

Christward

The magazine of



May – June 2022

~ From the Editor's Desk ~

I made the mistake of booking a fortnight's holiday starting this Saturday (23rd April) forgetting that the magazine was also due out this weekend. The dilemma was this, I could try to get some copy from people over the Easter break (probability zero) or publish the magazine three weeks late.

I have always had a suspicion that ministers, under pressure, recycle previous sermons trusting that the congregation will in all likelihood not remember they have heard it before provided the date it was first preached is sufficiently far in the past. Acting on this suspicion I have raided the magazine archive and this magazine is mostly a 'blast from the past'.

~ From the Archive ~

Below are four excerpts from Eric Bray's 'From the Minister's Desk'

Magazine September 1992

It can be discouraging to write for "Christward" wrote our Minister in September 1992 bemoaning the lack of response to two questions he had asked in a previous issue. (Nothing changes. Ed) He continued,

'Discouraging as this may be it's not half as discouraging as reading some other magazines. Philip C Webb, Minister at Maidstone, was a Baptist representative at the Forum of Churches Together in England and therefore at least moderately liberal minded and ecumenical. He wrote this of the worship at the Forum.'

'A husband and wife team, both URC ministers and members of the Iona Community, led us in this. We found, not surprisingly, that much use was made of Iona and Taizé material, with various other chants or choruses from Africa and South America..... The worship had typically nothing in common with that of the average evangelical Baptist Church today, but was nonetheless very acceptable for all that.'

Well, thanks Philip, nice to know that we are still acceptable despite our appalling eccentricities! We quite like the odd little Kendrick song now and again you know, vetted for triumphalism and all that of course..... Incidentally we've noticed how the word "christian" is being filched from us but are we to lose "evangelical" as well now? There is no way, theologically, to have a non-evangelical Baptist church. It's a contradiction in terms.

Magazine June 1988 following the Prime Minister's (Mrs Thatcher) lay sermon to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

The sermon may have had party political intent as the cynics say but it did have a reasoned defence of her policies from a theological point of view. It is no use her opponents complaining about the attractiveness of her views to the "new right" in Christianity if they have no similarly reasoned and theologically based defence of their own position.

She was right again in accusing Mr Kinnock of debasing the level of debate by simply dragging in Biblical texts in response. Should he not be able, at the drop of a hat, especially since it has been known for some time that Mrs Thatcher has been preparing some such defence, to show some grasp of let us say Liberation Theology and some familiarity with texts like the Exodus and Jesus' sermon at Nazareth announcing his mission?

One further feature of Mrs Thatcher's address deserves praise. She criticised a statement that 'spiritual redemption and social reform are totally different things' which has to mean that for her religion

and politics do 'mix'. All we have to do now is decide what Christianity is and what politics are appropriate to it!!! She has answered this question to her own satisfaction. Who will offer alternative answers with, in her words, 'courtesy and mutual respect'?

Magazine July 1992

The Editors said they wanted something controversial for this number so here goes! I seriously think that after 150 years "Union Chapel" ought to disappear. It's served its purpose and now is merely off-putting! No, I don't mean close down. I want us to create a title that will tell people true things about us and not simply confuse them with a history they don't know. A very large number of our contemporaries cannot differentiate between Protestant and Catholic, never mind between Protestant denominations and certainly more than 99% would not be able to describe the exact sense in which "Union" is meant and that includes a significant number of our present members. Many potential worshippers who do not know these differences would need another paragraph on what we mean by "Baptist" before stepping through the doors for their perception of what a Baptist is can be very negative indeed.

So far, four potential members have spoken to me about "Union Chapel" assuming either it meant we were "Unitarian", the result of some Ecumenical experiment or a church belonging to the United Reformed tradition.In 1842 they called it "Union Chapel" because they wanted to have a membership open to people from all the denominational traditions and they felt that this title would convey a sense of openness and freedom of ideas. It worked..... This is the tradition we very much want to maintain. The same title in 1992, far from suggesting openness and freedom suggests some kind of obscurity and possibly, exclusivity.

A competition for the rest of 1992. Suggest a new name that would convey to people that we were open, welcoming, free of over much tradition and belonged to the mainstream of Christianity.

Magazine September 1999

Coda: If it is true as people say that churches are becoming “custom built” - that they aim to consist of people with similar life-styles, ages and interests and thus grow larger, and that the fastest growing market at the moment consists of older people who are beginning to dominate the population, it must follow that a church that welcomes the active over fifties as its principle aim, has beautiful gardens, a non-combative fairly restful style and a “Classic FM” culture ought to go like a house on fire. What went wrong?

