



**Dromore Diocese**

**Music Ministry Leadership Event**

Saturday 16 November 2024

St Anthony's Centre and Parish Hall, Craigavon.



# Introduction

Dromore Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) invited those involved in music ministry leadership within their parish or church organisation in the Diocese of Dromore to meet for a 'conversation' on Saturday 16th November 2024 from 10am to 1pm at St Anthony's Centre and Parish Hall, Craigavon.

## **The aim of the event**

was to recognize the invaluable contribution of those involved in music ministry leadership, and it offered Archbishop Eamon and members of the DPC the opportunity to consult with them, to listen to their positive experiences, determine what support they may need, and to ask them about their vision for the future.

## **Structure of the event**

Thirty church musicians attended and the event began with prayer and an outline for the day. Round table discussion was facilitated by members of the DPC, with the following questions being asked:

- What positive experiences have you had through your involvement in ministry for the Church?
- How might we support each other in our involvement in music ministry in the Church?
- What possibilities do you see for the future of music ministry for the Church?

Following an enlightening discussion, the day was rounded off with a Music Workshop, the purpose being:

- To share our gifts
- Learn some new music
- Have a bit of fun

# Round Table Discussion

Following the 'Conversations in the Spirit' methodology as espoused by the Synodal Process, the following questions were discussed:

## What positive experiences have you had through your involvement in music ministry for the church?

### The Positives:

- Playing music 'moves me' and I would like to pass that on to the congregation.
- My faith has been enriched, I understand the significance of the liturgy as preparing the music, prepares you for Mass. I read the readings of the day and chose appropriate music.
- Fall off in Mass participation – music keeps participation.
- As a church musician, you support families on life's journey – sacraments, weddings, funerals.
- I love the friendship and social aspect of coming together. I get more out of it; it has helped me 'integrate into the parish as I was a 'blow in' and it has allowed me to be involved in the community I live in.
- My involvement in the 'junior choir' has enabled young children to be involved in Church as parents are not bringing them.
- An example from one choir, where they go away for the night to 'prepare for Christmas' semi retreat, semi social - you are there with friends, singing your heart out.
- Music brings people together from across the parish, I was new to the parish and joined the choir. I love the camaraderie.

### The Negatives

- Commitment - other ministries have a 'rota', as the choir we turn up every week
- Parishioners are quick to criticise, it can be difficult to get a 'thank you'
- Much discussion evolved around the 'role of the choir'
  - Are we to 'lead' the congregation in prayer?
  - Choirs were told that parishioners 'didn't like their repertoire', there was much resentment here as it disrespects the commitment given by the choir, they are church volunteers and not paid musicians; it also disregards the musicianship of the choir director as their choice of music could be determined by limited choir numbers and the ability of members.
  - There are some sacred liturgies, when the congregation want to 'listen' to the choir.
  - Congregational singing – priests have to realise that not everyone wants to be forced to sing. If you want a congregation to sing, you have to repeat, and repeat the hymn - it was said that once a choir get fed up, the congregation know it. If you keep repeating a hymn, it is not always liturgically correct each Sunday.

- It was acknowledged that there was room for both, however the choir director should have autonomy.

## **How might we support each other in our involvement in music ministry for the church?**

- **Communication is Key**

- We don't know each other - 1<sup>st</sup> time this event has brought us together
- Some choir directors have years of experience, others just starting
- Once or twice a year a gathering for the choir -
  - Get to know each other / learn new music
  - Similar to Loretto Mc Auley / Down & Conor Music workshops

- **Central Repository**

- Central resources to help with planning music
- What can be used
- Guidelines for Music Ministry
- Liturgy tools – hymns suggestions / what are others using
- If you have 'anything nice' to share with others

- **Resources**

- **We need a fair and realistic budget** if we are to be sustainable
  - For new music
  - Photocopying - I personally buy the ink and paper
  - We are volunteers and yet financially contribute to our ministry
- **Choir Space**
  - Availability of practice space
  - Some choir spaces in the church, not conducive to good musicianship
- **Liturgical guidelines**

- What is liturgically correct?
    - Weekly
    - Weddings
    - Funerals
    - Christmas
  - What about a hymn with a familiar tune eg Danny boy, is that appropriate?
  - What a Priest will / not allow depends on the individual
  - Real challenges for a folk / trad group as their style of music does not suit formal sacred liturgies such as Holy Week.
  
