

## Claire Cox

### Singing Angels and Archangels



At the Children's Society Autumn Fair in 2018, Martin interviewed Claire Cox, founder of Singing Angels, our children's choir based at St Andrew's The Straits.

***Martin: Tell me about your autumn and Christmas plans.***

Christmas is the most exciting time of the year for Singing Angels and Archangels. They recently sang at St Andrew's Harvest Festival Service.

The group changes the theme of the songs every six weeks or so; since September they've been 'Thanking God for His wonderful gifts'.

At the same time they've been getting ready for Christmas and they'll be following that theme till the end of the year.



They have seven showcases over Christmas, including The Lower Gornal Lights Switch-On event, St Andrew's Christmas Fair, St Andrew's Christingle service, St Andrew's Carol Service, All Saints' Christmas Fair and the 'Black Country Well-being' event.

At Mary Stevens Hospice they sang at their Easter event; also at their SummerFest event at Himley Hall - and will sing again at their Christmas Event.

The Christmas repertoire consists of 16 songs.



***Martin: I noticed that your son Albert sang a solo at the Autumn Fair. How does the opportunity to sing solo help the children?***

If any of the children fancy it, they can do a solo. The group offer it, but we don't put any pressure on them to do one. It's a development opportunity for all of them.

This was a huge step forward for Albert. The effect on children's confidence is massive. One of the Archangels (aged 8 plus) who has only been at Angels one year, sang 'Amazing Grace' as a solo in the summer. Her mother was beside herself with surprise and joy because it was so out of character for her.

***Martin: What are your plans for engaging parents?***

The group is currently praying over the prospect of 'Café Church' with potential for a session before Singing Angels begins, on a Sunday afternoon. A consideration is opening about 30-45 minutes earlier for families to meet over a drink.

Time can often be tight on a Sunday at present - parents are dropping children off and often want to chat to each other and to me, but I can't offer quality time to talk as I'm busy preparing for the session.

'Café Church' would mean they could relax and chat over a cup of tea beforehand, which would be ideal.

Parents come along to all showcases held throughout the year and I share a summary of the Christian messages talked about in the sessions.

Singing Angels has been going now for over two years and special services, such as the recent Harvest Festival Service saw large numbers in attendance.

***Martin: What are your plans for 2019?***

The first theme will be Peace. This year they have covered Friendship, Getting to know Jesus, Discipleship, Faith and Hope.

Once the theme is chosen, the songs follow that theme.



***Martin: Your song choices include secular songs don't they?***

They do a nice split of secular and religious songs, yet the secular songs are given a religious interpretation relevant to the theme.

***Martin: How else is the choir helping to develop the work of St Andrew's?***

One of the Angels lost her nanny not so long ago; there was a lovely gathering in the church to support her as she said goodbye. So Singing Angels has been able to reach out to families and support them when they're having really difficult times.

That's where the Café Church would help, because while the group would like to help at present, there is not enough time to chat.



There is a break of around 15 minutes in the middle of the sessions, when they have a story or a Christian message, and a prayer. The group often prays for people known by the Angels.

The Archangels choose who they want to pray for, and thank God for. The children themselves are very keen to read the prayers, so much so that they now run in alphabetical order - so every Angel gets a turn!

***Martin: Tell me about your journey in faith.***

I'm training to be an ALM (Authorised Lay Minister) at the moment - through which I will become a 'Worship Leader'.

I re-found God when my husband Paul battled cancer from 2008 to 2010, and when our son was born very poorly in 2011. My faith flourished from there. I was confirmed at Worcester Cathedral in 2012, am currently an altar server, do bible readings and lead intercessions. The last ten years have been a whirlwind, feeling that God is always calling me to do more.

There may be further steps in my faith journey and it could be that becoming an ALM is just the first step. Moving to part time at my employer Mondelez has facilitated additional time for me to discern what God wants me to do.

***Martin: How do you cope with working and all the work you do for the church?***

I work three days a week and feel I have more time to devote to serving God. I use my Thursdays and Fridays to help with my training, and I'm also doing the Bishop's Certificate in Cradley Heath.



***Martin: Thank you very much for all the work you do for the children and for our church, Claire.***

**Author: Martin Jones**

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