

Heath Street

BAPTIST CHURCH



Heath Street hosts the National Teachers' Choir

By Baz Chapman, General Manager

In October 2025 I received an email from Ewan asking if we'd ever like to use Heath Street for one of our weekends. We were delighted to accept, and this became a reality on 24 and 26 July, as around 40 teachers, teaching assistants, school leaders and music tutors came from across the UK for the National Teachers' Choir's summer 2026 singing weekend.

On Sunday afternoon we welcomed a cappella group Vocal Shack and jointly presented a public concert in the church, with music including Billy Joel's River of Dreams, 1950s Latin classic Sway and a medley of numbers

from Pitch Perfect; plus I Dreamed of Rain, which felt particularly appropriate!

With free run of the building, plus Saturday dinner provided by Turanj Persian restaurant, we couldn't have felt more welcome or have wished for a nicer place to sing in. We are enormously grateful to Ewan, and to Heath Street members who came along to hear us, and we hope to return one day.

Baz



Remembering Godfrey Old

BEREAVEMENT

I am desperately trying to find someone or something to hold on to

Something or someone who holds the tempestuous key to truly equilibrium, courage and understanding.

Is it my doctor, dentist, priest, friends or family?

Is it with poetry, art, music or literature? Alcohol? No!... Drugs... No!

But what will soften the panic attacks, unreality and disbelief?

There is only one thing left
To trust where LOVE will take me.

Léonie Scott-Matthews
8.50 Tuesday 25th April 2026

It's a musical send-off for good old Godfrey

by CAITLIN MASKELL

HAMPSTEAD turned out to say farewell to a musical legend. Nearly 300 people attended Heath Street Baptist Church last Wednesday for a send-off for Godfrey Old, who died aged 71 after suffering a heart attack in late April.

At the memorial, his partner Léonie Scott-Matthews said: "We fell in love at first sight. We just loved each other so much. He was a man of such integrity he had such humour and we loved being together, creating together."

His daughter, Alice Old added: "He genuinely was a legendary harmonica player and I will always feel him now when I hear a harmonica playing."

"As I ride the wave of shock and grief during this surreal time I am also filled with immense gratitude as well, seeing how many he touched."

Godfrey John Mortimer Old was born in Enfield in 1954 to Peggy Rose Old and John Old. His father was born in Egypt and Mr Old was named after both his father, John, and his father's boss, the Egyptologist Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

His sister, Penny Old



Legendary harmonica player Godfrey Old

said: "We used to put on plays as children. Our most noted work was *Sleeping Beauty*. Godfrey, he was wonderful. Right at the end he would be running around in circles to save *Sleeping Beauty* but the oddest thing about it is that this was to the 1812 Overture."

"Looking back, and thinking about how Godfrey's life started with such bad health and what seemed to be forbidden opportunities, I think all of this made him such a remarkable person."

"His art and music was so individual and his kindness and weird sense of humour brought such joy to us all."

During the service Ms Old's band, The Butterfly Wheel, took to the nave to perform a song in Mr Old's memory. "If Godfrey is up there he will look around and go 'good turnout today'. He always loved an audience. He'd be pleased," said close friend and bandmate Conrad Blakemore.

Mr Blakemore said he first met Mr Old while auditioning for the same band in the 1970s. They have been performing together in their band Mad Dog Bites for over two decades. Mr Blakemore added: "He was a multi-talented man, he was like a brother to me and I miss him every day."

A church that started in a pub

Edward and Gaynor Humphreys were invited to attend Choral Evensong at St Saviour's Chalk Farm on 7th July by a member of that congregation who is also a good friend of Heath Street, Janet Cowen. It was a special service to commemorate the 170th anniversary of the church's consecration. The worship music was mostly 16th and 17th century and beautifully sung. The service was conducted by St Saviour's new priest, Fr Philip Chester.

After the service the congregation took advantage of the extensive, shady garden the church is fortunate to have, and guests were served generously with food and drinks. Fr Chester's energy in reaching out to the local community had brought some people from neighbouring streets into the church for the first time.

The area around Eton Road where the church is sited started being developed for housing in the middle of the 19th century, and the idea of founding a new church emerged very early on. An unusual and decisive moment in the planning was a meeting in 1846, presided over by the Bishop of London,

where the decision was firmly taken to form a committee to make it happen—the unusual factor being the meeting location, an upstairs room in The Load of Hay.

