

Upper Thames Methodist Circuit 7/23

Bristol District



July/August Newsletter 2017

Note from the Editor

Please note that we all now have new email addresses in the Circuit Office after a revamp of the computer system. Emails sent to the gmail address will be forwarded to our new addresses.

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Superintendent

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Holidays - most of us are thinking about them at this time of the year! Do you think that God intended us to have holidays? I think that he most certainly did, for when we are on holiday we have time to think differently, have new experiences, time to reflect, read, re-energise...the list can be endless.



Last year, while on holiday in Croatia, I went kayaking for the first time and it made me realise that I am often most fearful to try new things. Holidays give us new opportunities, whether we stay at home or spend time away.

We praise you Lord for the joy of holidays, for the opportunity of visiting new places and enjoying different experiences. Thank you for rest and refreshment and for the happy times that we can share together. May we be aware of your presence in the wonder of creation and the beauty of all we see around us. Help us to be thankful for all that you give us to enjoy and to return home better able to serve you. In Jesus' name, Amen

Prayer by J Carrington

NB Deadline for items for the September Newsletter is Friday 25th August

District News

Bristol District Youth Weekend - EWEnique - October 13th - 15th 2017

Nailsea Methodist Church
See attached poster for details

Bristol District Youth Weekend - request for knitting

CALLING ALL KNITTERS ☺

The event is taking place in 4 months' time at Nailsea Methodist Church and yet again the young people have been asking for knitted items.

We would be REALLY grateful if any of you, or members of your congregations (or even family and friends) were able to knit a "Where's Wally" hat please for adults & teenagers to wear.....and/or.....

Also we would love some "Where's Wally" dolls. Sadly we don't have an exact pattern but my son's school have kindly provided a pattern for a standard doll which they used to create Wally by changing the colours appropriately (red and white striped jumper, blue trousers) and by adding the hat, glasses & walking stick . The lady who knitted them insisted that it was fairly easy for competent knitters ☺.

If you know of anyone planning to knit any of these then we would be grateful if we could be given a very rough number of knitted items you will be providing please well before the event if at all possible.

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Youth Work Enabler
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Circuit News/Events

Simeon Wood Concert

Please see attached poster advertising this event on Saturday 30th September at Sheldon Road, Chippenham.

Dates for your diary

Sunday 3rd September Circuit Service at Toothill 6.30pm
Tuesday 26th September Circuit Meeting at Highworth 7.30pm

STAND AND PRAISE GOSPEL CHOIR



Words of Tribute spoken by Andrew Fleet at the Thanksgiving Service for Jim Eddings – The Church of Christ the Servant Abbey Meads.

It was in September of 2016 that Rev. Rachael and her husband Graham told the Upper Thames of a Gospel Choir which had been operating where they had lived in Cornwall and asked us to consider the role that such a choir might play in the Mission and Ministry of our churches. It was an idea we prayed on and took to our Circuit meeting ... and from that came a vision for such a choir to worship God and which we would open to everyone who might be interested in sharing the good news of Jesus through such music.

But we had no-one to lead. And so we prayed that we would be led to the right person who God had anointed for this role and **we were led to Jim Fitzgerald Eddings.**

We first met him by arrangement in December in a coffee shop in old town and shared our faith and the gospel choir vision. Jim wanted to go away and think and pray about it but as he shared with us we all had a sense that God was leading us.

It was in January that he came back to us to affirm that it was God's project and the project was on.

We met at Graham and Rachael's manse soon after and Rachael has written this:

Graham and I will never forget the first time we met Jim, when he came to our house with Andrew and Fiona to talk about how we could begin to try to form a Gospel Choir. His energy and enthusiasm was so obvious, and within a few moments we felt that we were swept up in it. I remember thinking to myself, "This could really work!" After we had discussed some practical points, Jim moved over to our piano and started to play. Then he got the 4 of us to stand up and start to sing a note. Then he wasn't happy with the amount of space we had, so we started to rearrange the furniture in the living room. Eventually he was happy enough with the arrangement and we got going. Just the four of us – yet within a few minutes he had us singing our hearts out in harmony (that's saying something!) and trying to master the off-beat clapping (that was more of a challenge!). Jim was impressed with Graham's clapping, less so with Andrew's, and we all got to the end feeling encouraged, uplifted, and quite a bit warmer!

In the times we spent with Jim we were inspired by his passion and excitement as much as by his immense talent and professionalism. He made a big impact on us and we can't quite believe that he has gone. Our loss is heaven's gain. My life has been made richer for knowing Jim, and I will never again be able to bear anyone clapping off-beat without thinking of him!

Jim led the **first workshop in the Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads** in February 2017 with over 80 people attending during the day. In preparation he'd laid down all sorts of backing tracks & he'd started to rehearse with the musicians. He was absolutely on fire...

teaching us to relax - running around the church – putting us into groups – playing keyboard – teaching us to clap in time – playing drums –guiding Lola and the girls assisting him - teaching us to move – teaching us to breathe and teaching us the songs to sing.

