



# CHOIRLINK

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

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*It has been a soggy winter and early spring in the UK, and the dreary outlook continues. With ongoing conflicts worldwide, things seem to be going from bad to worse, but Easter reminds us that we have a hope in our risen Saviour. That's something we can proclaim! We begin with details of Council's latest meeting.*

## **COUNCIL REPORT: MARCH 2024**

*Ian Stangoe, Chairman*

Council met through Zoom on 6<sup>th</sup> March with all present except Huw Jones who delegated Kenny Dykes in his place. Special welcome to John Buchanan who logged in at 2:30am all the way from Australia. There's dedication for you.

Ian read James 1:17-18 reminding us that all good things come from God and that we should always try to show that to others as exhorted in 2 Cor 9:8 'God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work'.

Paul has produced a financial report but there were few transactions in the last 6 months. The Insurance indemnity has been renewed and certificates will be issued to choirs shortly. Council agreed to again fund the insurance cost from existing funds.

Choirlink is still being well used with 13 choirs having submitted articles over the past year, and many contributing regularly. Council thanked Vaughan for his sterling work in producing this faithfully. Mike had written a summary of a questionnaire recently sent to

choir leaders to gain some understanding of the ‘state of play’ within the movement. It’s encouraging to note some choirs have gained members (all through personal invite from choirmen) and the invaluable fellowship experienced in practice times.

Ian outlined 2 options to resolve

the issue of music downloads: either to create a new website or try to have a web designer review/repair the existing. It was agreed to try the latter, with Alfred also able to supply music on request to choir leaders.

Ian thanked all for attending and Mike closed the meeting in prayer.

## United Kingdom

### ST. IVES MALE VOICE PRAISE

*Frank Stevens*

On Good Friday there was a service held at Fore Street Methodist Church, St. Ives, with a musical theme. The St. Ives Male Voice Praise Choir took part and sang four pieces. This was the first engagement by the choir since Christmas and it went down well with the full chapel. The four items were: The Saviour is waiting, Where He may lead me, The Cross and Tomb are empty and finally The Wondrous Cross. Part of the service which includes the last two items can be seen on YouTube under Good Friday Reflections at FSMC.

I trust your Easter was a blessing. As before, any choir members who visit this end of the country are very welcome to come and join us

on Thursday evenings, 7.30pm at Hellesveor Chapel, St Ives.

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### HIGHLAND GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

*Eric Halkett*

We hope everyone had a blessed Easter and are looking forward to the Lord’s redeeming Grace in the joys of Spring.

The choir continues with a faithful attendance at practice with an average of 16 choirmen, but we are still short of tenors – mainly first tenors, and that affects our balance at engagements.

However, they have faithfully attended all our engagements, that include a Praise Night for an Open Door Project; a local charity to restore a safe, welcoming place

where Christian literature and fellowship can be found; an Afternoon Club in a local Church (wonderful refreshments afterwards); our choir dinner and fellowship social in a local church where we invited several widows of men who faithfully served the choir; an evening supporting a local branch of the Gideons (Good News for Everybody) at their annual rally (again with some wonderful refreshments); and a Joyous, Glorious, Christ-centred Praise night just before Easter.

For the next few months we will be practising new pieces for our Festival on 1<sup>st</sup> June, and will be able to attend a few engagements in between to hone our performance and share the Good News of Jesus in song. We will sorely miss attending Peterhead!

May the Lord bless all of you.

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**HERTFORD MALE VOICE  
PRAISE**  
*Keith Youngman*

The year has started well for us with an afternoon service at Grange Baptist Church in Letchworth at which we joined by choir-men from the Luton and Uxbridge choirs. In addition, we were delighted to welcome Vaughan into

the choir. There were 16 choirmen plus conductor David and accompanist Jane - a good number and the choir sounded very good on pieces with an Easter theme. The congregation filled much of the church and I have had a number of complementary and appreciative comments over the last 2 weeks.



*Combined choir at Grange Baptist Church*

On a smaller scale, we sang some Easter pieces at an afternoon event in our own church and we are now preparing to return and take a Sunday service at a village chapel north of Hertford at the end of April. These visits are seen as part of the outreach and support our church can give and we have two similar services programmed for the autumn.

We thank the Lord for these opportunities to sing and spread His Word.

