



CHOIRLINK

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

No. 25

**JANUARY
2025**

Editor: Vaughan Reynolds, 26 Longfellow Road,
Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 9LB, UK

☎ 01295 369289

✉ vaughan.reynolds@talktalk.net

Welcome to this quarter's Choirlink. Lots of news to share, so let's begin right away with an update from Bolton.

United Kingdom

BOLTON MALE VOICE PRAISE

Mike Dewhurst

Greetings to all from Bolton wishing our brethren worldwide a very Happy and successful New Year as we serve our Lord together.

It seems a long ago now that we started practising for 2 engagements we had over the Christmas period. These have been and gone and we praise the Lord for such a wonderful time of being able to sing the good news we celebrate at this time of year.

Now we place ourselves in the Lord's hands. At the moment we do not have any engagements

planned for the coming year. However, we intend to keep together and will meet about once a month for fellowship and to keep on singing so that our voices don't go rusty. We are praying that the Lord will lead us on and present new opportunities to witness for Him.

Like most choirs now we are a small group and getting older and in common with other groups we have lost members and suffered our share of ill health amongst the ranks during the last year. However, let us encourage each other to "press on" doing the Lord's work for as long as we are able and for as long as He wants us to do it.

To encourage us - take a look at

Psalm 92. In verse 1 we are encouraged to give thanks and to sing praises unto our Lord. We look back and think of all the many wonderful meetings and Festivals we have shared together and can agree with the Psalmist in verse 4 - yes He has made us glad and happy serving Him. Long may it continue.

We are reminded that there is more to come if we faithfully continue to serve Him. We might be getting older but the Lord can still use us to His glory. Look at the promise in verse 14: even in old age we can bear fruit for the Saviour.

Every blessing for 2025.

HIGHLAND GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Eric Halkett

May the Lord be with all choirmen in 2025. It is currently snowing quite heavily – the Lord’s artistic hand is truly evident.

We are pleased to say that first bass Edwin McMillan, who was a member of Moray Choir, has relocated to the Highlands and has joined our choir. We will also be welcoming in the new year Roy Nixon from the Black Isle as a first tenor.

Since the last Choirlink, the choir has sung at an afternoon ‘Connect’ group at Inshes East Church, and at two care homes – Cameron House and Isobel Fraser. The choir shared with the prisoners from ‘B Hall’ and that same night sang the same programme to a selected audience of a few prisoners and numerous staff members. The governor was so pleased with our visit that he asked us to swell the numbers at the Prisoners’ Carol service. It was a privilege for us to mix socially after the service with prisoners and staff.

We will restart practices on 13th January to be ready for an engagement at another Care home in Fortrose in February, then our choir Dinner/Social, before a couple of engagements in March.

Please continue to uphold our ageing members in prayer as many are still waiting for or undergoing cataract and knee operations at the moment.

May the Lord bless all of you.

HERTFORD MALE VOICE PRAISE GROUP

Keith Youngman

In the last quarter of 2024, we were able to support the Uxbridge choir at a Christmas engagement

as well as doing services ourselves at Anstey village chapel firstly on a Sunday in October then finishing on a high with a candlelight carol service 3 days before Christmas.

We were pleased to be able to support the local leadership at Anstey, and the carol service attracted more than 40 people to the small chapel – more than anyone could remember! It is rewarding to know our ministry still has a role to play in bringing people to God's house to hear the message.

For 2025 we already have invitations for the spring/summer.

UXBRIDGE GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Gerald Durrant

We had 2 Christmas engagements this year with the usual help from Luton and Hertford. The first was our regular visit to my church in South Ruislip for the Tuesday afternoon meeting. with a choir of about 12 and a similar number in the congregation. As usual a very enthusiastic response even with the low numbers. "You will come again at Easter, won't you."

The second was a new venue for us: a Care Home in Hayes called 'Grassy Meadows'. In this case we

only had 8 men, all 1st and 2nd tenors, so it was only 2-part harmony. It was rather a chaotic start, not knowing where to put us and where to place the keyboard. But we eventually sorted ourselves out and started singing. We sang the same programme as my church, which was probably a mistake as it was a bit long for that venue. However, it must have been favourably received as they have asked us to go again at Easter. I personally had a pleasant surprise there as I was greeted with a "hello Gerald" and the manager turned about to be a past church member who I hadn't seen for some years.

As our numbers are so few we now meet in my house every 2 weeks, but we are on our Winter break and will start again at the end of February to work on our Easter programme.

