential courses for auditioned choristers, and organists.
- Training choirs, singing to a high standard in cathedrals in the UK.
- Publications: RSCM Press produces a wide range of music for all abilities; some is photocopiable.
- Significant discounts on publications, courses, and training days.
- Magazines. Free subscription to *Church Music Quarterly*, *Sunday by Sunday* music planner (not students).
- *The Network* information on locally organised events.
- Online resources from www.rscm.com including e-letter; downloads and information.
- Help and advice

As we head deeper into a century permeated with electronics, the internet, and as part of a society which seems to be increasingly secularised here and there, the worship of Almighty God is still carrying on through music, even if there are difficulties and frustrations at times. There is no doubting the enthusiasm and commitment to make Church Music work. The RSCM is here to help.

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AND FINALLY...A MESSAGE FROM LINDSAY GRAY, DIRECTOR.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this survey. Personally, I found in it a variety of interesting results: for example the high percentage of churches in Wales which use and see the organ as their main instrument.

I was delighted to see the high percentage of churches that have choirs. Nevertheless, the lack of young people is a concern, as is the lack of men. The number of junior church activities and the potential within adjoining schools in many places leads me to think that more can be done to recruit young people into choirs. I am constantly reminded that young people are the Church of the future, and music is an excellent way to actively involve them in our worship.

So in conclusion, despite some difficulties, there is plenty of cause for optimism. I wish you well as you digest the information collected by means of this survey and as you move forward in your own local music-making. The RSCM is here to listen to your needs and to provide the advice, training and resources that will support you in your work and worship. *Pob lwc!*