Magazine September/October 1999

In the above issue Victoria Howes told us about Ukraine, her homeland, which is now being devastated by Russian invasion. Following Vic's article Andy provides a personal account about the Ukraine and the complexities of the Ukraine/Russia relationship.

Ukraine

Kiev

There is quite a contrast between life in Kiev, which is the capital and one of the biggest and most beautiful cities of the Ukraine, and life in a provincial city in the North of England. Kiev is characterised by seven hills, with wonderful architecture, wide boulevards and beautiful public squares. The River Dniپر dominates the centre of the city with acres of parks along the high banks. The river divides Kiev into two distinct areas: on the right bank is the old city, with the great Sophia Cathedral and the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra monastery; the left bank is much flatter, and most of the dormitory areas are located here. Housing in Kiev almost invariably means a flat in a large block; private houses are very much the exception. Transport is still relatively cheap, with an extensive tram and trolley bus system, and an underground network.

History

Archaeological excavations show evidence of the first settlements on the territory of Kiev 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. Historians say that in the 6th century many tribes which lived around the Dniپر united under the name Rus named after a branch of the Dniپر which they inhabited and this later gave its name to Russia. After that Kiev became the capital of a state called Kievan Rus. By the end of the 9th century Kiev was the political centre of the Eastern Slavs. Kiev maintained wide foreign commercial trade links due to its position in the middle of trade routes between the Vikings and the Byzantine Empire. Kievan Rus had existed for more than three centuries. In the 14th century, the Kiev region became the cradle for the birth of the modern Ukrainian nation.

Christianity

In the 10th century the nobles of Kievan Rus became familiar with the Christian religion from the Byzantine Empire. In 988 Prince Vladimir the Great who intended on strengthening his power in the broader international arena introduced Christianity as the official religion of the realm. By the 11th century, Kiev was one of the largest centres of civilisation in the Christian world. It had over 400 churches and by the 18th century Kiev became the Russian Empire's centre of worship and symbol of Orthodox Christianity.

The Orthodox style of worship is very different to Baptist church life. People come in individually and make the prayers they need to, often using candles near an icon as a means to concentrate their mind and heart on prayer.

Postscript

26 years ago I met a Russian woman at the International Society at the University of Manchester. Vic and I were masters students; I had returned from high school teaching in Indonesia, while she had come from Kyiv, on a scholarship from the George Soros Foundation to study Higher Education management here. Vic had lived most of her life in Ukraine, and was intending to return to contribute further to higher education development in the post-

Soviet transition. I had planned to work in other countries again myself. But instead we married and stayed here in Manchester, with Vic's young son Phil. Out of the window of our lovely flat in Linton House was Union Chapel, and we began to put down roots in Fallowfield.

Vic's mother Rita visited us often in Manchester, and we visited Kyiv often too, seeing wider family and friends. Phil did some GCSE work experience there with Ukrainian friends working to strengthen civil society at UNESCO. We sang at the outdoor karaoke bars in Hydropark, an island in the middle of the Dnieper. After Vic's death in 2013, we continued to visit Kyiv – myself, Phil and our adopted daughter Jess, whose maternal family is also Ukrainian and Russian. We walked through the encampment in Maidan with sandbags in place in 2014, and saw the makeshift memorial to those who died in that protest and uprising against the Russian-leaning president. But Kyiv continued to be a place for our family, and family-building. On a visit in 2017, Rita embraced Anne, to whom I'm now married – a hug of acceptance which is now deep in my memory. Anne and I have been back each year together with all of our children, till Covid, swimming in the Dnieper below the church domes of Sophia and the Lavra, eating too many pryaniki, spending an afternoon at Vic's father's dacha out in the countryside.

We have grown to love Kyiv. What the BBC's Lise Joucet says about the city and its people is true – beautiful, modern, European. But it also shares so much culture and heritage with Russia – through authors, artists, composers; through infrastructure, housing, transport, and through deep familial ties. And we have visited memorials too which speak of the sometimes violent and repressive relationship with Russia. High on the bank of the Dnieper is a stark monument to a genocidal famine. Stalin's excessive quotas for grain from Ukraine in the early 1930s meant enforced starvation of the Ukrainian peasantry – an 'exterminating hunger', the 'Holodomor', in which perhaps four million Ukrainian people died. Such monuments will have renewed significance for many people in Kyiv now.