McROBERTS FESTIVAL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Bryan McKay via Ian Stangoe

We had the pleasure in September of starting our practices again together, meeting twice a month. Having shared in the festival at Buckie which was well attended, followed by the sad news of the Moray choir ceasing to function, we wondered what the future

might hold for male voice singing.

The core pieces for 2025 arrived from John Buchanan and it was a promising prospect to use the pieces to practise for future festivals as we cannot take on any engagements locally due to an imbalance within the parts. This gave us a feeling of eagerness to keep going and share fellowship as we really enjoy singing together. We are Looking to our Saviour to lead and guide us in the days ahead with hopefully an opening coming to serve Him again.

LONDONDERRY GOSPEL MALE CHOIR *Craig Henderson*

For the first time in years we had to sing at a church service in Moville Co.Donegal without piano accompaniment, as our pianist Helen was unable to attend due to her mother's illness. Sadly Helen's mother passed away; our sympathy goes to her at this sad time.

Andy Walker, one of our 2nd tenors was called home recently leaving us now with 9 members. However requests for the choir to sing have come in. We look forward to singing at Lismacrol mission hall, Drumahoe and at the Disabled Christian Fellowship in Richill Baptist Church in February and

later in the year in Raphoe Co.Donegal and at a long standing venue outside the village of Ardstraw Co.Tyrone where the choir have sung annually for almost sixty years.

We thank God for the fellowship within the choir and the opportunities to witness for Him over a wide area, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

CHELTENHAM AND DISTRICT MVP CHOIR *David Kendrick*

Christmas has been and gone, and we have had the pleasure and privilege of singing in 6 Residential Care Homes. Due to various personnel issues and problems we have been unable to perform as a proper MVP 'choir'. However we were really keen to be involved, as usual, in a programme of singing in our local Care Homes, where we were requested to lay on a Carol Service. As I reported in Issue 24 of Choirlink, our membership is very small at the moment, with just 1 member for each part, together with our Leader and Accompanist, Dr David Tingley, who has renamed us, unofficially, as the 'Cheltenham Male Voice Praise Singers'. We sang in unison with the help of the staff and residents. I produced a generic pro-

gramme which we used in all 6 Homes, and instead of having a short epilogue-style Christmas message, the Chairman gave a mixture of a brief introduction or description of the carol, together with a suitable Bible passage to accompany. We give thanks to the Lord for His divine enabling on each occasion and the Activity Coordinators for each engagement were very complimentary and have asked us to visit again during the year, using a similar format. It was wonderful to be able to serve the Lord as a 'choir of sorts'. It was really great to renew fellowship with one of our residences, to which we have not been invited since pre-pandemic time and we have been invited to return sometime during the year, DV.



Oakhaven Residential Care Home in Cheltenham

One new initiative we tried this season was to purchase a Christmas leaflet to be given to each resident and carer who was happy to receive it. We gave away about

120 copies which were received willingly and joyfully.

I asked for prayer for the healing of the wife of our Deputy Conductor who had fallen and broken her arm in a very inconvenient place, which hampered his attendance at our practices and engagements. Believe it or not, having recovered somewhat from her accident she fell again and damaged a hip, meaning that Peter has continued to miss being with the Choir during the Christmas season while acting as Jillian's nurse/carer. We have missed him and look forward to his return in the New Year, DV.

We were all set to perform our Christmas programme with two 2nd basses, when David H took a mild heart attack and was advised by his Consultant that he should step down from his numerous Christian commitments and live life at a slower pace. He was thus unable to join us in our singing.

Please again pray for us, a choir of older men who love singing and speaking for the Lord, that in His goodness He will continue to sustain us and lead others to join us in our ministry for Him.

May I wish you all a very Happy New Year and may the Lord bless you all as you continue to sing in honour of our Saviour's name.

EXETER MALE VOICE PRAISE

Alfred Tarring

Greetings from Exeter. As we have been very remiss in not sending reports recently you may be forgiven for thinking the choir had closed. It is true that some while ago we were very small, some of our members had passed away, and we had lost members through frailty and illness. We prayed over the situation and decided that we would continue if the Lord provided new choirmen and venues. The Lord answered our prayers, and we have had a very balanced choir of 16 choirmen and have been invited to sing at several new venues.

