



CHOIRLINK

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of Choirlink. Another season, another set of changes. Sincere thanks to everyone who has sent information and thoughts to share with us all. Please can I recommend you read the item below. If you are in the position of having left a choir, or the choir has closed, this is a good way to remain connected with FMVP.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Mike Dewhurst, Council Secretary

Sadly, the pandemic has taken its toll on our movement. Many choirs have had to call it a day and have been forced to close due to falling numbers amongst their ranks. This has made it impossible for them to continue as an effective witness.

This has left many choirmen, who would love to continue in fellowship with FMVP, without a choir within reasonable travelling distance for them to join.

As Council we became aware of this situation at our last meeting in

September 2021 and in order to help choirmen who no longer are part of an affiliated choir and wish to continue in fellowship with us, they can now do so by becoming an Associate Member of FMVP.

This will enable ex-choirmen to still be involved in official FMVP meetings such as choir engagements reasonably local to them, and area Festivals they may wish to attend. They will subscribe to the movement on an individual basis and be covered by Insurance as though they were a member of an affiliated choir. We will ensure

they are kept up to date with events near to them and provide them a copy of Choirlink when it is published.

If you wish to become an Associate Member, please contact the Council secretary for an application form either by post or e-mail:

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HIGHLAND GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR *Ernie Collinson*

Happy New Year from the Highlands of Scotland! As I write the snow is falling steadily and heavily on a freezing January evening.

It's been so good to be back and be able to have weekly face to face meetings and singing again although, it has to be said, when it came to meeting in person, we all had different perceptions as to what our sound would be like. However, it was so encouraging that attendance and support had been maintained at our regular venue of Inshes Church, Inverness.

But...in spite of the Christian Fellowship that has obviously been enjoyed, Coronavirus restrictions have had a devastating effect on events this year for the Choir to the

point that they have hardly occurred at all. That is why it was not long after returning to practice that our attention turned to Christmas.

Following the devastating outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in the U.K. in 2001, the owners of the auction mart for sheep and cattle in Dingwall, a small town some 10 miles north of Inverness, held a Christmas Carol Service in the auction 'ring' that December, and since then it has always been a tradition that The Choir sang there for the farming community. However, in 2020 the event had to be cancelled due to Coronavirus.

In eager anticipation of being able to reach out by singing once again, and with the help, encouragement and guidance from our Musical Director Eileen Mackintosh, our rehearsals took on a real purpose as Christmas approached! Our

prayers were indeed answered when it was finally confirmed that The Mart was prepared to hold the event once again. Hallelujah!

Unsurprisingly, however, the congregation numbered far less than on previous occasions. This was primarily due to the cautious awareness of Coronavirus, which at the time was still quite prevalent in the Highlands. Possibly, it had also been anticipated that due to one of the ongoing restrictions, which was to have the venue ‘well ventilated’, it would have been extremely cold on a December afternoon - even inside! It was — extremely! But it was still truly wonderful to be able to sing The Lord’s Praise in public again.

We return for practice, rested and enthused, later this month and immediately start rehearsing a programme of Praise for the community in Fortrose, a picturesque Victorian village and former royal burgh popular with both locals and visitors for spotting bottlenose dolphins in the Moray Firth, about six miles north-east of Inverness.

As far as the coming year is concerned, hope is God’s speciality. He invented it. When things looked bleak, Jesus came along bearing all the possibility of freedom and eternal life.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13)

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES CHOIR NEWS

Keith Youngman, Chairman

I am pleased to say there has been some return to singing and fellowship in the months up to Christmas. The highlight was 2 afternoon engagements for the Uxbridge choir who were joined by choir members from Luton and Hertford making a choir of 15 for the second service. These services were very well received with one being made available over the internet. It was also greatly rewarding for the choir members to be back singing again.

All choirs have a reduced number of choir members due to an ageing membership and I believe these opportunities for different choirs to come together, where practically possible, provides one model for the future of the movement. This is made easier thanks to the music and practice tracks being available from the FMVP website allowing private practices to take place in advance of attending a joint practice or engage-

ment. This wonderful resource and the provision of Associate Membership also makes it easier for choirmen no longer part of a regular choir to participate in such engagements.

In Whitstable the choir met in early December to discuss the future. After an hour or so of prayer and discussion, they planned to meet once a month from February 2022 (when the weather should improve) for a time of fellowship, prayer and hopefully some singing. Their main problem is that the accompanist for their practices has moved away from the area to be closer to her family. They are not planning on any engagements yet but will be reviewing the situation each month when they meet.

