

Farewell service for Terence Atkins at St John's, Chipping Barnet

On January 5th a service of evensong was held at the church of St John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet in thanksgiving for the dedicated service of their Organist and Choirmaster – none other than our President, Terence Atkins. Terence was Organist and Choirmaster at the church for 48 years and is now Organist Emeritus. The church was packed, and so were the choir stalls, several former members having coming back to swell the numbers. Many other former choristers, parents, and parish friends and associates across past decades were in the congregation. Lending no small amount of grandeur to proceedings was Bishop Hall Speers, a former rector, who helped lead the service of thanksgiving.

The service setting was Bairstow in D, with the Rose Responses, and the anthem was Harris's *Bring us, O Lord God*. There were two hymns – 'How shall I sing that majesty' and 'Lord for the Years' - and Psalm 24. The current Director of Music and Musical Mission Patryk Korczak conducted the anthem but Terence, who chose all of the music, conducted everything else. Jonathan Gregory accompanied the service, with Ben Markovic playing Bach's Prelude and Fugue in A beforehand and Ashley Wagner playing the Finale from Vierne's 6th Organ Symphony as the final voluntary. The service was uplifting – quite a demanding repertoire for a choir including children to learn, but they coped with it very well.



Terence conducting the choir



The congregation enjoying Terence's speech



Bishop Hall Speers congratulating Terence

After the service there were abundant refreshments and then a number of former choristers and colleagues and choir parents gave sincere and heartfelt tributes to Terence's work as organist and choirmaster over the years. Notable among these were the Bishop's recollections of Terence's service and consistently high ambitions for the choir, and the touching testimony of a recent head chorister who thanked Terence for simply changing his life. The vicar and rector each spoke, raising a toast and presenting Terence with gifts on behalf of church members.

What a legacy Terence has left! Many of his pupils and choristers have gone on to be musicians in adult life: Ben is DoM at St Mary's Barnes and Ashley Assistant DoM at Birmingham Cathedral, to name but two. Since his retirement from St John's, Terence has been much in demand at other churches in the area, though he is sure to maintain his St John the Baptist connections and friendships for years to come.

*Rosemary Knight & Sanu de Lima
Photos by various choir parents and associates*