He started with his shoes on – but then a foot started to poke out through his shoe; so he abandoned his shoes and ran round in his stocking feet... and by the end of the workshop he had a hole in his socks – and he must have been exhausted. But God had used him to engage us, to inspire us and to start to realise that gospel music singing was about the Spirit of God working in our hearts and minds and our bodies.

He visited a group of our churches and took part in morning worship on a number of Sundays, leading gospel singing. He ran another whole Gospel choir rehearsal in April, and opened up Eastcott studios for one to one and group coaching sessions each week, both for musicians and singers and we were laying plans for further practices, the making of a recording of the choir singing the songs and a performance towards the end of the year – something we still hope to achieve in Jim’s honour. How – God will show us!

“He believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God sent into this world to save each and every one of us – Jim believed in the power of God’s word and he believed that when we sang we had to let go and let God fill and inspire us.”

God had gifted Jim with **immense – prodigious - musical talent** – tremendous versatility and a passion for musical expression - but there was something more that came through in our working together with Jim – it was **not just about the music** – it was about the words that we sang – it was about those words arising from a relationship with the Lord Jesus and moving hearts and minds. ‘Yes – Yes Lord’ was a song he taught us and he kept reminding us that the words were about saying ‘Yes’ to God in our lives!

He believed that **breathing** was important regularly reminding members of the choir

to “Breathe!!” The choir was about moving , clapping in time – singing and breathing – because as we breathed in we were taking in the breath of God – clapping and moving in time because we were one in the Spirit – he emphasized we must be of “One Accord”; singing some of those beautiful words because they were the Good news of Jesus – the Gospel. And when we got it right Jim smiled with that broad beautiful smile that radiated around the room.

When we were on our own once he told me how we must **use these Gospel songs** to allow God to bring people to know and love the Lord Jesus – that we must speak of our belief in the words we are singing. Oh how powerful is that and what a legacy for him to leave and for us to continue!

Jim taught us a lot about mission and resting in the Lord.

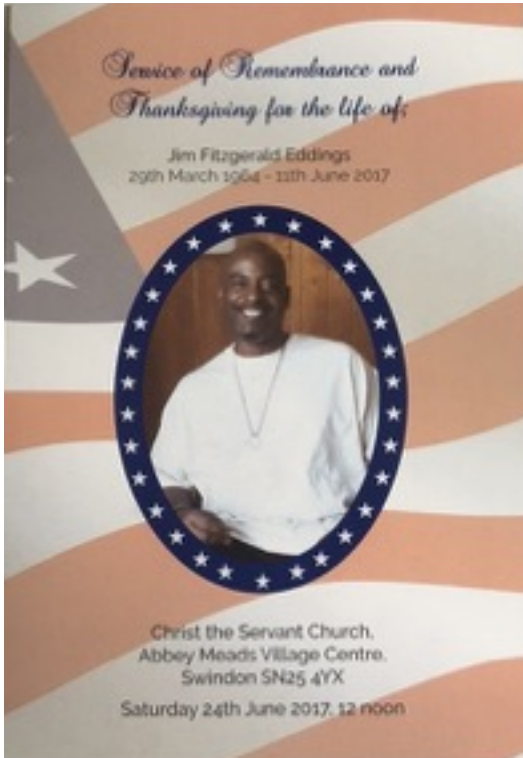
We are shocked at his sudden passing from us and **on behalf of all who have been part of the Gospel choir** we have sent our Christian love and an expression of our sadness to Jim’s family back in the USA. Our thoughts and prayers are also with his fiancée.

After his stroke a few weeks ago Jim made a remarkable recovery to rehearse with us – and told us how God had enabled him to still be able to play the piano and to sing and resume his life. He reminded us of the song he’d taught us: *‘I’m looking for a miracle; I expect the impossible, I feel the intangible and I see the invisible. – Just believe it and receive it God will perform it today!’*

For the amazing Jim the ultimate miracle now has happened – He is with His Lord! Hallelujah!

“The sky is the limit to what he can have. Just believe it and receive it God will perform it today.”

We give thanks for the way in which God enabled Jim’s special life to touch us.



Foot Note:

We want to express the Circuit Thanks for all who took part in the Thanksgiving Service for Jim and particularly the musicians and members of the Gospel Choir who, at very short notice, played and sang.

Jim would have wanted us to continue with the Gospel Choir and many of those supporting the Choir have indicated they would like to do so.

PLEASE PRAY WITH US THAT GOD WILL LEAD US FORWARD ON THIS IN THE DIRECTION HE WANTS US TO GO.

We are presently exploring the possibility of a “guest” Gospel Choir Leader who could lead a Workshop and Rehearsal as planned on Saturday 15th July 2017.

As soon as we have news this will be published to churches.

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