SWANSEA GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Huw Jones

The Swansea Choir started practising in early October for our CHRISTMAS Praise event. The practices went well under the guidance of our conductors John Davies and Gareth Radford. Sheila Flannagan has done a fantastic job as our accompanist.

Before every practice on the Friday evenings our chairman Rev.

Jim Webber spoke on Ephesians with great clarity and encouragement. We had around twenty men at each practice which was very encouraging.

The Christmas event took place on Saturday evening, 11th December at The Waterfront Church in SA1. There were twenty-one members singing with a congregation of around eighty. The Gospel was preached faithfully by Alastair Flannagan. The soloist was Lydia Havard who sang three lovely items, one of which was “Oh, Holy Night”. Many of the congregation commented on how it had been a real blessing to be there. Praise The Lord.

CHELTENHAM AND DISTRICT MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

David Kendrick

It is now 21 months since we met as a choir and 24 since we sang together at a venue. The majority of us had hoped we would be recommencing practices and fulfilling engagements in January 2022. However, Omicron put paid to such hopes and expectations. The only consolation is knowing our Heavenly Father has everything under control, and we will know when the time is right for us to

regroup. The apostle Paul informs us ‘we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose’.

We know that we must be careful about our restart date since some of our choir members need to be cautious about mixing, especially when we start to visit Care Homes. We were disappointed to have to decline two invitations to sing at two of our Care Homes at Christmastime, as well as an invitation to sing at a Christmas Fayre in the Baptist Church where we usually practise, when things are normal.

The widow of one of our late choir members has recently been called into the presence of her Lord and her wish was that the Choir should sing at her Thanksgiving Service. We have managed to form a quartet to sing ‘We’ll All be There’ at the service later this month.

As things stand, we are unsure as to when we can recommence as a choir. It could be towards Easter-time, by which time I am hoping to be on the right side of the orthopaedic surgery for the replacement of my left hip, which is causing me a great deal of excruciating pain. Like the majority of my choir colleagues, I cannot wait to be back singing in the wonderful service of

our Lord and Master.

Meanwhile, we send our love and best wishes to our fellow brothers in the FMVP choirs.

[Let’s please remember David in prayer concerning the timing of his hip operation, given the pressure on the NHS and the cancelling of so much booked surgery.]

ST. IVES MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

Frank Stevens

The St. Ives Male Voice Praise Choir met in November 2021 for the first time since lockdown and much to my surprise, 17 members turned up for practice. A few others were on holiday or unwell at the time. Like many choirs with a two year absence, a few choir members are now singing in the Heavenly Choir but encouragingly we have been blessed with three new members and the possibility of a couple more, so we should be around the 25 mark. We begin practice again on January 13th.

The invitation is given to any choir members who come down to the west of Cornwall for a holiday to look us up and come and join us on Thursday evenings, 7.30 at Hellesveor Chapel (at the top of the town with a car park).

A NEW SONG - *Bill Mowat, Moray Male Voice Gospel Choir*

“A new song tonight” the choir leader announces. First, the notes - and most of us can't read music, so we listen while he plays it through. We follow the music, and see it rising and falling across the lines. We see where it jumps up and down, and with practice manage to make the jumps safely, landing on the right note, picking up the tune, learning our part.

And there's all those note shapes - open and closed, dots and strokes, tails up or down. The music-readers are in their element. They notice comments like “*f*”, “*ff*”, “*mf*”, “*rall.*” and “*cresc.*”, and they know what to do. The rest of us have to be told. Out come highlighters, on go the hand-written comments. We wonder why musicians don't speak English. “Watch the commas lads”, the leader tells us, “take a breath here, but not there”, and “remember to smile”. Sometimes it seems too hard work to smile. But, we get it done. Eventually the tune, timing, blend and diction are all acceptable, and familiar, so that we begin to relax a little, then something truly wonderful happens - we hear the words!

“The Lord is my Shepherd, away then with care, no want shall I know
while His mercy I share”

“Since I have been redeemed, I will glory in my Saviour's name”

“There is a Redeemer, Jesus God's own Son”

“He took my sins away, and keeps me singing every day”

“Grace , Grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all my sin”

Our hearts fill up to think He loves us so. Sometimes we can hardly sing for wonder and emotion, yet our spirits rise to the occasion and we worship Him. Heaven seems to touch earth for a moment, and we are lost in it: singing of Him, singing for Him, singing to Him.

