



CHOIRLINK

*The Prayer and Praise bulletin of the
Festivals of Male Voice Praise*

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Welcome to another edition of Choirlink! It had been hoped that, by now, all restrictions in the UK would be lifted but COVID Delta has put paid to that, for now, at least. Some countries have been faring better, others worse. We give thanks for what we can do, wherever we are. Council may next meet in September, so without their business to report we dig straight into news from individual choirs, beginning with Australia, where choirs have actually been meeting.

Australia

SYDNEY CHRISTIAN MALE VOICE CHOIR *David Gordon*

As with many other choirs, practices ceased in March 2020, when pandemic restrictions forbade singing in NSW ... so it was with much joy that we resumed practice in April this year, when the restrictions were eased. It turned out we weren't as rusty as we thought! We

scheduled a presentation on 18th July — but in late June we were again prevented from practising, and it seems unlikely that the restriction will be lifted any time soon ... so we have postponed until October or later.

However, we set up meetings via Zoom in April 2020, and these continued every Friday night until December, restarting at the end of January 2021.

As I sit at the keyboard on the afternoon of Monday 12th July, here in England we are expecting our Prime Minister to confirm relaxation of many of the COVID restrictions we have endured in one form or another over the past 15 months. A similar situation is expected in the Nations. The decision is not without risk: COVID cases are rising steeply in many areas and not everyone is vaccinated. Some would advocate further caution; others feel he has been too cautious already. One thing he does not lack is advice! It is his decision, though, and it's bound to be a tough one. We all hope it is the right one.

We are also likely to face momentous decisions both as individuals and as choirs. Certainly, some choirs have been weakened by loss of members (some, sadly, through COVID) and are now very few in number. Many men wonder if they can still sing after so long! A few choirs have kept the flame burning through Zoom rehearsals, as we have seen, and seem in a good position to re-start quickly. Each individual situation is different but in all cases, it has not been possible to sing publicly (even, until recently, in Australia). No-one is sure when bookings might start coming in once more. This is especially true of residential homes where the 'bread and butter' work of many choirs is to be found. This much is certain: we have all missed the personal fellowship when rehearsing, and shared sense of commitment when singing together to God's glory. There really is no substitute, is there?

We may be at a crossroads as a movement. I am in no position to offer advice to those deciding their choir's future. However, when making such decisions, we should always ask ourselves: will the outcome of our proposals be honouring to the Lord, and do we believe them to be in line with His will? God does not stand still; nor should we. As He closes one door, He may open another; He only asks that we be obedient to His calling upon us. If proclaiming His Word in song through Male Voice Praise is still His desire, those doors will open (though we might still need to knock!). If not, we should recognise a closed door for what it is. His redemptive work continues regardless and His Word will not return to Him void. In that we can take great comfort!

Thank you so much to all who have contributed. Please keep in touch regarding your choir's future and plans. I expect the next edition to be in October by which time many, including Council, will have considered the way forward. In the meantime, brethren, "pray without ceasing".

Yours in Christ, Vaughan

These have been a great way to keep in touch with choir members, and various comments have indicated that the sessions have been appreciated. The invitation was open to past members, some of whom joined from time to time; we were delighted when a couple of the men from the Brisbane choir also joined the Zoom sessions.

We have been pleased to welcome two new men - 2B and 2T - who were invited by one of our 1T members. Both seem to be enjoying the experience.

We're now in winter, which typically has resulted in a reduced attendance. The end of last year saw a couple of members sign off after many years, and we are grateful for those years of fellowship and gospel presentation.

We look forward to being able to resume "proclaiming Jesus - no other name" - but, realistically, our access to aged-care facilities is likely to be severely curtailed as the operators are super-cautious, their residents being in the "high-risk" category of catching the coronavi-

rus. We will see what avenues remain open, and what new avenues the Lord opens for this work.

