

Hyfrydol



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St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter

April 2025

April

Eastern Daylight-Saving Time ends on Sunday 6 April. Then, when Phil decrees that the choir uniform will be “shirts”, that means that the men will have to find, and wear their Swiz ties and dark jackets again.

Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the autumnal (in the southern hemisphere) equinox. This year the moon will appear full on Sunday 13 April, so Easter falls on the following Sunday, 20 April¹.

Our Easter program begins on Saturday 12 April when we present our slightly abbreviated *Messiah*. The first of these was sung on the day before Palm Sunday in 2013. We missed 2020 and 2021 through Covid; making this year's the 11th. That almost marks the event as a “tradition.”

Palm Sunday follows, then Good Friday when we sing a special service with four penitential anthems. On Easter Day we will be singing the final chorus from *Messiah – Worthy is the lamb* as the anthem.

Last month

March began with a choir social event, hosted by our organist, seemingly well recovered from his orthopaedic adjustments. The social was very well attended by choristers and their other halves. Peter Hamilton, as host, welcomed everyone, served the pizzas and delivered a well-researched dissertation on proper choral singing. Phil Linquist also addressed the assembly and revealed that the Foundation Concert this year will be a presentation of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*.

Later in the month, we presented our Lenten Evensong. It was an uncomfortably sultry evening and singing was not easy. But we did the job, and the congregation was appreciative. For the record, we sang Orlando Gibbons *Drop, drop, slow tears*, Peter Hamilton's *Preces and Responses*, Psalm 143 to a chant by William Horsley, Charles Stanford's *Evening Canticles in C*, *Prayer of Richard of Chichester* arranged by American composer and singer L J White, and Sir John Rutter's *Clare Benediction*.



Drop, drop, slow tears

This was the Lenten Evensong introit. We shall sing it again on Good Friday.

Luke (chapter 7 from verse 36) tells the story of the sinful woman:

³⁶ When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume.

³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

This is the clear inspiration for Phineas Fletcher's text, written some 400 years ago:

Drop, drop, slow tears,
and bathe those beauteous feet
which brought from Heaven
the news and Prince of Peace:

¹ March 22 is the earliest date for Easter, the latest date it can fall on is April 25. The last time Easter Sunday fell on April 25 was in 1943, and the next occurrence will be in 2038.



Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercy to entreat;
to cry for vengeance
sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
drown all my faults and fears;
nor let His eye
see sin, but through my tears.

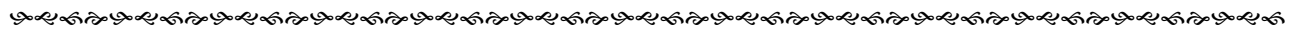
Phineas Fletcher was born at Cranbrook in Kent. He was educated at Eton and at King's College, Cambridge, where he studied Theology.

He was ordained and, in 1620, became the Rector of Hilgay in Norfolk, not far from Cambridge, in which living he remained until his death in 1650. He wrote poetry in imitation of Edmund Spenser (their lives overlapped, Spenser being the elder). Fletcher's principal work, *The Purple Island* (1633), is a very long poem in 12 cantos, each canto itself a long poem, describing allegorically the human physiology and soul². It included the *Piscatorie Eclogs and other Poetical Miscellanies*, a collection of pastorals, the characters of which are represented as fisherboys on the banks of the Cam River. They are interesting for the light they cast on the biography of the poet himself and his father, and on Phineas' friendship with Cambridge men.

Drop, drop, slow tears is set to the first two phrases of Orlando Gibbons' *Song 46*.

Orlando Gibbons was a contemporary of Phineas Fletcher. He was an English composer, virginalist and organist of the late Tudor and early Jacobean periods. He was a leading composer in the England of his day. Like Fletcher, he also attended King's College, Cambridge. He was a member of the choir, and his older brother Edward was master of the choristers.

James I appointed him a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, where he served as an organist from at least 1615 until his death. In 1623 he became senior organist at the Chapel Royal, with Thomas Tomkins as junior organist. He also held positions as keyboard player in the privy chamber of the court of Prince Charles (later King Charles I), and organist at Westminster Abbey. He died at age 41 in Canterbury of 'apoplexy' (probably a stroke), and a monument to him was built in Canterbury Cathedral.



Led like a lamb

Isaiah 53

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Graham Kendrick's own website carries the following comment on his composition:

"Led Like a Lamb" holds a special place in Graham Kendrick's heart, not only because of its message but also because of how it engaged people in worship when it was first introduced.

Graham recalls leading a crowd at Spring Harvest when the song was new. One of the most memorable parts of the song is the chorus where the word "Hallelujah" is repeated in a call-and-response pattern.

"The obvious thing to do was to divide the crowd into three sections and have them call and respond with 'Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah.' It created a powerful and dynamic atmosphere of worship."