Since Vic died, Rita has firmly resisted visiting the UK, or relocating here. Vic was her only child, and she has, she says, too many memories of her in Manchester. And her health is not the best. So we talk on Whatsapp, Anne, myself, Rita – my halting translations sufficient for the meanings we need. Rita has been learning English, and we meet halfway, and our cats provide helpful distraction.... As the Russian threats increased in the early part of this year, Rita avoided talk and thoughts of war. Now in her 80s, she could never have envisaged a Russian attack on Kyiv; and then came the morning of 24th February. For a period after the war began, Rita would talk with us by the light of her computer – the authorities had asked everyone to keep their lights off, to reduce the chance of attack. She's on the 11th floor, in what used to be Vic's flat, and she was adamant that she was not going anywhere. She had sufficient food and water, and fortunately the district heating stayed on. But for a while we restricted ourselves to portions of news, because to search for news all day every day was unsustainable. For now, thankfully, the threat to Kyiv has largely gone, but we think of so many others in a similarly terrible position in the Eastern cities of Ukraine.

Vic's writing about Kyiv describes the long, historical entanglement of Russia and Ukraine, and this horrific war marks the latest period in that often complex relationship – albeit one that hardly anyone saw coming. I don't think Vic ever imagined the possibility; she was Russian, with a deep love for Kyiv, and a commitment to working towards a democratic future for Ukraine. She believed that all of that was possible, and she would have been deeply sad about this turn of events. But she would also have been admiring and excited, if somewhat astonished, at the current manifestation of Ukrainian identity, capability and resolve.

PS. Anne and I are glad that a relative of Phil's, Nastiya, is likely to be coming to stay with us in Manchester for some time. She lived in Kyiv until just before the war started, and has managed to get a visa to come here through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Magazine July 1989 (Our 300th Edition)

Even past Editors recycled material!

Read All About It

We were quite pleased with ourselves for achieving “Christward” No. 300, but Mr Ward has found us some fascinating old Union Chapel magazines.

March 1929 - “Union Chapel Magazine” cost 2d. It carried commercial advertising and a serial story called “Caught in the Toils”, as well as devotional articles and news of the fellowship. Much of this issue is devoted to tributes to Dr J E Roberts, who had died on 25th January. There is also an advertisement for the Crematorium, which lists as some of the advantages of cremation, “removes all possibility of being buried alive”. Telegrams to “Incinerate Manchester”.

September 1943 - “Union Chapel and Fallowfield Baptist Church News Letter” marked Priceless. Designed as news and notes for, and about, our members in the Forces.

December 1957 - “Union Chapel, Fallowfield (Baptist) Magazine” cost 4d. This was the last issue of the magazine (“Christward “ was started by Revd John Nicholson). At the church “sittings are free, but the principle of voluntary self-assessment is observed”.

Magazine March 2006

There are now no members of our congregation who remember worshipping in that ‘Cathedral of the North ‘which was Union

Chapel, Oxford Road. One of the last, Ethel Biggs, remembered the night a bomb brought its glory to an end.

The Last Day at Union Chapel, Oxford Road

The war had been in progress for fifteen months and we were all trying to cope with difficult circumstances. How our lives had changed. Our homes had to be sealed, so that no chink of light could be seen from outside. Street lighting was non-existent, a complete blackout. To go out at night was a real adventure, for we had to grope our way to the desired destination. Sometimes the only illumination was incendiary bombs. For a year the air raid siren sounded frequently and Manchester experienced isolated bombing raids. The radio and the press kept us informed of the havoc caused by concentrated bombing in London, Birmingham, Coventry and Glasgow. Although, at that time, Manchester had escaped a blitz, inwardly we all knew that our turn would come.

It was the week before Christmas 1940, and each evening the air raid warning had sounded about 6.30pm. At church all evening activities had stopped. The evening service was held on Sunday afternoon. As Christmas Day drew near a few young people thought a little celebration was necessary. So it was arranged that after the "evening service" on December 22nd we would have a little cheerful "get together". We managed to spare a few refreshments from our meagre rations, asked the help of Mr Wood the caretaker, and organised a short entertaining programme. Mr Wood and his family lived in a house attached to the church. He kindly made a lovely fire in the Deacons' Vestry and a piano was moved into the room. I have tried to remember who was there and the following friends are all I can recall: Misses Harvey, Shaw, Kelly and Bentley, Lowther (Henderson), Fawcett (Abdullah), Condon (Biggs), and our minister John Townsend. Laura and Winnie Shaw played piano pieces and accompanied Miss Kelly, Ruth Bentley and myself as we sang solos and Joan Fawcett recited in her very accomplished style. We will always remember Miss Kelly singing "My Heart Ever Faithful" - the only time she sang solo at Union Chapel. So we relaxed, sang

favourite carols and hymns, enjoying a happy fellowship until the clock registered 6pm.

