

Christward

The magazine of



July 2nd–Aug 27th
2017

~ Journey - A review of the Church Weekend ~

Last weekend Union Chapel took their annual expedition for a weekend away, this year to Thornleigh in Grange Over Sands. The title of the weekend was Journeys (note the plural- this was not a weekend about the seventies rock band Journey) and led us through a contemplation of the Israelites' Exodus and our own religious and spiritual journeys. It was postulated that the Israelites had never actually been to Egypt and more worryingly that the Egyptians were a highly inclusive society and although there was a clear hierarchy there was never any slavery in Egypt (with the possible exception of the building of the city Rameses) which is not bad going for a society that lasted for 3000 years over 5000 years ago. I think the Dreamworks studio might need to issue an apology for the misrepresentation of Egyptian culture in their film the Prince of Egypt. Although on the plus side it does have some cracking musical numbers.

This reviewer rated the weekend very highly (nothing to do with familial loyalty) but in case you were looking for the views of a more impartial attendee someone noted that we had been "fed well in there (indicating the dining room) and also nourished in here (indicating the session room)."

While we are on this subject I think it is important to note the high quality of food provided on the weekend. A 'light lunch' on the Saturday consisted of burger (deliciously pink) and hot, fluffy chips with warm chocolate cake and ice cream for



pudding. I think it was not wholly unpredictable that when asked in a session to choose our three essentials from a 'packing list' of doctrine, worship and spiritual disciplines no one suggested fasting.

On Saturday afternoon people were free to wander of their own accord. While some went on a health giving and bracing walk up



some rocky terrain others strolled along the promenade or went to explore the myriad of local shops. Grange is surprisingly well provided for in this regard offering a labyrinth of second hand books in its bookshops, a dazzling amount of vintage jewellery and a surprising number of estate agents. Grange is apparently *the* place that people in Didsbury retire to (which does somewhat explain the panoply of high end gift shops selling soft furnishings).

The Saturday evening entertainment was of the same high standard as ever. Sketches written by our resident playwright Alan Redhouse were highly entertaining and also provided a very creative response to the 'Linton House Problem'. If you were not there I



urge you to read the script. We also had work from new writers, Earnshaw and Howes, and they are indeed a promising new generation of writers. It was an hilarious sketch with first class



performances but it still was able to pose some profound and thought provoking questions- why couldn't Rose just have shifted over on that door in the middle of the Atlantic? "Perhaps Kate Winslet is more dense than we know." Thankfully though any element of farce was confined to the stage and other domestic arrangements were carried off very smoothly thanks to Andy Howes.

Many thanks to all who contributed to what was a really fantastic weekend where it was wonderful to be in fellowship with you all. The theme of the weekend was how the Israelites had created their own foundation myth- a metaphorical journey- travelling first away to Egypt in order to come back home. To quote a wise woman, despite the current uncertainties in our day-to-day life as a church going away on the church weekend always feels like coming home.

Rachel Garner

~ Church Weekend Photo Gallery ~

Given below are a few extra photos. They will look much better in colour and you can find them in the magazine section on the Church Website.



That's three I've made but I seem to have run out of wire.



The future? Who knows - two of them could be the answer to the Linton House problem!



Every Church Weekend is full of surprises



Jess is not impressed by Isobel's relaxed attitude towards work.



One member of the afternoon walk group looks on in exasperation..



...as the rest decide to go off on their own. (against all the rules)

~ Ideas for the journey ~

This article stems from a conversation after one of the sessions at the recent Union Chapel weekend. We were talking about prayer. For many people there are issues around prayer particularly around prayers of petition. However although they may not want to pray, they still want to grow closer to God.

Over the centuries various practices have developed which are intended to facilitate this. One of the better known is the Ignatian Review of the Day. In this you reflect on the events of the day allowing yourself to be open to new ways of understanding and to what God may be offering to you in this process. Spiritual journaling is similar with the added opportunity of recording your thoughts and insights so that you can come back to them at a future date . A third practice of this type is known as gratitudes in which you reflect on the happenings of the and record three things for which you are grateful.

Spiritual practices of this nature if repeated regularly can start to help us to learn to connect with the eternal and to develop a meaningful way of prayer.

In the last fifty years or so people in the west have become more interested in some of the practices in eastern religions particularly in the various forms of meditation. These allow the mind to settle and the Spirit to enter . Most of these depend on the awareness of the breath going in and out of the body.

The process could be as simple as counting, up to five as the breath goes in and then another five as the breath leaves. A variation could be to breathe in on a word , for example, peace, and breath out the word love.

The mind will wander whatever we try to do. This is normal and as soon as we realise that it is doing so, we can return the attention to the breath.

This is only a very small introduction to the ideas of spiritual practices. If it seems that it is of interest to you, then a small book entitled "Deepening the life of the Spirit" Resources for Spiritual Practice developed by Ginny Wall and available from the Quaker Book Shop in Friends House will provide much more detailed information .