Eton College, which has owned a large part of the area since 1440, offered a site, and some years of struggle followed to raise enough money for the building. Ambitious plans for a VERY large church were modified to suit the budget. The building we now see still holds 800 people, and the architect finally chosen was EM Barry, who went on to design the Royal Opera House. For St Saviour's he used a neo-Gothic style.

Many of us from Heath Street know St Saviour's as the venue for an early December treat, the performance by the Players of St Peter of medieval mystery plays. This year's will include the Norwich play of Adam and Eve and scenes from the Coventry plays (3–5 December).

—Gaynor Humphreys

St Cecilia's and St Stephen's arms are getting tired holding up our church stonework

In the last newsletter they and we appealed for donations towards our last big push to see if we can complete the church facelift, finishing the cleaning and restoration of the façade. Lots of people enjoyed reading the piece, and lots of people said they would donate. Hardly anyone has done so!

We have the chance of a grant of £25,000—if we can match it. We are more than halfway there. Please, please get us to the point where we can claim it. Any amount will help. In the first phase of work, donations ranged from £10 to £10,000, and we needed and appreciated every one. If you haven't kept the last newsletter with the first appeal, Ewan can email it to you: ewan_king@mac.com.

Remember Gift Aid adds another 25% to what you donate if you are a UK taxpayer. If you aren't already on my radar as a Gift Aid donor, email me at gaynorhumphreys143@outlook.com and we can set that up really simply.

To donate please make a bank transfer if you can, using *stonework* and *your name* as the reference.

Account name:
Heath Street Baptist Church

Account number: 00014178
Sort code: 40-52-40

If you prefer to use cash or a cheque you can add it to the collection plate on a Sunday morning, but please mark it “stonework,” and leave your name and address or email with it so I can acknowledge and thank you and also chase you for Gift Aid permission if I need to. If you don't attend Sunday worship with us, since the church is a bit less busy in the summer perhaps let Ewan or me know that you have a donation to hand over and we will make an arrangement that keeps it secure and gets it into the bank rapidly.

And huge and grateful thanks to those who responded to the appeal straight away.

—Gaynor Humphreys

Celebrating Wilf

When Wilf first came to Heath Street and instated 'Sunday Club', there were next to no children at church. Over the course of camping trips to Devon, passion and nativity plays, throwing eggs off the pulpit to symbolise Saul lowered over the walls of Damascus, pilgrimages to Taizé, nerf gun wars in the basement, Dungeons & Dragons in the vestry, hard-earnt laser tag or seaside trips, and the joyful chaos of weekly Sunday Club, Wilf's indefatigable energy and humour has made church home for countless children!

Frida King



When we were in Luebeck in June we discovered it to be full of courtyards and hidden-away paths twisting between one street and another. This is a photo of our favourite one. We were members of the gang already!

Edward and Gaynor Humphreys

Merlens Gang
M 26

No-one can tell stories like you do,
Everyone in church knows it too.
We come to church just for you,
Everyone in church knows it's true.

Judit





wilf has been such a warm and special part of our years at Heath street—from working alongside him at the nursery to sharing so many lovely moments through music and church life. We will always remember his kindness, warmth and wonderful sense of humour, and we feel very lucky that he has been part of our journey at Heath street. We wish him every happiness and success for his next chapter. He will certainly be missed, but we hope wherever life takes him, it brings him many wonderful new experiences and happy memories.

With Love, Zahra & Emad



During the first leg of our journey to Taizé, unbeknownst to us, the tyres on Wilf's car nearly fell off, but Wilf somehow turned the chaos into one of my fondest memories from the trip. Looking back, I realise how serious it could have been, and I'll always remember and be grateful for how Wilf handled the situation and saved the day. Thank you Wilf, for making it such a memorable trip.

Kind regards, Avie

I remember when Wilf helped us put together a Christmas audiotape during Covid. He brought us together when we were isolated and helped us reconnect through amazing storytelling.

Leo



Now, apart from being fascinated by the idea of eggs being launched on the baptismal pool, what is particularly vivid is the churches Together walk when we came to Heath street to view the model of Jerusalem Wilf had been creating with the children. It was totally fascinating and so beautifully done that all the adults would, I am sure, have stayed to enjoy and have the various models commented on. A perfect example of engaging children by way of imagination.

