



# CHORAL EVENSONG

## 17th APRIL 2011



St Faiths doesn't usually have an evening service and therefore Choral Evensong is rarely done. It was therefore a special occasion when it was sung on Palm Sunday, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2011 under the direction of the Choirmaster Mike Attwood and it provided a good opportunity for the choir to focus on a different type of service of choir involvement. They had worked hard in practice and on the day sang the Magnificat by Dyson, Nunc Dimittis by Mendelssohn and responses by Smith. The anthem was that beautiful setting of O Saviour of the World, by John Goss.

### **Choral Evensong - some more information**

Evening Prayer is a liturgy in use in the Anglican church and celebrated in the late afternoon or evening and more commonly known as Evensong, especially (but not exclusively) when the office is rendered chorally (that is, when most of the service is sung). It is roughly the equivalent of Vespers in the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran Church, although it was originally formed by combining the Roman Catholic offices of Vespers and Compline. Although many churches now take their services from Common Worship or other modern prayer books, if a church has a choir, Choral Evensong from the Book of Common Prayer often remains in use because of the greater musical provision. Evening Prayer, like Morning Prayer, and in contrast to the Eucharist, may be led by a layperson, and is recited by some devout Anglicans daily in private. The Clergy in many Anglican jurisdictions are required to do so.

In years gone by the service was sung only by the choir, for the people, who would not take part at all or not join in with any of the music or hymns. Often the choir would be located behind the large screens that are a feature of our large churches and cathedrals. The effect of voices and the organ echoing around the church and appearing to come from an invisible source must have been incredible.

The content of the service has remained relatively unchanged and comprises Old and New Testament readings, prayers, an anthem, responses and a psalm. In more modern times hymns have been included in which the congregation join in. The responses are either sung by the minister or a cantor and take the form of one voice singing a statement and the choir responding to it i.e. *Cantor*: 'O Lord open though our lips', *Choir*: 'and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise'. The Magnificat or Song of Mary and the Nunc Dimittis, the song of Simeon are also sung, usually by the choir. Distinguished church musicians have written many different musical arrangements to these two pieces but the words always stay the same. The creed and three collects; the collect for the day, the collect for peace and the collect for all perils were always sung in the past, but today are often said and only an Amen is sung by the choir.