This call-and-response style of worship, known as antiphonal worship, has deep roots in biblical tradition. It's a dynamic approach where one side of the congregation calls out and the other responds, creating a sense of unity and collective praise.

² Search for it on the web. Some of the footnotes describing the actual body parts are a real hoot!

"It's very much there in the Psalms, but we don't use it very much these days. I think we should bring back antiphonal songs and get us all interacting together in our worship."

"Led Like a Lamb" speaks to the heart of the Easter story - Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. The powerful "Hallelujah" refrain reflects the triumph of Christ's victory over death and invites the congregation to celebrate together.

This song not only captures the message of Easter but also creates a moment where worship becomes interactive and deeply communal.

Graham Kendrick (born 2 August 1950) is a British Christian singer, songwriter and worship leader. He is the son of a Baptist pastor and grew up in Essex. He now lives in Tunbridge Wells and is a member of Christ Church, Tunbridge.



Fellow songwriter and former Kendrick bandmember Stuart Townend has said, "I have no doubt that in 100 years' time the name of Kendrick will be alongside Watts and Wesley in the list of the UK's greatest hymnwriters". Kendrick also has his critics, among them the journalist Quentin Letts, who has described him as "king of the happy-clappy banalities." We shall let readers come to their own conclusions.



The Chorister's Prayer

The following is taken from a past version of the RSCM UK website. It is based in part upon research done years ago by a member of the RSCM NSW Branch Committee, Sr Marie Therese Levy.

Bless, O Lord, us Thy servants,
who minister in Thy temple.
Grant that what we sing with our lips,
we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts,
we may show forth in our lives.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Chorister's Prayer in its most common form was first published by the School of English Church Music in 1934 in the *Choristers' Pocket Book*. No indication of its origin was given there and it has been assumed by many that this may have been the work of Sir Sydney Nicholson and/or Cosmo Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury and a keen supporter of Sir Sydney and of the School of English Church Music as the RSCM was then called.

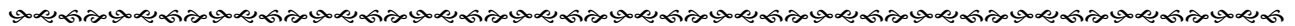
The prayer does however have origins which extend back at least to the 4th century. The tenth canon of the fourth council of Carthage (c 398 AD) decrees that cantors should be blessed with the words *Vide, ut quod ore cantas, corde credas, et quod corde credis, operibus comprobas* ("See that what thou singest with thy lips thou dost believe in thine heart, and that what thou believest in thine heart thou dost show forth in thy works").

The same Latin text is also used in the *Pontificale Romanum* of 1595/6 in both the form for admitting a psalmist or cantor and also at the ordination of priests. The earliest English versions seem to date from the 1840s with two, one for use before and a second version for use after Divine Service, published in a booklet entitled *Historical Notices of the Office of Choristers* 1848 by Revd James Millard. Within a few months the 'after service' version of that prayer also appeared in the journal *The Parish Choir* - "Grant, O Lord, that what I have said and sung with my mouth, I may believe in my heart; and what I may believe in my heart, I may steadfastly fulfil, though Jesus Christ our Lord" and this identical prayer was published again in *The Choir and Musical Record Almanack* in 1866.

It may be that Sir Sydney modernised the language of The Chorister's Prayer, but we who pray these words weekly carry on a tradition of many centuries and hopefully we both 'steadfastly fulfil' and also 'show forth' the tenets of our faith in our lives and music.

There are some who might argue that Anglicans don't "minister in temples"; that "temples" are for Jews and Mormons. A revised form of the prayer was used at RSCM NSW Branch meetings for some years, as follows:

Bless, O Lord, us your servants,
 who minister among your people (or, in this place).
 Grant that what we sing with our lips,
 We may believe in our hearts,
 and what we believe in our hearts,
 we may show forth in our lives.
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.



Choir Calendar for 2025

Day	Date	Time	Location	Service/activity
Sat	12 Apr		Swiz	Messiah presentation
Fri	18 Apr	9 am	Swiz	Good Friday service
Sun	20 Apr	9 am	Swiz	Easter Day Communion
Sat	31 May	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Sat	14 Jun		All Saints, Bathurst	Celebrating Psalms
Sun	15 Jun		All Saints, Bathurst	Two services
Sun	22 Jun		Swiz	Huguenot annual service
Fri	1 Aug			RSCM Midwinter Dinner
Sat	23 Aug		Swiz	Foundation concert
Sat	13 Sept	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Wed	24 Sep	6:15 pm	St James, King Street	Evensong
Sat	18 Oct		Swiz	Celebrating Psalms
Sun	26 Oct		St Albans, Leura	Celebrating Psalms
Sat	29 Nov	5 pm	Swiz	Advent Evensong
Sun	21 Dec	9 am	Swiz	Lessons & carols
Wed	24 Dec	10 pm	Swiz	Christmas Eve service
Thu	25 Dec	9 am	Swiz	Christmas Day service

Many of the fixtures after Easter in the above table are still to be confirmed.