“Isn’t this lovely,” said Miss Harvey, “let us sing a few more carols before we go home.” Then I was the awkward one; thinking about the previous week’s 6.30pm air raid warnings, I said that I preferred to leave. Laura and I lived in the same street, so we decided to walk home together. That prompted Mr Townsend to say that if the group had different opinions he thought it better to pronounce the Benediction and all go home. Was that a lucky decision or God’s guidance?

Laura and I walked along Wilmslow Road and just as we reached Halmer Street the sirens sounded. Almost immediately lots of incendiary bombs began to fall. “I am sure this is Manchester’s blitz,” I said, and was proved right. We were both worried about Ida (Mrs Frank Ward) who had taken some Chapel flowers to Longsight; she could not contact us until the ‘All Clear’ sounded in the early hours of Monday morning.

A heavy bomb fell on the Nurses’ Home in York Place (near the MRI and Union Chapel) where several nurses were killed. The blast shook Union Chapel, shattering windows and causing much structural damage. Had we stayed in the Chapel that night I am sure some would have sustained injuries and suffered from shock. The following night was another blitz and more damage was done. Mr and Mrs Wood and family escaped injury, but were badly shaken. Thus ended the the saga of Union Chapel. After this, services were held at the Baptist College, until in 1942 we joined with Fallowfield Baptist Church.

June 1987 saw the publication in Christward of ‘Diary of a Pewbody’. Taking as its model the classic ‘Diary of a Nobody’ it was gentle humour satirising views which could be heard at the chapel such as a hankering after past glory, a conviction that Union Chapel

was superior to other churches, and even that some subjects were taboo.

Diary of a Pewbody

10th July 1992

A colleague at the Bank, with whom I often discuss my Diary extracts, asked me if I realised that it was 150 years since the first publication of my grandfather's diaries, which therefore must have been published in Union Chapel's 50th year. Eventually I realised he was referring to Messrs. George and Weedon Grossmith's famous book 'The Diary of a Nobody'. I explained to the poor gentleman that Mr Pooter couldn't possibly be my Grandfather as he was, in fact, a fictional character.. Having said that I greatly admire the character of Mr Pooter, and consider him to be one of the most worthy creations in literature, and would be proud to think that I had such an esteemed ancestor.

4th October 1992 (*Discussions were taking place re a possible merger with Withington Methodist Church*)

The good folk of Withington Methodist Church join us for lunch and a conference . I mention to one of the Methodist members that I was quite looking forward to the prospect of them joining our Church and swelling the numbers a bit. He looked slightly puzzled and said that he understood that we were going to them and help them renovate their beautiful building. I did not understand this remark but did reply that I thought our delightful chapel was far superior to theirs.

18th June 1989

The second of the Early Sessions on 'Problems at Work'. I was looking forward to listening to Dr Garner's exposition of some of the more interesting medical problems she had encountered, but was hoping that she would bear in mind that it was a little too early in the morning for much in the way of what could be described as the more surgical aspects of medicine.... I was so embarrassed. I

hadn't realised that Dr Garner worked in a Family Planning Clinic. I do think that such things are not to be discussed in Church, at least not without a good warning, so that those of a more delicate disposition can stay away. There were people present who were not married.

June 28th 1992

The day we have been waiting for all these months finally dawns, bright and fair. How joyfully we all make our way to our illustrious College to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Union Chapel! I am rather puzzled to be met at the door by the editors, who appear to be handing out pebbles instead of hymn books, but I am told that I am not entitled to one anyway, as I have not been selected to make a statement of my hope for the future. I express my disappointment, as my great aspiration must be that we rebuild, for use in addition to our beautiful buildings, an exact replica of Union Chapel Oxford Road.

Now back to the present

~ Minutes of the Church Meeting held on Zoom on 20th March 2022~

Present: Andy H (chair), Brenda M, Alan R, Margaret R, Margaret G, David G, Carole W, Geoff W, Gwen M, Nicola H, Margaret E, Steve R, Gwyneth HR

1. Apologies: Enid W, Lorna R, Monica D

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the February Church Meeting (in the current issue of the Magazine) were approved.

