

Makana Choir School

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT FROM SEPTEMBER 2021 TO SEPTEMBER 2022

A year ago, when we had our last AGM, we were still in the midst of the Covid pandemic. The vaccination programme had commenced, but it was not clear at that stage how long it would take for us to get back to normal – or some semblance of normality in any case. At the time of the last AGM, we were just coming out of the third wave of the pandemic. Around Christmastime, we found ourselves going into a fourth wave, resulting in cancelled services up and down the country. We were still under Covid regulations at the time, and these continued until June (the final regulations were lifted only three months ago). Now, however, thanks to the vaccination programme, we have been able to return to a routine much more akin to that which we had before the pandemic started.

Owing to the developing situation, this past year has been one of building and rebuilding in the musical life of the Cathedral. Owing to the exigencies of the changing situation, the committee was meeting on a monthly basis during the pandemic. That, happily, was deemed no longer necessary as things settled down, and we have gone back to meeting once every two months. Like many other organisations, we have also been very thankful to again be able to meet in person.

Before the pandemic, the idea was raised and adopted to start a programme with Good Shepherd School, aimed at training primary-school aged children to sing in services. A similar scheme with Oatlands Primary School came along somewhat later. The pandemic caused some understandable interruption in these projects, but I am pleased to report that they are both now up and running. The Oatlands children meet with Kepa and Jonathan on Tuesdays and join the high-school-aged *Imvumi* choir for rehearsals on Wednesdays and for services on Sundays. The Good Shepherd children are working through the RSCM's Voice for Life course with a view to involvement in services soon. They meet with Kepa and/or Jonathan four afternoons a week. *Imvumi* itself has been rehearsing and performing regularly at services. They have been joined this year by Choral Scholars from the University, who will be receiving an honorarium for their time. The Cathedral's ecosystem of choirs also includes a small adult ensemble – the Cathedral Consort. This group has been meeting irregularly, preparing for specific services. We hope to get regular sung evensongs going again, and the Consort will be intimately involved in this process.

The principal highlight for me in the past year has been being able to return to the regular rhythms and routines of the year, as well as the 'punctuation marks' like All Souls, Christmas, Easter and the Festival. At the All-Souls' service last year, the Consort offered excerpts from Mozart's *Requiem Mass in D Minor* – a work usually performed with a large orchestra and a larger choir. The Consort had eight singers, and a piano – a mark of the versatility of our musicians. This Easter, it was decided to put on a service of nine lessons and carols for Easter. The Consort sang in this moving service which was well received both in person and online. In June, finally, after a break of two years, the National Arts Festival returned to town, coinciding with the removal of most of the remaining restrictions. It was a great celebration – the town seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. The Cathedral's usual offerings during the festival were enthusiastically received. Another important bookmark in the year was the Corpus Christi service in June, at which sang *Byrdsongs*, one of our local community

choirs. Another great highlight of the year has been the 'Organ Crawl' series of fortnightly concerts showcasing the pipe-organ heritage of our town. This idea was conceived and realised solely by our Choral Assistant and Senior Organ Scholar, Jonathan Hughes.

Of course, all these things don't just happen. I must therefore thank our Director of Music Kapa, Jonathan his assistant as well as Peter Breetzke, Peter Black and everyone else who has contributed to the musical life of our cathedral.

The principal aim of the Makana Choir School, as stated at its inception in 2009, was to foster the growth of church choral music by providing scholarships to talented young singers to attend local schools. This past year, we have given scholarships towards the school fees of four choristers. We have also awarded choral scholarships to (5) university students, in addition to Jonathan Hughes, our Choral Assistant and organ scholar. We, therefore, extend our very great thanks to New Settlers Foundation and individual donors, and to Cathy Meiklejohn our fund-raiser, without whom none of it would be possible.

I must also thank the rest of our committee for their service, and, perhaps most especially our very able Secretary, Maggy Clarke. Maggy has indicated that she will not be available to continue serving in her capacity as secretary – a role in which she has given indispensable service over many years. We thank her greatly for her invaluable contribution. Her organisation, efficiency and experience will be sorely missed!

Glyn Lloyd-Jones
Chairman, Makana Choir School Committee
September 2022