- **Concern around music licensing / broadcasting via the webcam**
  - This is an all-Ireland Issue – what you are allowed to copy?
    - Blue book (Liturgical Hymns Old & New) – if you have the books, is that the licence?
    - Catholic Hymn license
    - The composer has the right to be paid!
  
  - Major concern in this area, feel training required, don't want to be the 'scape goat' if there is an issue.

## **What possibilities do you see for the future of music ministry for the church??**

*“We are integral to the liturgy –*

*the need to maintain a living, breathing ministry needs to be prioritised”*

- **Future of the church**
  - More involvement in church
    - Currently lack of commitment / involvement
    - Approach schools for children / young people to get involved
    - Develop the same sense of 'community' within the GAA
  
  - We need to bring 'families' back

- We are competing with the GAA - young people are there
- Parents not going to Mass
  
- Family Mass is intergenerational and an ideal model
  - Children will bring wider family in
  - They will learn new skills - reading / singing as they move up
  - Music needs to be appropriate - very upbeat
  
- Role of webcam
  - Bringing the parish to others – elderly, those abroad – family celebrations
  - However not an alternate to ‘going to Mass’
  - We ‘did it’ during COVID, as an emergency - more training and governance required.

- **The Future of the Church Choir**

*Resources make a difference!*

- Need a **budget** for sustainability - if people pay for it, they will take it seriously
  - To introduce new music
  - Workshops
  - Photocopying
  - Service & maintenance of equipment / organ
- **Training**
  - Music Ministry
  - Minefield of music licencing & broadcasting
- **Central Repository**
  - Help raise the standards
  - Share good practice
- **Appreciation** given to choirs
  - For their time given
  - Respect their Time off (Children's choir - similar to term time – however not always liturgically correct)
- **Come together to make music**
  - 'Peace Proms' for the Diocese - 'Singing Together' programme for choirs
  - Encourage visiting choirs

## **Next Steps..**

There was a deep appreciation on the day that the diocese was recognising the role of the church musician. The music workshop was the highlight of their day, there was a lot of fun learning new music and indeed much musical improvisation. Many on the day wished that choir members and

not just the leaders were invited. There was willingness from participants to be involved in a DPC subgroup to develop Church Music within the diocese.

*Work for the DPC in the short term*

- **Create a Central Repository**

This idea was mooted at the Coms gathering also.

- **Diocesan ‘Songs of Praise’ to coincide with the ‘Jubilee of Choirs’ in Rome**

Proposed date: Feast of St Cecilia - Patron of Church Musicians - Saturday 22 November 2025

Appendix 1

## **Dromore Music Ministry Consultation Event - 16th November 2024**

### **Facilitator guide**

#### **Aim of the event**

By consulting directly with those actively involved in music ministry leadership and decision-making on behalf of parishes and other church organisations, we hope to gain insights into their real lived experiences to inform future development.

#### **Procedure for each roundtable activity.**

1. Carefully read the question aloud at least twice.
2. Use the prompting questions in turn to guide the discussion.
- 3. Record detailed notes** of the discussion.
4. Encourage active listening.
5. Keep the conversation, **positive** and **focused on the topic**.
6. Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- 7. Manage time effectively to finish within the allocated 20 minutes.**

#### **Round table discussion 1 (20 minutes)**

<b>Question 1</b>
<b>What positive experiences have you had through your involvement in music ministry for the church?</b>
Probing questions
1. Can you share an example of a time when music helped you connect with the faith community members in a meaningful way?