BRISBANE FESTIVAL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Neil Moss

Noel Gomm whom we mentioned as terminally ill in our last advice passed away on the 2nd March 2021. He was laid to rest on Tuesday the 9th March 2021 at the Mt. Gravatt cemetery. Although the choir did not sing at the service his brother and nephew both expressed their appreciation of quite a number of Choir men and their wives being present at the service. We also mentioned Richard Goodison requiring surgery. Unfortunately his dear wife Helen passed away on the 8th April 2021 aged 92 years. A total of twelve choir members and eight wives attended the memorial service and Burial in the nearby Garden cemetery. This was held at Southport on the Gold Coast where they lived. Richard has just had surgery in the last week. Please pray for him.

From here and there...

*Mike Dewhurst writes from **Bolton** saying that at this time of year they would have been on their summer break anyway, but would have had dates for their return to practice.*

At the moment they have not made any plans for the future but hope to meet in August to consider their winter programme.

It remains to be seen how many choir men return and what level of witness can be produced. No engagements are planned as churches are also looking as to what is happening before they make contact. Similarly, meetings in homes for the elderly are likely also to be on hold for a while yet.

*Gerald Durrant has written from **Uxbridge**. He says the only item of news would be that on Saturday 3rd July, Ann Swallow arranged a Thanksgiving Service for her late husband Richard at Waterloo Road Church in Uxbridge. She had waited over a year for this hoping that restrictions would be lifted and there could be a full service with the choir singing. But it was not to be and a 'Covid service' with limited numbers and no singing was*

arranged. It was very moving and beautifully planned under the circumstances.

Gerald himself is due to have a cataract operation on 30th July, and will only consider plans for the choir after that time, and when the Government has lifted restrictions.

***Tom Rowley** writes with the following message to choir men:*

"My twin brother and I both plan to celebrate our 90th birthday in August and wonder if anyone remembers us. We formed the Bolton MVP choir shortly after leaving the army in 1952. In 1959 I started the Bognor MVP Choir and later my brother Arthur started the Sheffield MVP Choir. Between 1961 and 1968 I worked with the Norfolk and Norwich MVP before going to Sierra Leone for 10 years, where I started a choir at the Bible College and in Freetown. If anyone is still around we would like them to celebrate with us. Yours Sincerely, Tom Rowley."

*Tom is well-known to a number of choir men and can be contacted at:
tomrowley80@gmail.com*

practices ASAP, while others may be unsure, depending upon Government guidelines. The problem then could be the ability to set up a balanced choir. The one thing of which we can be sure is that the pandemic did not take the Lord by surprise and we are seeking to know His will for the future. Speaking personally, I cannot wait to sing at a Festival and enjoy the fellowship that accompanies it.

With Christian love and greetings to all our brothers in the fellowship of FMVP.

**KEDRON GOSPEL MALE
VOICE CHOIR**
Walter Brown

Greetings from the Peterhead Choir. As you'll all be aware the pandemic has stopped all outreach services and also prevented us meeting as a choir. As things are starting to open up we are hoping it won't be too long before we are permitted to resume practising again.

During the past year and a half, three of our choir members, Al-

istair Stephen, Stuart Drysdale and John Stephen have gone home to be with their Lord and Saviour. They will be greatly missed by us all. Also our brother Ian Cordiner needs our prayers as he struggles with illness, having recently been in hospital but now home.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all other choirs at this time and we trust that things will get back to normal soon.

God bless you all!

**WHITSTABLE GOSPEL
MALE VOICE CHOIR**
Freda Tassell

It is very many months since the choir last met, during which time some folk are no longer able to be active members of the choir, for various reasons.

The choir committee is hoping to hold a meeting shortly, at which they will consider the future of the choir.

The committee would appreciate prayers for wisdom that they would make the right decisions.

Ken Pitcher, our previous Conductor, has not been at all well. He has been in and out of hospital over the last several weeks. We received advice at the weekend that he will not be returning to his own accommodation but has been able to get access to a unit in a Baptist home at Mudgeeraba just behind the Gold Coast near to where his daughter lives. This is a big relief to Ken as he has not been able to cope with the cleaning and maintenance of his unit as well as doing his own cooking. Please pray that Ken's health will improve in his new location.