Margaret Edmonds

~ Some Thoughts from our Interim Minister ~

"There are no strangers here, only friends you haven't yet met."

William Butler Yeats

Over the last few weeks, since a family bereavement, I have had an opportunity to experience the care and kindness of this lovely fellowship of Union Chapel. I am most grateful to everyone for your consideration, your thoughts and prayers, and your lovely messages. I have truly felt held by the fellowship at this difficult time; thank you so much.

It seems to me that it is often when we experience difficulties or challenges that we truly see whether a group's espoused values are true in practice. I often hear stories of how people have been deeply hurt by 'the church' (which tends to be how it's put) but in practice it can sometimes be one or two people, sometimes the church leadership, sometimes those outworking a particular theology in a very negative way. And so it is good to be with a church whose espoused values (i.e. those on the board outside), are lived out by the individuals that corporately make up the church.

But not all challenges are individual. Sometimes it can be the church as a whole that is challenged and one of the pitfalls of a community facing challenges is that relationships can become frayed or broken. People can focus on the things that divide rather than those that unite, and individual desires can be prioritised above the corporate good. And yet, when good relationships

already exist, they can be the glue that holds a community together through difficult challenges.

And so as Union Chapel looks forward, with all the challenges that are likely to come our way in order to achieve the best outcome for the future of the church, I think we can be confident in the foundation of the good and lasting relationships between people of the church community. These, when it comes to the crunch, will be the glue that holds us together, even as we may disagree, and will allow us to put the good of the church community above our individual preferences, enabling us to make changes in a positive way.

I am truly hopeful that as we walk together with grace and in fellowship, we will maintain the great values of Union Chapel Church and Community for the benefit of all, including those strangers who are friends we have yet to meet.

Jane Henderson

~ Snippets of Thomas ~

As someone once said, “And now for something completely different”. I therefore submit for your perusal some snippets of the Gospel of Thomas.

Scholars have observed that in the early centuries after Christ, there were many Christianities. The version which became the Orthodox one, is described by scholars as proto orthodox. One of the most famous of the Christianities was one which was heavily influenced by Marcion in about AD 140. Marcionite Christianity is interesting, because it attracted a very large following. The underpinning concept of it was that there had to be two gods. The vengeful Old Testament Jewish God, and the loving New Testament God. It relied heavily on Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke and the ten of the writings of the Apostle Paul. Much of the Marcionite Christianity has been reconstructed from works which criticised it.

Another version of Christianity was influenced by the Gospel According to Thomas. This is an early Christian non-canonical, gospel that many scholars believe provides insight into the oral gospel traditions. It was discovered at Nag Hammadi, near Luxor in Egypt, in December 1945 among a group of books known as the Nag Hammadi library. Further details can be found at gnosis.org.

In the gospel of Thomas, there is no narrative. It consists of 114 sayings of Jesus (or logia in Greek, pronounced with a hard g as in logos, meaning word). Many of the logia appear to have been taken directly from the gospel of Matthew or Luke.

According to Thomas, Jesus had a twin brother, Didymus Judas Thomas. Didymus is the Greek word for twin, and in Semitic languages Thomas meant twin. So it seems that his name was simply Judah, or Judas. Perhaps then Didymus and Thomas were nick names, the first being a Greek and the second of Semitic origin.

Orthodox Christianity does not believe that Thomas was Jesus' twin, but in Thomasine Christianity which is very strong in India, Syria and Mesopotamia, it is thought that he was actually Jesus' twin. Thomas is credited with being the apostle who took the gospel to India.

There is also an infancy gospel of Thomas, which describes Jesus as a child, and the Acts of Thomas. In the Act of Thomas, he (Thomas) comes across as very anti marriage and anti-family. Thomas also wrote the Hymn of the Pearl, or its full title is The Hymn of Jude Thomas the Apostle in the country of the Indians. There is also the Book of Thomas the Contender Writing to the Perfect.

Thomas' gospel is often described as a Gnostic gospel. Gnosticism was described in a poem by Theodotus.

*Who we were,
what we have become,*

*where we were,
whither we were thrown,
whither we are hastening,
from what we are redeemed,
what birth is,
what rebirth is.*

The answers to the poem are:

Who we were? Divine beings.

What have you become? Become mud, entrapped in a dead body,
trapped in materiality.

Where were you? In Heaven, with the divine Father, with
God

Whither we were thrown? Into the earth.

Where are we hastening? Back to the divine.

What are we redeemed from? From the material world

What is birth? Damnation, because your spark is
entrapped in your body.

