

St Michael's Organ Afternoon for Beginners



St Michael's held an organ afternoon for beginners, and those helping them, on Saturday, 28 May, led by parish organist Dr Evelyn Stell. There were fourteen participants altogether, representing six different parishes in our archdiocese, which was quite a lot for this sort of event. Two of them were even playing three-manual instruments on Sundays. Five of our own beginners were there, and everyone seemed very enthusiastic and keen.

Father Paul started the session off with a prayer. We then looked at the nature of the organ itself, touched on the things to remember when leading the people, and, I regret to say, spent some time on an item called 'shortcuts and surgery', which told people how to cheat their way through a difficult or inadequate hymn setting; perfection is not the name of the game here. Working with chords was also a theme, with the emphasis on being simple and smooth. You can't strum the organ.

The Forth in Praise *100 Hymns for Organ Beginners* was on sale and went like hot cakes. This book is a sort of hybrid, giving a melody line, a bass part and chords, thus catering for piano students around grades 2/3 as well as chord-players. Even experienced pianists find it useful for instant sight-reading, and the bass line can be used for pedal practice.

An introduction to pedalling seems to be what most people would like as a follow-up. So perhaps sometime in the autumn we'll have a look at that aspect of organ-playing.

EFS

June 2016