



RUN A KITCHEN CHOIR

Why did you do it?

We needed to pull together a group of signers who could help lead the music at the Christmas Carol Service. We also knew some friends and work colleagues who didn't come to church but said they liked a good sing at Christmas. The success of TV programmes such as Gareth Malone's "The Choir" were an encouragement that ordinary people could sing and several people had mentioned that they would like something similar locally.

What did you do?

We found some fun vocal warm-up exercises on the internet (included in the pack) and invited all those who said they were interested round for an initial singalong. A variety of drinks were provided (water and wine!) and we put out a few chairs for those who find standing difficult. Creating a lighthearted and fun atmosphere – not unlike the beginning of a party – has been very helpful in making people feel welcome.

As none of us are trained choirmasters, we found the easiest thing to do was to use a music application on the computer to play all the individual parts and provide backing music. This also meant that the members of the choir could listen to their parts during the week to practice as we made them accessible on a web file sharing system. We encouraged the members to buy their own copies of the music and provided copies of the public domain material where possible. It is not a requirement to be able to read music to be in the choir but having the notes in front of them means they are also learning some musicianship along the way.

A typical evening starts with some chatting over a drink, a quick time of prayer and then around 15 minutes of vocal warm-up fun before tackling some new material and singing some old favorites. After Christmas, we asked the choir if they would like to continue and so we are now tackling a wider repertoire including Gospel, Choral and some secular music. We are also encouraging people to have a go at some small solo sections.

How did it work?

In the first year we were able to lead the singing at the Christmas service using backing tracks and this was well received. In subsequent years, we have repeated this (usually starting rehearsals in September) and have been able to work with other musicians to tackle more complex pieces as confidence has improved. This year Choir members said they wanted to carry on so we continued to meet weekly from January and are looking for more opportunities to perform. Whilst some members still feel daunted by new material, keeping things lighthearted and fun means we keep improving and always enjoy what we achieve as a choir together.

Where did you do it?

We practice in our kitchen and have sung at Church Services, Pubs, Village Fetes and Christmas Markets.

What would you do differently?

After the first year we tried to keep it going but didn't meet every week. As a result attendance fizzled out only picking up again in September ready for Christmas. This year, we have been meeting every week and have had much more success and some new growth. Going forward, we need to be more proactive in securing opportunities to perform so that the Choir feel they are working towards a variety of performances.

For more info get in touch Mike Griffiths

Mike.griffiths@stpetersyateley.org.uk | 07866 727146 | @Mike_Griffiths