We started the last quarter with an engagement at a new venue at Poundsgate Methodist Church. This little Chapel is on Dartmoor with very few houses around and has just one service a month. We wondered what size congregation we would have, but were delighted to see that the church was full, with the congregation responding well to the music and message we sang.

In October we were invited to lead a Harvest Festival service in a small Chapel in mid Devon. We had invited the retired evangelical

Bishop of Plymouth to be our chairman and speaker. Although the Chapel was quite small the numbers attending were such that not everyone was able to get into the building. We were not sure whether they came to hear the Bishop or the choir! We have been invited back next year, but next time to a larger building!

Perhaps we have been most surprised by the size of the congregations at our engagements as we had not visited 3 of the venues before. One of these was St. George's, the parish church at Goodrington, Paignton. It was one of those days when we wondered whether we would need to cancel the engagement because of the atrocious weather. My, didn't it rain! We were perhaps expecting no more than 25 to come out and hear us, but were most pleasantly surprised to see about 70 in the congregation. Although most were not used to hearing the FMVP style of singing, again there was a positive response to the presentation of the gospel.

Our final engagement of the year was at a Gospel Hall in Torquay—the home church of one of our own choirmen. Once more, there was a good turnout, and we were pleased to be able to sing both the old carols, and many of the newer

ones written by Valerie Collison.

You will realise from this report that we have been very encouraged over the last three months in being able to sing for our Lord and to witness for Him. However, we have also had our challenges, and we finished the year with having funerals for two of our choir members who had been called home. We also have sickness in the choir, and we are looking to the Lord again for his guidance for 2025. We wish to sing the gospel as long as we are able, and so your prayers for us will be much appreciated - thank you.

ST. IVES MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

Frank Stevens

We have only had a few engagements over the last few months but we practise every Thursday evening and enjoy the singing and the fellowship together.

We are looking, as most choirs today, for more members. We do have twenty but could do with top tenors. I am talking to two men at present and hopefully they will fill these positions!

During the days leading up to Christmas the choir did take part in various carol services where we

sang some of Valerie Collison's carols - In the stillness of night, An Epiphany Carol, The Wonderful One, and Come with joy to Bethlehem! These were well received by the congregation.

One choir member has recently had a new house built and invited the choir to come along on our choir practice evening to sing. He had invited his neighbours as well as those involved with the building also to come along. We sang all our MVP carols as well as some traditional carols, inviting everyone to join. It was a lovely evening of Christmas music, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

In St Ives, there is a Combined Chapel Carol Choir which is made up from members of the various Fellowships in town. Years ago, each chapel had their own carol choir and went around the town singing in December but today, these have all come together and sing Cornish carols, many written by miners in the 1800's. The St. Ives MVP Choir make up a large part of the tenor and bass section so it is difficult to fit our own engagements within the busy timetable. However, the object remains: to present the Gospel in song.

May I wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

Worldwide

SYDNEY CHRISTIAN MALE VOICE CHOIR

David Gordon

We had the pleasure of presenting two Christmas programmes recently: Blaxland Presbyterian Church on a Sunday afternoon, and Gracewood Community at Kellyville the following Thursday.



The choir at Blaxland

About 80 residents of Gracewood turned up to the special Christmas event, and they were very appreciative of the Choir's singing.

On a related note, there were only 9 men at Blaxland, and 8 at Gracewood. Some of our members are struggling with ill-health, and that depleted our ranks. Ray (first tenor) was recently in hospi-

tal with a renal problem, but is now home thanks to the medication doing a great job. Alan was also in hospital to have a pacemaker fitted; that has now been done, so he hopes that his quality of life will improve. Both of these men would appreciate your prayers. Please also pray that we will be able to attract more men to join our ranks.

Last Saturday we "signed off" for the year with lunch at Epping Gospel Chapel: Ed was our Master-Chef, and cooked the meat to perfection! Steve Mayall, who was our accompanist for some years, was able to join us. Chris told us of the response at Gracewood from many of the residents, and Gloria (the chaplain) would like us back there around Easter. A great time of sharing followed, and we were then challenged with a quiz by Bev. It was a delightful way to wrap up the year, being mindful of the opportunities that the Lord graciously provided.

Finally, please can I ask for prayers for Jean, wife of Allan Turner who was leader of the former Purley choir. Jean was admitted to hospital before Christmas with heart problems. She is back home as I write but quite weak, having suffered multiple heart attacks.

Please send your items for the next Choirlink by Saturday 5th April.

Yours in Christ, Vaughan