Beryl Dowsett

Always greeted with warm smiles and good conversation. My favourite moment was when Wilf created the audible Bible account of David and Saul. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and it really captured Wilf's openly playful nature and his devotion to Christian teachings.

Julie-ann Benoit



I remember last year in the Moses and Miriam boat race. Me and Wilf were the judges and it was fun.

William

READINGS & PRAYERS

SEPT 13-19 EXODUS 14.19-31

13th Emad Eisapour
14th Ilia Ghasempour
15th Dusol Lee
16th Robin Thorne
17th Lydia Baker
18th Anselm King
19th Maral Agin

SEPT 20-26 EXODUS 16.2-15

20th Nathalia Bell
21st Josh Somers
22nd Mysie Johnson
23rd for all who attend Contact Club
24th HK
25th Jen Finamore
26th Ali Ghasempour

SEPT 27-OCTOBER 3 EXODUS 17.1-7

27th Sarah Harper
28th Leila Ranjbar
29th Theresa Thom
30th Elisa Ghasempour
1st October Esme Baker
2nd Juno Lee
3rd Julie Benoit

OCTOBER 4-10 EXODUS 20.1-20

4th Evelyn Baker
5th Zahra Safaryazdi
6th Ewan King
7th Otilie Johnson
8th Tom Somers
9th Wilf Merittens
10th Nesa Thorne

OCTOBER 11-17 EXODUS 32.1-14

11th Thaddeus King
12th Frida King
13th Genna Naccache
14th Susan Le Quesne
15th Birgit Leuppert
16th Hyun Ju Lee
17th Isabel Somers

OCTOBER 18-24 EXODUS 33.12-23

18th Beryl Dowsett
19th John-Henry Baker
20th Edward Humphreys
21st Babak Agin
22nd Joachim King
23rd Cole Ellenbogen
24th Gaynor Humphreys

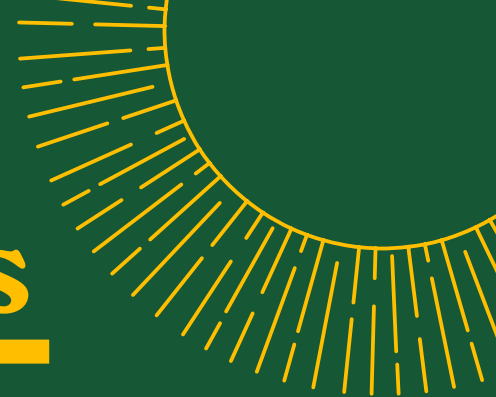
OCTOBER 25-31 DEUTERONOMY 34.1-12

25th Phoebe Jiang
26th Coco Ellenbogen
27th Annie Fang
28th Grace Jiang
29th Victoria Tjirimuje
30th Laura Somers
31st Selena Barrera

And let us consider how we
may spur one another on
toward love and good deeds.



Weekly Activities



Sundays	11:00am	DIVINE WORSHIP Including our Children's Sunday Club stories, crafts, drama and play for all ages Live stream also available on request by emailing johnhenry@heathstreet.org at least 24 hours in advance
	7:00pm	CONTACT CLUB
Mondays	4:30 pm	STORYMAKERS CLUB An after-school club aimed at children between the ages of 7 and 13.
Tuesdays	10:00am	OLDTIME NURSERY Introducing old melodies and traditional stories to a new generation of children
Wednesdays	4:00 pm	PRAYER MEETING
Thursdays	10:00am	OLDTIME NURSERY
	7:30pm	HEATH STREET CHOIR REHEARSALS
Fridays	3:30pm	STORYMAKERS CLUB



Please see the church website for updates

heathstreet.org

For requests regarding church membership,
Baptism or opportunities for Christian ministry
in the church, please contact the minister

Take Care



Copy for the next Newsletter

should reach Eleanor Patterson
(eleanorlaise@gmail.com)
not later than Wednesday 14 October

Church Officers

Gaynor Humphreys (*Treasurer*)
Wilf Merttens (*Church Secretary*)
Annie Fang (*Deacon*)

Minister Ewan King

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