Then we gladly acknowledge that He *has* taken us out of a horrible pit and put our feet upon a rock. He *really has* put a new song in our hearts, even praise to His name.

So we will sing our new song at events, and in our homes, and while walking the dog, or while working in the garden, in fact, through all the days of our journey here on earth.

And in eternity, in heaven, there its sentiments will glorify Him who is truly worthy of all our praise.

Bring on the new songs!

Worldwide

BRISBANE FESTIVAL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Neil Moss

Greetings to all from Brisbane where we are in the middle of our hot, humid summer weather. We are also experiencing regular changes in rules due to the various Covid19 outbreaks. As a result we were not able to do any presentations after visiting Marybrough in June 2021. However in September and October we were able to get back into practice albeit with sometimes having to wear masks.

On the 16th October we joined with the Toowoomba Choir for a presentation in the town with 40 voices and a good balance of parts. This was very well received by an audience of perhaps 150. Belong Church, a converted commercial premises, was a new venue to us. However we found that the acoustics were very good and the Toowoomba group provided an excellent electronic keyboard. It was a joy to be able to again sing the Gospel in a public venue.

We sang at the Seniors Christian Convention held at Mt Tambourine Christian Convention Centre on the 13th December. This is about 1½ hours south of Brisbane

and west of the Gold Coast. More than 200 delegates from all over South East Queensland were able to sample the type of Gospel outreach we could bring to their Church or nearby venue. The 50 minute presentation was very well received. We had previously asked for prayer for Richard Goodison who had undergone surgery and lives at the Gold Coast. After attending some practices Richard sang at this presentation so those prayers have been answered.

We then began preparing for our Christmas programmes whilst still uncertain about any possible lockdowns. However God was very gracious. We also had a BYO break up lunch on 20th December at Colmslie Reserve on the Brisbane River. We had a good time of fellowship although numbers were low due to other commitments. All of our Christmas presentations were held on the one weekend. On the 3rd December we sang in Hill-song Church's courtyard after their evening Chapel service. In between the two parts of our presentation, they had an official lighting of their Christmas lights and fireworks. Many of the audience thanked us for the presentation.

On Sunday 5th December we

attended The Plains, a Christian retirement and old age facility at Eight Mile Plains in Southern Brisbane. Here we sang to a large audience with residents and visitors joining in some community carols. In 36 years we have only missed singing there at The Plains because of Covid19. Many of the older faces have passed on but it was great to meet others who were enthusiastic with the presentation. We then travelled to Wynnum Christian Community Church where we were treated to a lovely two course dinner, contributions for which helped with their mission fund for sending containers of clothes, tools and other basic necessities to poor countries in Africa. We gave a 75 minute evening presentation followed by supper. Many spoke of their appreciation of the programme. Some had never been to that venue before but responded to a personal invitation from friends or neighbours.

We give praise to God for allow-

ing us to be able to do a limited number of presentations in a difficult year. I trust you have all had a blessed Christmas time and pray that we will all have opportunities to sing the Gospel in 2022.

SYDNEY CHRISTIAN MALE VOICE CHOIR

David Gordon

Last year was essentially a write-off for the Sydney Christian Male Voice Choir. As indicated in past issues of Choirlink, we had one engagement that was on, off, on, off; that's now on again (tentatively) for 10th April as an Easter programme. We ended the year with a barbecue lunch on 8th December and look forward to our first face-to-face practice for 2022 on 28th January. Meanwhile we trust that we will not fall prey to Covid19. New restrictions have recently come in to combat the omicron variant; they are in place until 27th January but if extended, we may not meet on the 28th!

Please do remember in prayer Paul Davies (Council treasurer and lately leader of Bristol Evangel Choir) who continues with chemotherapy for amyloidosis. This makes him very tired, and the condition itself causes sudden breathlessness which recently led to an overnight stay in hospital. Because of the treatment, Paul is also having to stay home to avoid Covid.

Let us also remember the FMVP Annual Day of Prayer on 19th March, James McRoberts' birthday. How we need to pray in such tough times!

I will try to produce the next Choirlink for Easter, so I would be grateful for contributions by Saturday 2nd April.

Yours in Christ, Vaughan