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|---|
| 2. Have you observed any positive developments in your faith community fostered by your approach to music ministry?                                       |
| 3. What are some positive surprises you've encountered through your involvement in music ministry for the church?   |
| 4. Can you share an example of a time when your organisation learned something valuable as a result of your involvement in music ministry for the church? |
| 5. Have you received any positive feedback from faith community members about your approach music ministry for the church?                                |

## Round table discussion 2 (20 minutes)

### Question 2

#### How might we support each other in our involvement in music ministry for the church?

##### Probing questions

1. What are the biggest challenges you face in your involvement in music ministry for the church?
2. Do you feel you have the necessary skills and training to effectively manage music ministry for the church?
3. Are there any specific areas where you feel additional support would be most beneficial?
4. How might we sustainably support each other on an ongoing basis?
5. How might we use technology to support each other?

## Round table discussion 3 (20 minutes)

### Question 3

#### What possibilities do you see for the future of music ministry for the church??

##### Probing questions

1. How might music be used to encourage young people to actively participate in your faith community?
2. How could music be used to attract new members to your faith community, especially those who might not traditionally attend church services?
3. Do you see any potential for using music to create closer connections between different age groups?
4. How might music be used to encourage people who have been away from the church to come to church services?
5. How might music be used to facilitate sharing, weaving threads of communion, creating bridges without raising walls?

## **The Ministry of Music**

From "Preparing for Liturgy" by Austin Fleming

Yours is a share in the work of the Lord's Spirit who draws us together into one, who makes harmony out of discord, who sings in our hearts the lyric of all that is holy.

Yours is the joy of sounding the first note which brings the assembly to its feet, ready to praise God.

Yours is to impart a "quality of joy and enthusiasm (that) cannot be gained in any other way."

Yours is a ministry that reaches the deepest recesses of the human heart; your work is soul-stirring.

Yours is none other than the Lord's song; you draw us into that canticle of divine praise sung throughout the ages in the halls of heaven.

You help us to respond to God's word, to acclaim the Gospel, to sing of our salvation in Christ.

Yours is a ministry that gathers our voices into one great choir of praise.

Come to your work from your personal prayer. Let your rehearsals begin with prayer in common.

Let your practice be marked by unanimity in spirit and in ideals.

Be gentle in correcting one another: the kingdom will not fall on a flatted note.

Open your choir to those whom the Lord has blessed with musical gifts; help the not-so-gifted discern the talents that are theirs.

Rehearse the Lord's song with the reverence it is due. Take care to study the scriptures for the liturgy in which you will serve; know well the word that calls forth our praise.

Let the lyrics of your songs be strong, true and rooted in the scriptures; those who sing the Lord's word sing the Lord's song.

Make no room for the trite, the maudlin, the sentimental.

Open your hearts and voices to new songs worthy of God's people at prayer.

Let your repertoire change as all living things must, but not so much that the song of God's people is lost.

**The Ministry of Music cont.**

Be ambitious for the higher gifts, but not beyond your gifts; respect the range and talent the Lord has given you and your community.

Think first of the assembly's song, for this is the song you serve.

Let your music be always the servant of the Lord, of God's people, of the divine service they offer.

Let the service of your music complement but never overshadow the people's ritual prayer.

Let your performance become a prayer, and your art a gift.

Let technique become no idol, but a tool for honing the beauty of your gift.

Remember that your ministry is ever an emptying out of yourself; when the solo is assigned to another, let that singer's offering become your prayer.

When no one comments on the new motet, be thankful that your work led the people to God, not to you.

When the assembly will not sing, be patient with them and with yourselves; the Lord's song is sometimes a quiet one and silence precedes every hymn.

Waste no time wondering, "Do you think they liked it?" But ask at all times, "Did it help them and all of us to pray?"

When your ministry leads you to music, it has led you astray.

When your ministry leads you to the Lord, it has brought you home.

When your brothers and sisters thank and praise you for your work, take delight in the song their prayer has become, and rejoice in the work the Lord has accomplished through you.

Be faithful in the work you do, for through it the Lord saves his people.

