



THE WAKEFIELD UNITARIAN

The Newsletter of Westgate Chapel, Wakefield

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website: www.ukunitarians.org.uk/wakefield/

Westgate Chapel was opened in 1752.

Its congregation was established in 1662 and became

Unitarian in view in the eighteenth century.

**It has taken a leading part in the economic, social,
educational, political - and spiritual - development
of Wakefield and its vicinity.**

JULY 2011

Thought for the month

Looking at new research by the Harvard sociologist Robert Puttnam, the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, writes that places of worship still bring people together in "mutual responsibility":

The evidence shows that religious people -- defined by regular attendance at a place of worship -- actually do make better neighbours.

The research shows that this willingness to give time to volunteering is directly tied to the frequency with which they attend a place of worship.

Sacks suggests a reason for this:

Religion creates community, community creates altruism and altruism turns us away from self and towards the common good... There is something about the tenor of relationships within a religious community that makes it the best tutorial in citizenship and good neighbourliness.

From the New Statesman

Services in July at 10.30am on 3 July and at 3pm on all other Sundays

3 July	Stephen Carlile
10 July	David Arthur
17 July	The Rev Bill Darlison
24 July	The Rev Bill Darlison
31 July	The Rev Bill Darlison

Rota of Welcomers

3 July	Nancy Denison
10 July	Ralph Denby
17 July	John Goodchild
24 July	Pat Howard
31 July	Nancy Denison

As always, if you are unable to act as welcomer on the day indicated, you are asked to arrange an exchange.

Chapel Committee, Tuesday 12 July, 7pm in the Vestry

The Chapel Committee meets on 12 July. The meeting is in the Vestry at 7pm

Events at the Chapel for the Festival of British Archaeology

Two talks will be held in the Chapel in July to mark the annual Festival of British Archaeology:

Wednesday 20 July 7pm A talk by John Goodchild M Univ on ‘An American Family in Wakefield: a Curious Story

Saturday 23 July 11am ‘The Whale Fishery from Yorkshire in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Both talks are free of charge

Chapel Open Day, Saturday 23 July 10am to 1pm

The Chapel will be open to visitors, again to mark the Festival of British Archaeology, Saturday 23 July, Help in providing tea and coffee or in welcoming visitors would be much appreciated.

Wedding, Saturday 30 July

There will be a wedding in the Chapel at noon on 30 July. Please leave the Chapel drive free of other cars.

Organ Building in Wakefield in the 19th Century – a talk by Paul Dawson, Thursday 28 July, 7.30pm in the Chapel

The illustrated talk by Paul Dawson marks the publication of his book, *Booths of Wakefield: organ Builders to the World 1796-1893*. Paul first became interested in Francis Booth in 1995 when he came across the Booth organ here at Westgate Chapel. He has had a life-long passion and interest in the organs, and had his first tentative lesson at the organ of Westgate End Methodist Church at the tender age of ten or eleven with Mrs M Squires. The organ was an 1896 two manual and pedal instrument by Abbott & Smith of Leeds. He is a self-taught organist, and has been assistant organist at a number of churches in Wakefield, as well as further afield in Birmingham, York, Bradford and Swindon. ‘My interest in the Booths,’ Paul says,

‘was piqued both by my love of the organ and also of Wakefield history. Here seemed a project that combined the two disciplines of music and historical research which has resurrected the memory of one of the leading organ builders of the middle decades of the 19th century.’

Our own organ features in the book of course.

Admission to the talk is free but we should welcome donations to the organ fund which, as members and associates of the Chapel will know, is being seriously depleted by the current repair and reinstatement.

Bill Darlison’s ministry in New Zealand

On August 24th, Morag and I will be going to New Zealand for a little over three months. I'll be working as minister to the Auckland congregation. I'm expected to take ten services in that time, to do some adult education and to provide an evaluation of the congregation's strengths and weaknesses. It is an unpaid position, but the congregation will be covering our travel expenses, providing us with a place to live and giving us the use of a car. It's a marvellous opportunity for us to visit this part of the world, and for me to become acquainted with another branch of our Unitarian family. The Auckland congregation is quite small - I think about 30 people worship regularly on Sunday - and its orientation seems to be mainly humanist, but I've heard good reports about the friendliness of the people and I'm looking forward to the challenge of working with them. I'm also looking forward to the actual journey. On the way out we'll be stopping over for a few days in Singapore, and on the way back we're spending two days in Sydney, Australia, and three days in Hong Kong.

Bill Darlison

GA Report

From 15th – 17th April I had the privilege of representing Westgate Chapel at the 83rd Annual Meeting of the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches held this year at Swansea University. Indeed in the same building as the GA met in 1964.

