



11. Why Are Some Parts Of Our Services Sung?

'It is easier to sing than to shout.'

'He who sings his prayer prays twice.'

These two unattributed maxims provide the key to the reason why some prayers in church are sung. It is easier for the celebrant in a large church without amplification to make his or her words heard by the congregation if they are pitched or sung. This is one reason why, from quite early times, parts of the service were sung or intoned, particularly those parts which it was thought most important for the congregation to be able to hear, such as collects and the Gospel reading. There was also the thought that words sung would reach God more effectively than if merely spoken.

Music has an added importance when it is considered that all the senses - sight, hearing, scent, touch - should be fully involved in the worship of God. Hence the use of colour, music, and, sometimes, incense. (Touch? Don't forget the Peace!) Music is particularly appropriate to praise, through psalms, canticles and hymns. This is one reason why the first part of the Eucharistic prayer, where God is praised, is sometimes sung.

St Mary's has an amplification system, which (usually) works well. However, we also have a hard-working musical team and maintain the tradition of choral services, with officiant, choir and congregation all playing their proper parts in the worship of God through music and song. Long may this continue - it is much appreciated.