



Friends' Newsletter

St Francis' Choir Inc. 326 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. 3000

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Vol. 33 No. 1, June 2025

Director's Report

Dear Friends,

As winter sets in, the season is a reminder that somehow nearly half of 2025 has already



passed by. St Francis' Choir has also been busy in marking the liturgical seasons. After a late Lent, the choir moved on to celebrate the ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter, singing a customary selection of fine liturgical music. As usual, these liturgies drew very large

Haydn's Stabat Mater, Good Friday

crowds, overflowing into the adjoining marquee, and on Good Friday afternoon

standing right back to the Lonsdale Street fence. What a privilege to sing this music to so many and know that the choir's musical ministry touches thousands of people.

One of the highlights of this year's Holy Week was the presentation of Haydn's glorious but seldom performed *Stabat Mater* with choir, soloists and orchestra. We last presented this work in 2009 and had planned to revive it in 2020, but alas, COVID made this impossible. After such a long wait, it was very satisfying to see the nave of the church full for the performance and to receive many appreciative comments afterwards.

We are currently in the process of finalising the music list for the second half of the year and in coming weeks you will be able find the details on our website. One of the other celebrations that COVID prevented was that of the 175th anniversary of both St Francis' Church and St Francis' Choir (the choir having sung at the church's opening on 23 October 1845). Five years on, we are determined to celebrate the 180th anniversary enthusiastically. It has been decided to have the celebration slightly early, on the feast of St Francis which we will observe on **Sunday, 5 October at the 11.00am Mass**. We do hope you can join us for this very special occasion.

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Over recent months the choir has had its fair share of comings and goings. On a sad note, we mourn the passing of two great friends of the choir: Sandra Street and Tony McNally. Tributes to both of these wonderful people are found in this newsletter.



St Francis' Choir farewelling Santana

We also bade farewell to our friend and loyal tenor Santana Ashanth Royan, who after a happy time in the choir has moved to Denmark to take up what he describes as his 'dream job'. We thank him for his great dedication to the choir and wish him every success and blessing as he embarks on this new chapter in his life. Happily, we have also had the pleasure of welcoming a new choral scholar, Shelby Holland. You will also find a profile of Shelby in this issue.

As we draw close to the end of the financial year, we encourage you to consider making a tax-deductible donation and/or renew your membership to help us maintain our living tradition of liturgical music. In Australia, St Francis' Choir offers a unique and important contribution not only to the life of the Catholic Church, but also to the broader community, ensuring that St Francis' Church continues to be a 'place of festive celebration, ... of welcome and meeting...' as described in the *Rule of Life* of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament which has administered the church since 1929. Any donation, no matter how small, is very welcome and will be gratefully received. Details of how to donate are included in this newsletter.

In conclusion, the choir joins with me in thanking you all for your ongoing support and wishing you and your loved ones every blessing. We look forward to welcoming you to St Francis' very soon.

Tony Way
Director of Music

In Brief

Welcome back to all our Friends. We have had a wonderful start to the year with so much uplifting music being sung every Sunday at the 11.00am Mass. On behalf of the Friends, we thank Tony and Anthony for their musical leadership and pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of all our regular choir members.

As we approach the end of the financial year, we ask you to consider supporting the choir by renewing your membership to the Friends and/or by making a tax-deductible donation. You may do this by using the enclosed form or by using the EFT details included in this newsletter. As always, my thanks to all the Friends of the Choir for your continual support.

Marilyn Jamieson, Co-ordinator, Friends of St Francis' Choir

Vale Sandra Street & Tony McNally

*It is with great sadness that we note the death of two great friends of St Francis' Choir:
Sandra Street and Tony McNally.*



Sandra Street, along with her husband, former magistrate Patrick, became devoted supporters of the choir when they moved from the suburbs to inner-city Carlton in the 1980s.

Regularly attending the 11.00am Mass, there were generous donors to the choir as well as becoming great friends of many choristers and choir supporters.

In 2005, Patrick became one of the inaugural trustees of the St Francis' Choir Foundation.

Sandra's bright and bubbly personality will be sorely missed by all those who knew her.

Tony McNally was a staunch supporter of the choir, having been a regular



worshipper at St Francis' for over half a century. While his work in the arts as a highly sought after company manager took him around the world, working with such luminaries as Leonard Bernstein and Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, his spiritual home remained St Francis', which he lovingly referred to as the 'Mission Chapel'.

In 1991, he managed the Living Stones Festival at St Francis' which celebrated the sesquicentenary of the laying of the foundation stone in 1841. In 2005 he founded the St Francis' Choir Foundation and remained a member of its advisory committee until

his death. After a long and courageous battle with illness, we will miss his wit and wisdom but give thanks for his extraordinary contribution to both St Francis' Choir and St Francis' Church.

Spotlight on Shelby Holland



Earlier this year, St Francis' Choir was pleased to welcome soprano Shelby Holland as our latest choral scholar. Shelby grew up in Texas where she had many formative musical experiences, especially singing in choirs. She also learnt violin, piano and acoustic guitar, playing violin in her high school orchestra. Since moving to Melbourne for postgraduate studies, she has been a member of the Newman College Choir. We extend a very warm welcome to Shelby and wish her a most happy and fulfilling time with St Francis' Choir.

Donating to the Choir

- You can donate using the form accompanying this newsletter.
- Given the current delivery speed of ordinary mail, we encourage to use the donation facility on the choir website www.stfrancischoir.org.au or
- You can also donate by EFT:

St Francis' Choir

BSB 033068

Account 186383

If you are making an electronic donation, please email us at stfmusic@blessedsacrament.com.au to advise us of your donation and then we can issue a receipt.

Thank you!