I also had the privilege of driving both Bill Darlison and Kate Taylor to the GA and I must say that Kate did a sterling job as a ‘Sat Nav’ in the back seat.

This was my first time at a GA and I have to say I greatly enjoyed the experience, it being rare to be in the same place as so many Unitarians. Since I was the Chapel delegate I did my duty and attended the business sessions which were

largely without controversy apart from one debate about amending some of the standing orders! A number of motions were passed including one committing the GA to support the 'Charter for Compassion'. This is a global initiative which I believe the religious writer, Karen Armstrong, has played a key role in developing. In due course the GA will be developing worship material on the theme of 'Compassion'. Dr Ann Peart was confirmed as the new President of the GA.

However I also made sure that I attended plenty of the workshops and other events including meetings organised by the National Unitarian Fellowship and the Unitarian Historical Society. I also spent money I don't have buying Unitarian books and worship material!

The highlight though for me was the beautiful Welsh singing by children's choirs both on the Friday night and before the Anniversary Service on the Sunday. I found this to be very moving.

The Anniversary Service itself marked Palm Sunday and saw Kate in action displaying a variety of historical pictures on the theme. Whilst the service was very Christian in tone and may have alienated some for that reason I don't think it unreasonable for us to mark such key events in the Christian Calendar. My only criticism of the service was that the Taize chant seemed to go on for ever. Welsh cakes were served after the Service and I have now developed a fondness for these.

For those of you who have yet to experience a GA I heartily recommend going. The GA in 2012 will be held in Keele.

Chris Pilkington

Can we learn from other religious groups? The June Forum

The topic had come about when Bill Darlison commented at a meeting of the Bible-study group that we could learn something from the Mormons. We began our Forum discussion by considering the Mormons' abstention from tobacco, illegal drugs, alcohol, and coffee and black tea. This deprivation we thought would be good for the health but we wondered whether we should really care for it as a spiritual discipline. One of us rather likes her daily gin-and-tonic. And is a no-coffee life really worthwhile? The idea of improvement through some form of discipline led to the reference to a recent television programme where over-active and wayward teenagers had been put under the care of a firm father-figure who

seemed to change their behaviour by a mixture of disciplined requirements and verbal chastisement.

We noted that our own *Wakefield Unitarian* quotes from Andrew Hill, claiming that we are open to insights from world faiths. We felt that we had absorbed a little of the Quaker tradition in having become accustomed to a period of silence during some acts of worship.

Kate had been to a recent meeting of the College of Canons at Wakefield Cathedral where longer periods of quiet, as well as of movement about the worship space, had been advocated. People might use the silence to light a candle or – rather a fanciful idea – to launch a prayer in the form of a little paper boat in some large dish of water. We thought that some children might like that.

We considered then something of the Buddhist practice of meditation and remarked that many Unitarians are drawn towards aspects of Buddhism. We talked about the phrase ‘Om, shanti, shanti. Shanti’, repeated aloud or in silence as a form of stilling the mind and focusing just on peace.

This led us to talk about stilling the mind as an aid to sleep. One of us focused on the image of a sunflower head and repeated the phrase ‘raggedy, taggedy sunflowers’. We heard of the wife of another member of the group who worked through the alphabet backwards.

What did we focus on during the silences in Chapel. It seemed to be on those dear to us, their needs, perhaps their problems.

From time to time the Westgate Chapel congregation are invited to light a candle during a service, most notably on Remembrance Day. Should we have more opportunity to represent a prayer? Many orthodox churches have large candelabra for lighting and placing candles as a means of making a prayer. St Giles’s, Pontefract, has a prayer-tree where words about a need, or words about something to be thankful for, are written on small squares of paper and fastened, like leaves on the tree, by tiny clothes pegs. Someone had written on a similar tree that they were thankful for cheese! Was this a genuine feeling or was it making fun of the idea?

We were reminded that other faiths might take something from Christianity at least insofar as Muslims accept the worth of Jesus.

How do we commemorate the dead? In more recent time we have placed a bookcase and the lectern in the Chapel as memorials rather than pursuing plaques on walls. We had no other formal commemoration. We learned that the Anglicans are to put memorial plaques on boards on a wall of the Chantry crypt. There will be a service for those remembered on them on the Sunday closest to All Souls Day.

Of course we don't 'do' All Souls Day in the Unitarian Movement. When he made his comment about Mormons, Bill also remarked that it was rather a pity that we do not have more seasonal events, festivals, something of a liturgical year. We occasionally celebrate Spring, or even the Winter Solstice. There have been occasions when we have had a form of communion on a Maundy Thursday. But we tended to think that the communal meals we preferred were buffet parties where family and friends were gathered, or the faith teas in the Chapel Vestry.