This year we have been able to practise most weeks at our new practice venue. There have been some lockdowns including recent weekends. We have been able to do three presentations in 2021. The first was at Janoah Gardens, a retirement village at Manly West in Brisbane where there were a good number in attendance. The presentation was enthusiastically received. On the 8th May we travelled to Boonah to present a Festival in the Church of Christ. This received very good reviews from

those who attended but the numbers were quite low compared to previous visits. This is a town south of Brisbane which we try to visit each two years.

On the 12th June we visited Maryborough, a town about three and a half hours' drive north of Brisbane. Again we try to visit each two years but owing to Covid had not been there since 2018. A new venue was tried being St Stephen's Uniting Church. The church was very cooperative and because of Covid made it a ticketed event (no charge). This was promoted through their diocese and some neighbouring ones and we had 153 people booked for the event. With 21 choir members from Brisbane and 11 from Bundaberg plus our conductors and accompanist there were approximately 190 people in total. This was an excellent result from a regional centre. The comments were very positive and we have been invited back to this venue. The next morning we attended a local Church and sang a short bracket of songs at the start of the service and also at the end. We were then treated to a lovely Barbeque

lunch followed by a variety of sweet cakes and a cuppa. God provided a lovely warm, sunny winter's day so we could sit outside and enjoy fellowship. We trust we will be able to enjoy future presentations later this

year in Toowoomba and Mt Tamborine as well as some Christmas programmes.

We trust all those in Great Britain have a good end to your year as well. God Bless, Neil.

United Kingdom

HIGHLAND GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Ernie Collinson

With the help and guidance of our conductor and Musical Director Eileen Mackintosh, Highland Male Voice Gospel Choir has been meeting regularly every two weeks on Zoom enjoying fellowship, prayer and individual singing practice almost continuously throughout the pandemic.

The normal Monday evening practice time has been maintained when a core piece is rehearsed followed by a time of corporate prayer led individually by several of the choir members. Having been chosen previously either by Eileen or from a selection provided by Choir Members, a hymn is then enjoyed by

a regular number of around twenty choir members. We are also joined by several members of the Moray Choir each evening and recently members from Northern Ireland have 'Zoomed' in. With this in mind we would like to offer an invitation to all Choir members within the Movement to join with us on a Monday evening at 7 for 7.15pm for fellowship and praise when these sessions recommence in mid-August after the summer break. Please email Eileen Mackintosh on: eileen_mackintosh@yahoo.com (remember to use the underscore between eileen and mackintosh) in order to obtain the Zoom details beforehand.

During the last 16 months, although not Covid related, two members of our choir - Ian Col-

quhoun and Sam MacDonald, who was 90 years old - went home to be with their Lord and Saviour. During that time also, we sadly learned that George Nash, a former Highland Gospel Male Voice Choir conductor, passed away. There is now no more pain, only the sweet presence of his Lord.

In addition to Zoom rehearsals, because of the extended evening light available in The Highlands during mid-summer, the opportunity of practising outdoors is being considered; however this may be considerably tempered by the unpredictable Scottish weather (and the midges!!). Meanwhile, with the enthusiasm and encouragement from Eileen we look forward together to whatever the Lord has in store for us.

CHELTENHAM AND DISTRICT MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

David Kendrick

The Cheltenham Choir, like most of the other FMVP Choirs, has not been able to meet since 16th March 2020,

when we held an impromptu meeting to make a few decisions regarding the continuation of the Choir in the foreseeable future; little did we realise what devastating effect the pandemic was going to have upon the Choir Movement. Here we are still unsure as to when we can recommence our practice sessions and what will be the attitude of Care Homes and Churches to us returning to hold services with them.

As a choir, we have kept in touch via email and telephone, occasionally; unlike some choirs, we have not mastered the technology to allow us to practise via applications like Zoom, hence we have not seen each other physically for sixteen months. I met Mark, our Leader, at the local medical centre a few months ago and I see one of my 2nd Bass colleagues at our monthly GNFE! Zoom meetings (formerly GideonsUK).

We will have to arrange to meet in some way, in the near future, to discuss the future of the Choir. Naturally some of us will be keen to recommence