Date of Next Meeting: Sunday 1st May 2022, on Zoom (normal meeting date in April is Easter Sunday).

3. Matters arising: Gwyneth HR reported that work on the CIO had recommenced and we are in correspondence with our solicitors. They are recommending some further revisions to the draft constitution formally to allow online meetings. These have been referred to the Deacons and will come back to the Church Meeting in due course.

4. Any Other Business: Christian Aid Week.

5. Social Activism: Andy H said that we are committed to social activism as a church, but are we doing it as we want to and in a way that makes sense to outsiders? What does a socially active church look like? It is hard to tell from the exteriors of many church buildings what the congregation care about. How do we see ourselves in terms of social action, and how can we connect better with others on this?

There followed some discussion in which it became apparent that some of us see the letting of rooms on our premises as a form of social action; others wonder if some users may come into this category but not all; and others of us think that social action is about effecting social change on a larger scale, benefitting people we do not meet personally. Andy as chair felt that there was a need to rethink the terms of the discussion and that we should revisit it at a later date. This was agreed.

6. Forthcoming AGM: This year's AGM will be on the 3rd Sunday in June (19th). Nicola H reminded the Meeting that reports will be needed from the various group co-ordinators. Steve R will be stepping down as his 3 year term as a Deacon will end then, and we should be considering nominations for 1 or 2 other people. At present we can't say definitely if the AGM will be in person or online. To be reviewed in May.

7. Open Tuesday: Andy H asked whether the Meeting thought that the Open Tuesday meeting, which had been a significant part of the Church week pre—Covid, should be restarted. The regular

attenders were a mix of churchgoers and people from outside the church group, with non-Union Chapel people being the majority. Several people spoke of the value of the group and in support of it restarting. Alan R agreed to convene a group to decide how and when to go about this.

8. Finance Report and Examiner for Accounts: David G presented details of the church's expenditure for the last year, as circulated to members before the meeting. The papers for this item can be made available on request to the Church Secretary. There were no questions and David was thanked for all his work.

Chris Smail, who is a Chartered Accountant known to many of us, has kindly agreed to review our accounts for the last 2 years and also next year.

9. Gift Donations to Baptist Organisations and Other Charities:

The Meeting approved donations of £650 to the Baptist Missionary Society, £650 to Northern Baptist College, £650 to Christian Aid and £650 to Home Mission (Association of Baptist Churches) as part of our regular giving out of income this year. The Meeting also ratified the payment of £1,000 to the Christian Aid Ukraine Appeal already made and unanimously authorised a further payment to that appeal of an additional £5,000. The feeling of the Meeting was in favour of giving more generously generally than we have done in the past.

We believe that Fallowfield and Withington Foodbank is financially OK at present, but David will check.

10. Church Weekend 2022: David G reported that Carole W is going to help with aspects of the organisation of this year's weekend at Thornleigh, Grange over Sands. The main focus this year will be on the social side, though we are hoping that our link missionary Sophie will be able to join us on the Saturday morning. Please will people who are intending to come, confirm to David as soon as they can.

11. Election of BU President:

Nicola H reported that the only nominee for BU President for the year 2023-24 is Tim Presswood, now of the NWBA but also well

known to us from his time as minister at Openshaw. The Meeting was happy for Nicola to register a vote for him on behalf of the Church.

Any Other Business (indicated in Item 4):

Christian Aid Week: Gwyneth HR said that in view of our small numbers and the ongoing Covid situation, we would not be organising any events this year. People will be encouraged to give personally if they wish to do so. If we are made aware of any events being organised locally, the information will be circulated.

The meeting ended at 12:15 with the Grace.

~ Church Weekend ~

24th June to 26th June 2022

Thornleigh, Grange-over-Sands



This weekend we will be catching up with each other, walking, talking and sharing. Bring something to share if you like (music, writing, pictures etc.)


Contact David Garner for further information and to book

Cost is £158 (2020 prices!)

Number 516. Published 24th April 2022
The magazine of Union Chapel Fallowfield(Baptist),
2b Wellington Road, Fallowfield Manchester, M14 6EQ

Web Site: www.unionchapelbaptist.org.uk

Church Office:  225-4226

Editor: Alan Redhouse:  445-0020;
email: alan.redhouse@virgin.net

Secretary: Nicola Hamilton  270 0087

Treasurer: David Garner  434 4984

Deacons: David Garner, Nicola Hamilton, Andy Howes, Lorna Richardson, Steve Roberts.