And finally we asked whether we could gain something from the charismatic revival in orthodox churches which have borrowed from Pentecostal sects. Should we abandon the organ and have guitars and shakers? It seemed somehow too evangelical for us!

Visit by Julian Roberts and Tony Street 20th May 2011: Visitors' report on the Chapel wildlife

A previous visit had been made on the 20th September 2010 by Elizabeth Hardcastle. The chapel and its grounds are sandwiched between Westgate Station and a large modern office block near the centre of Wakefield. This is a built up area and the chapel grounds constitute a quiet green oasis. One or two nest boxes had been put up (presumably since Elizabeth's visit) and bird feeders, which are regularly filled up, attract some common birds. There are planted areas, including a rockery, in all areas of the chapel grounds. These contain garden flowers and shrubs. A number of mature trees are present. These were listed during the previous visit.

A list of wild flowers noted is below:

Cow Parsley Common Daisy Creeping Buttercup Foxglove Creeping Thistle
Ragwort Bush Vetch White Clover Violet Wall Speedwell
Rosebay Willow Herb Dog Rose Grasses Cocksfoot Ferns
Maidenhair Spleenwort Dandelion Groundsel Meadow Buttercup
Cleavers Ivy Chickweed Sow Thistle Herb Bennet Shepherd's Purse
Ivy Leaved Speedwell Procumbent Pearlwort Couch Grass Stinging Nettle
White Dead Nettle Broad Leaved Dock Feverfew Hedge Woundwort
Hedge Mustard Nipplewort Herb Robert Common Plantain
Broad Leaved Willow Herb Bramble Barren Brome

Conclusion

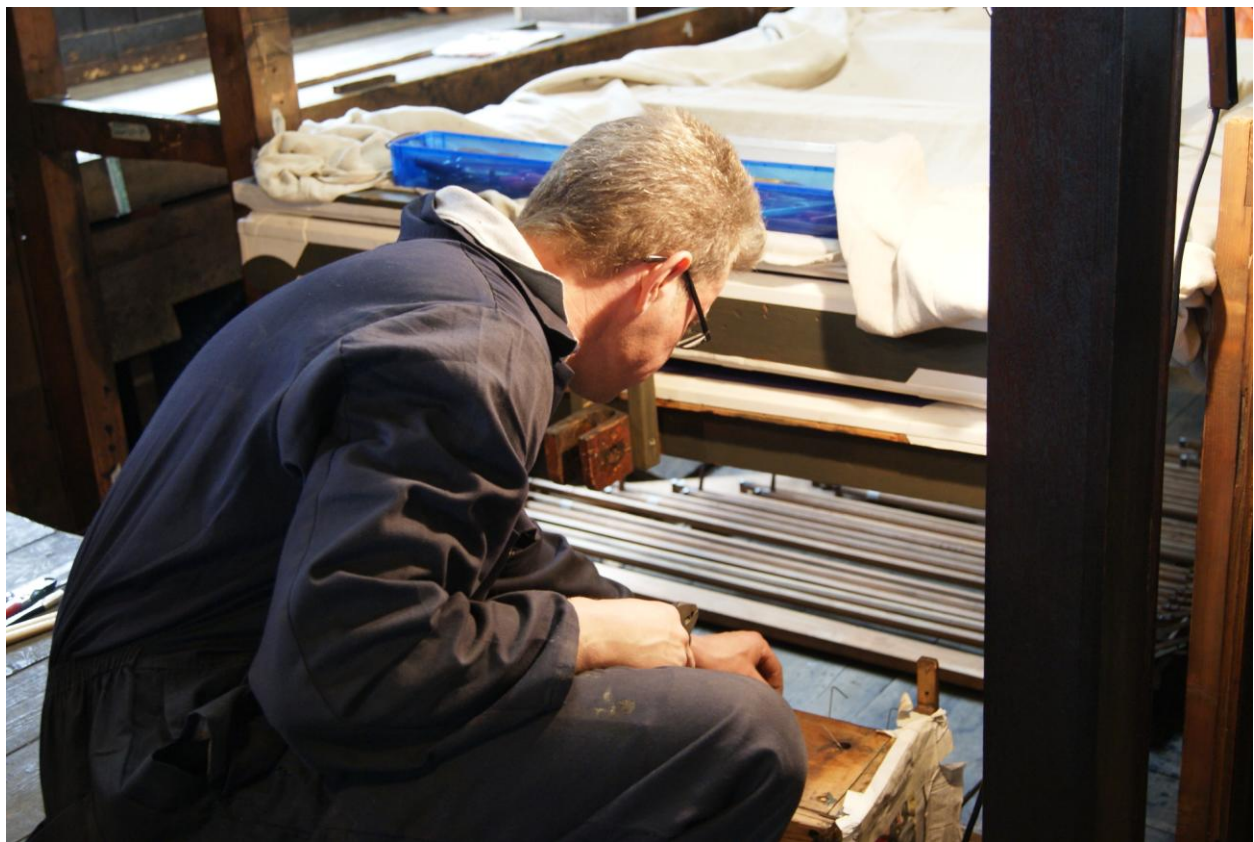
The chapel grounds are well cared for by a small group of dedicated people. The nest boxes and bird feeders are additions which will attract birdlife to the area, and there may be scope for some more nest boxes and perhaps bat boxes to be erected. The plant survey did not reveal anything of great interest and no part of the grounds suggest themselves as obvious areas for encouraging wild flowers to grow.

