***The Crystal Ball***

*Music for January 2023*

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fter a highly successful visit to our diocesan cathedral on New Year’s Day, which you can read about elsewhere in this publication, your choir returns to normal duties on 8 January with a performance of Elgar’s wonderful *The Spirit of the Lord* to celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord in the morning. This will be followed by our traditional Epiphany carol service in the evening, in which the kings will make their annual journey accompanied by suitable seasonal music for choir and congregation (and candles). Please make a note, though, that the service will not begin until 7 pm this year.

A miniature by Tallis provides our musical commentary on 15 January: *O Lord, give thy Holy Spirit* is one of a number of small-scale English anthems which show how a composer of genius can say something valuable even on such a small canvas.

Choral Evensong follows as usual on the fourth Sunday, 22 January. Some old favourites make an appearance here: the vigorous and cheerful responses by Sanders which we sang at the cathedral; Tavener’s classic setting of Blake, *The Lamb*, for the introit; Sumsion in A for the canticles, a joyful and tuneful setting which picks up on the mood of the responses; and a tender setting by Howells of words by Frances Chesterton (wife of G. K.), *Here is the little door*, one of the composer’s three ‘carol-anthems’.

This month, of course, we have a fifth Sunday; and this will be the occasion on which we depart from our usual form of worship to share the annual Covenant Service with our friends from Churches Together. We shall contribute two items: the familiar arrangement of music by Christopher Tye, *O come, ye servants of the Lord*, as an introit; and something less familiar to us, although well-known in wider musical circles, the setting of *Panis angelicus* by the Belgian composer César Franck. This is said to have originated as an organ improvisation at a Christmas service in 1861, but soon appeared in a choral version, and in one or another of its various arrangements is now the best-known work by this composer. The words are taken from a Eucharistic hymn by St Thomas Aquinas, which Franck clothes in appealingly Romantic style.

Such are the delights in store for this month; come back next month for further revelations about our attempts to enhance our worship.

***Succentor***