## BOLTON MALE VOICE PRAISE

*Mike Dewhurst*

Greetings to all from Bolton. We have been meeting regularly for rehearsal since Christmas practising for one engagement we had the week before Easter. Well worth the time we spent together in fellowship preparing for a service of Easter Praise at one of the churches we go to regularly. We keep praying the Lord will open up more opportunities for witness. Over the summer we will take a break and next meet together in July for our annual get-together fellowship evening. Then early in August we will start our fortnightly rehearsals in preparation for our winter programme.

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## CHELTENHAM AND DISTRICT MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

*David Kendrick*

Since Christmas 2023 we have not been out to present a programme at any of our usual venues, due to a dearth of invitations. The only engagement was one of our annual invitations to sing at the Ladies' Fellowship at a Baptist Church in Cheltenham, which was in jeopardy, primarily due to the domestic situation of Mark, our Conductor

and his father-in-law, Steve who continue to be unavailable for the foreseeable future. However, that was not to be because the Lord definitely overruled and enabled me to co-opt a very good FMVP friend of mine and many other choirmen, who expressed an interest to come over and sing with us sometime. I was able to engage the services of one of our previous choirmen to come and join us, hence I am in process of arranging a programme for Tuesday afternoon, 23<sup>rd</sup> April. It is always wonderful to stand back and observe the way the Lord answers prayers, which are seemingly unsolvable by us. Please pray with us that the Lord will enable us to honour Him well and be a real blessing to the ladies and maybe a few gentlemen.

We held our AGM on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February when we reviewed our present situation, discussed and prayed for the Lord's leading for the future of the choir, particularly in the issues of recruitment of Christian men, subsequent to the pre-Christmas advertising and a continuation on our behalf by a local preacher at the various churches where he preaches regularly. We felt that we needed to disperse and go away to seek the Lord's leading for our follow-up Special AGM when we feel that serious decisions may need to be

made, for which we crave your prayer fellowship. I don't think any of us want to see our 65-year-old MVP Choir cease its ministry. It would appear that our type of singing is not appreciated by the 'younger generation' – they don't know what they are missing, to say nothing of the fellowship that we enjoy as we minister in song for our wonderful Lord.

May the Lord bless you all as you

continue to sing in honour of our risen Saviour.

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## WHITSTABLE GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

*David Casse*

Greetings from the Whitstable 'Quintet'. There is no real news from us, and no engagements to report or on the books, but we are still meeting once a month for a time of fellowship.

## Worldwide

### BAY OF PLENTY MEN'S CHOIR

*David Cantwell*

We have had a great Easter at a camp in the little town of Kawerau, in the Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. The Bay of Plenty Men's Choir sang at the camp putting on a 1 hour service, on the Friday night, combined with a tea for the people attending. The funds raised from this service have gone to the Bible Society. It was very well received and as the camp's focus was the Cross of Christ, that was the theme of our music. Our next concert is in aid of Gideons International as this is one of the two groups we support in fundraising concerts.

We have been fortunate to have 2

new members for the year to date and this boosts our number to 14. We are fortunate to have a good base of men in the 40-60 age group who love singing the traditional hymns of the faith.

We had a good end to 2023 with several rest home services and an end of year service at a retirement village which was packed out and enjoyed by the residents there. We look forward to a good year of singing God's message in song.

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### BRISBANE FESTIVAL MALE VOICE CHOIR

*Malcolm Arnold*

We are blessed to have an average of 30 members from a total of 40, attending practices and presenta-

tions as we commence 2024. We presented a programme at the Bellbowrie (a western suburb of Brisbane) Community Church on Sunday afternoon 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024. This was well received with a good number in attendance. April will see us make two more presentations which I will mention in my next report.

Two members of the choir were honoured with Life Membership at the Annual General Meeting held in March 2024. According to our Constitution, these are given to a member who 'has rendered extraordinary, meritorious service to

the Association'. Recipients were Philip McCorkell, Deputy Chairman, Treasurer, and Festival Coordinator, and Malcolm Arnold, Chairman (13 years), and Past Deputy Chairman (5 years). Both men have been members of the choir for over 33 years. They join current Life Members, Geoff Renton, Ken Pitcher, and Martin Fleming who have been similarly honoured in the past.

We have a full calendar of presentations in 2024, for which we are thankful to the Lord.

Blessings to all.