The Chapel has obvious architectural and historical value and there may be some value in making the grounds slightly more attractive to visitors to the building. Perhaps some seating could be provided, as well as basic information about the building and its significance. There are some concerns about people entering the grounds after dark and causing damage, but apart from making sure that the gates are closed in the evenings it is difficult to see what else could be done to prevent this.

The copy of the report has been provided by Pat Howard

Work on the Chapel organ

The last month has seen painstaking work on reinstalling the Booth organ by employees of David Wood of Huddersfield. We employed an electrical contractor at their request to put in strip lighting above the organ case to facilitate the present rebuilding and future tuning. The pictures on the opposite page show the installation of some of the mechanism for the pedals and the careful cleaning of the tiny fixing pins.



The bellows, which required a vast amount of repair, languished for some time in one of the back pews in the Chapel but were then hoisted up by a crane over the front of the balcony and placed within the organ case albeit above their final position.

Did He contact you?

One day God was looking down at earth and saw all of the rascally behaviour going on..So he called one of his angels and sent the angel to earth for a time.

When he returned. he told God, ‘Yes, it is bad on earth; 95% are misbehaving and only 5% are not.’

God thought for a moment and said ‘Maybe I had better send down a second angel to get another opinion’.

So God called another angel and sent him to earth for a time.

When the angel returned, he went to God and said, ‘Yes, it’s true. The earth is in decline. 95% are misbehaving and only 5% are being good.’

God was not pleased. So He decided to e-mail the 5% who were good because he wanted to encourage them and give them a little something to keep them going.

Do you know what the e-mail said?

?????

OK, I was just wondering, because I didn’t get one either.

Passed on by Bill Humphreys from Tony and Jen Atkinson, but originating, Bill suspects, in America (your editor remedied the US spelling).

The 150 Anniversary of Pepper Hill Chapel, Sunday 3 July

The congregation at Pepper Hill Chapel has invited other Yorkshire Unitarians to the 150 anniversary service on 3 July at 10.45am when the preacher will be the Reverend Jeffrey Bowes. Light refreshments will follow it.

Pudsey Unitarians

Janet Gadsby reports that as yet there has been no interest from prospective purchasers in the Pudsey chapel building. The congregation is currently meeting just once a month. The Reverend Robin Boyes is far from well at present so that Janet has asked for the up-to-date list of lay preachers.

400 Years of the King James version of the Bible, Tuesday 19 July, 7.30pm at Wakefield Cathedral

There is to be a service in the Cathedral on 19 July when the preacher will be Dr Paula Gooder. Dr Gooder is a freelance writer and lecturer in Biblical Studies. Although her research areas are the writings of Paul the Apostle (with a particular focus on 2 Corinthians), New Testament Interpretation and the development of Ministry in the New Testament Period, she enjoys exploring the whole Bible. She is Canon Theologian of Birmingham and Guildford Cathedrals, Lay Canon at Salisbury Cathedral, Visiting lecturer at King's College, London, Associate lecturer at St Mellitus College, London, and Theological Adviser to the Bible Society. She is a Reader in the Church of England and a member of General Synod.

The Engagement Group

An 'Engagement Group' consisting of Unitarians and non-Unitarians, is organised by Mel and Steve from Westgate Chapel. The group meets every month, choosing a different location and theme for each meeting, but actively engaging with one another following engagement group principles (see website: <http://www.unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk/>).

We explore and discuss spiritual themes, and the beliefs and attitudes which shape our lives. Newcomers are welcome, and should contact Steve (boudicca7@talktalk.net) or Mel (melpx@hotmail.com), either at Chapel or by email.

The Unitarian path is a liberal religious movement rooted in the Jewish and Christian traditions but open to insights from world faiths, reason and science, and with a spectrum extending from liberal Christianity through to religious humanism. (Prologue to The Unitarian Path by Andrew Hill.)

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