

The received wisdom would be that if I'm preaching more than once on a Sunday, I should reuse my sermon.

In terms of preparation time and work-life balance, that might have been a good plan today, but for one thing: the sermon series we're now in the middle of, on the role of music in worship.

This means that each of the services here today requires a rather different treatment.

I certainly couldn't have preached the same sermon at the 8am as the 9.30, for example – given that the 8am has no music, but the 9.30 has plenty.

And this evening, clearly there is a big difference in the kind of service we have and why people come to it.

There are probably more people here in the choir than in the congregation, and their take on the role of music in worship will be a very particular one.

And for the rest of you here, the fact that you're here for choral evensong implies you also have your own attitude to the role of music in worship. Individually you will all have different responses to what happens here and why, but corporately at this service there is clearly a value placed on music, as having an important role to play at church.

So we can take it as read here, tonight, that St Peter's has a strong sense of the value and role of music in worship.

What we shouldn't do is either take that for granted or be tempted to let it stagnate.

So rather than preach a long sermon, I want to do something simple and short in this sermon slot.

I've talked enough already today in the other two services, so I am going to hand it over to you, just for a couple of minutes.

Today's theme is 'discovering skills and releasing gifts'. Given that you all value the music here, I think it's highly likely that you might also have allowed your thoughts to wander a bit at times, about what *could* be, however good what already *is*.

What we have here already is a lot; but what would you love to see done to put the musical talents we have to good use, to discover and nurture unseen talents, to enjoy and celebrate the music we have, to share it more with our community and other communities?

I'm going to give you just a couple of minutes to think about that.

You don't have to talk to your neighbour, you can just think about it. But if you want to talk, please do – because sometimes ideas gain energy from being spoken, and sometimes we can go for years with a burning desire for something to happen, but we're too inhibited to tell anyone else – but then when we do, we might get a response, and things can take on a momentum of their own.

So do, if you feel inspired, talk to your neighbours now, and listen to them: take this chance to say aloud, even if only to one person, what your pipe dream for music at St Peter's is. You might find yourself saying something you didn't realise

was in your mine. Just saying it now might be the first step towards releasing more of the gifts and talents and potential of music at St Peter's.

So Lord we thank you for the music. We thank you for all that music offers us in our lives, its power to heal, to calm, to encourage, to inspire, to build community and to bring our hearts and souls into tune with you.

We thank you for all who contribute to the music of this church, whether singing, playing, conducting, or organising the music. We thank you for their gifts, and for their readiness to develop those gifts and to use them for the benefit of others.

We ask you to guide us, to keep our hearts and minds open to how we may best use our music to praise you and to serve each other.

Help us to work together and listen to each other and encourage each other, that the music in this church may be a true witness to our faith and hope in you, and an expression of our love for you and for each other. Lord, in your mercy ...

We bring before you the needs of the world

We pray for countries and communities torn apart by war and violence.

We pray for countries and communities and individuals suffering at the hands of harsh and oppressive rulers and regimes and employers.