## From here and there

From Rev. John Pease, former London Area Chairman and Westcliff Choir leader, comes the news that his wife Pauline passed into the Lord's presence on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February, after a long illness. Pauline was very much in evidence at many Festivals in the London and Home Counties Festivals, helping behind the scenes. She will be missed not only by John and the family, but by many whose lives she touched while serving at FMVP events with the Westcliff choir, and elsewhere. Pauline's Thanksgiving service may have happened by the time Choirlink goes to press, being at

noon on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April. Please pray for John and the family who will be feeling Pauline's loss enormously at this time.

An obituary page has been set up: <https://www.funeralguide.co.uk/obituaries/121845>

Also, the service will have been live-streamed on the Website: <https://watch.obitus.com>  
Username: gula8940  
Password: 467023

A recording of the service is available afterwards, using the same login, if you didn't catch it live.

I also have sad news concerning Sheila Durrant, wife of Gerald who leads the Uxbridge Choir. Sheila had been unwell for some time, and was on oxygen and in hospital frequently. She passed away on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March. Her Committal and Thanksgiving Service are to be held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April, as follows: 12.30pm at Breakspeare Crematorium, Ruislip (mainly for family only) and 2.00pm at South Ruislip Christian Centre, Deane Avenue followed by refreshments at the church. Do please remember Gerald and the family in your prayers.

Some brighter news concerns John Cowell, of the Luton Choir. John had an operation for bowel cancer

late last year and was told he'd need a lengthy spell recuperating in hospital. Evidently the Lord had other plans: John made a much speedier recovery than expected, and returned home within a couple of weeks or so. Indeed I (Vaughan) sang next to him in Letchworth last month, and he seemed in good health, as well as good voice. Praise the Lord for his intervention!

For the record, Malcolm Simes' funeral took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> February at West Croydon Baptist Church. Malcolm was a former member of Purley Choir and travelled to many Festivals around the country, so might have been recognised by choirmen elsewhere.

## An Easter Reflection: John 13:1-5 and 12-17

*I reprint a short reflection from scripture by Ian Denyer, a member of our church congregation.*

The events of John 13 occurred on the day before that first Good Friday, the day marked on our calendar as Maundy Thursday, when Jesus showed his disciples the full extent of His love. I wonder how we are known by those around us? Busy? Easy going? Kind? Thoughtful? Withdrawn? Driven? On that night before He died, Jesus spoke of the one mark by which His followers were to be

recognised in the world – Love.

The distinguishing mark of believers is not how we dress, the church we attend, not even the doctrine, moral or religious code we live by. The ultimate distinguishing mark of us as Christians is love, because it was the distinguishing mark of Jesus himself. So, as He first loved us, we must love others.

Here Jesus showed us how to do it. In the upper room after sharing a final meal with His disciples before His crucifixion, Jesus gives

this amazing demonstration of humility and servant-heartedness, washing His disciples' feet! He leaves the seat of honour at the head of the table, takes off His robe and in a remarkable act, bends down and washes their feet. He then puts His robe back on and returns to His position at the table. He then asks: 'do you understand what I have done for you?'

Hopefully we get it. It's a picture of the Lord stooping, serving and cleaning His disciples' feet. It's a picture of the cross. Just a few verses earlier in John 12:45 Jesus had told His disciples: 'the one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.' So here with all eyes on Jesus, this amazing demonstration of God himself, is actually foot washing! As Jesus says in John 5:19 'I only ever do what I see my Father doing.' The apologist Glen Scrivener puts it in this way: 'He loves in action, loves in concrete service, addresses their needs, loves in humility, gives up his rights and privileges, loves under pressure – and bear in mind the cross was only hours away; He loves unconditionally'. These men would by the end of the night betray Him, desert Him or deny Him.

But even so God is stooping, serving and washing all their feet, even Judas's. And then when He goes back to the head of the table He says: 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another.'

He doesn't ask us to wash His feet in return; He commands us to play it forward. This is the life to which we are called. It is tragically true that 'hurt people hurt' but Jesus gives the answer to this, 'loved people, love people'. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God – and that is what we are! This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. Who can look at the cross and doubt the generosity of God? May we understand this afresh, as we reflect on the death of our Saviour and the awfulness of the cross, and then to the celebration of Christ's victory over it, and His glorious resurrection.

In all the conflicts and injustice we see in our world today we can still be the light and love of Christ and reflect that *God still reigns and He's still God.*

*Quite a thought-provoking and challenging note to end on. Looking ahead, please send items for next Choirlink by Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July.*

*Yours in Christ, Vaughan*