What is rebirth? Death or learning of your true self

Sex therefore, was considered to be a bad thing because one is trapping more sparks of light into more bodies. Evil powers try to keep the true self asleep or drunk, in order to keep the evil world together. In other words, they don't want you to learn and they don't want your spark to be able to fly through the realms and back to God at death. But really wise people have the secrets, that if you know, you can use them to unlock the gates that lead back to God. It is as though there are gates at the different levels of heaven and if you have the knowledge, or passwords for each level, you can ascend to the next level. Does this sound familiar? Think computer games!

In logia 21 Mary said to Jesus, "What do your disciples resemble? He said, "What they resemble is children living in a plot of land that is not theirs. When the owners of the land come they will say, 'Surrender our land to us.' They, for their part stripped naked in their presence, in order to give it back to them, and they give them back their land."

It could be an allegory. Who are the owners of the land? The evil powers that rule the earth. Who are the children, who are the real disciples of Jesus? Those people who know enough to say, when the earth is demanded of you, when your body is demanded of you by these evil powers, just give it up, because it is not valuable anyway.

Logia 37: His disciples said, "When will you be shown forth to us, and when shall we behold you?" Jesus said, "When you strip naked without being ashamed and take your garments and put them under your feet like little children and tread upon them. Then you will see the child of the living and you will not be afraid."

The Gnostic interpretation is: Stripping off the material world. When you strip your soul, the spark of the body, and you realise that it's not the real you, then you come to know the real you.

I wonder how many obscure writings in the New Testament have overtones of Gnosticism!

Geoff Walker

~ Shoeboxes ~

It's time to think **"Shoeboxes"** again!

I know it's really summer, and we may not want to remember shoeboxes until nearer Christmas. However, Link to Hope collects our boxes early in November, and I need to take them to our Area Collector by the beginning of November, which means we have to pack them in October so that I can check all's well with each box before the final wrapping.

If you want to fill and wrap your own box at home and give it completed to me, then that's wonderful, and thanks. Just let me know, so I don't miss taking it.

Does anyone have any unwanted shoeboxes? Please bring them on any Sunday.

I'm including the list of items as I always find it handy to take it around with me in my bag when going round shops in holiday mode, and want to buy something. I like to know what to look for, and the list helps.

Enjoy the summer folks!

Carole Walker

Carole's List is given below.

Please note the following restrictions:

Customs regulations mean there are certain items which cannot be included in your Shoeboxes. So please take care not to include any of these things as Link to Hope could be fined or your boxes impounded.

NO medicines or medical products

NO money

NO tinned food

NO perfume

NO coffee, tea or alcohol

NO out of date items

NO books or literature

Handmade knitted toys, for families, are very welcome but are not to be put inside the Shoeboxes

Family

Essential Items

- Gloves/Scarf or Hat (new or knitted)
- Sweets/Chocolates (BB June 2018 EU Origin)
- Soap & Flannel (New)
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste (New)
- Colouring Books/Pens/Felt Tips
- Small Toys - Yoyo/Skipping Rope/Toy Car
- Teddy/Doll/Soft Toy
- Candles & Holders
- Screwdriver/Tape Measure/DIY Tools
- Small Games - Travel Size Draughts/
Dominoes & Playing Cards etc

Extra Items

- Shampoo/Shower Gel - Max 300ml each
- Craft/Sewing Kit
- Socks/Tights (New)
- Hair Accessories
- Safety Razors/Plasters
- Wind Up Torch/Radio
- Foldable Brush/Comb & Mirror
- Simple Calculator - Solar Powered
- Scarf - Square or Straight (Light Weight)
- Work Gloves
- Nail Clipper/Brush/Small Scissors

Elderly-unisex

Essential Items

- Gloves/Scarf or Hat (new or knitted)
- Sweets/Chocolates (BB June 2018 EU Origin)
- Soap & Flannel (New)
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste (New)
- Reading Glasses/Small Magnifier
- Wind Up Torch/Radio
- Pens & Writing Pads
- Candles & Holders
- Sensory Items - Lavender Bag etc
- Small Games - Travel Size Draughts/
Dominoes & Playing Cards etc

Extra Items

- Shampoo/Shower Gel - Max 300ml each
- Craft/Sewing Kit
- Socks/Tights (new)
- Safety Razors/Plasters
- Nail Clipper/Brush/Small Scissors
- Foldable Brush/Comb & Mirror
- Shopping Bag - Strong Cotton Cloth
- Scarf - Square or Straight (light weight)
- Mug/Wooden Spoon/Cutlery
- Cloth Hankies (mens sizes)
- Work Gloves

~ News of the Family ~

Jane Henderson, our interim minister, will be ordained on Saturday 15th July, 2:30pm at Poynton Baptist Church. Jane invites all Union Chapel people to come and help celebrate and recognise her call both to Nationally Accredited Ministry in the Baptist Union and specifically to the role of Transition Minister with NWBA. Please let

Jane know if you would like to attend so that numbers can be accommodated for seating and refreshments.

Anna and Owen will be getting married on 26th August in Cambridge. So that all their Manchester friends can join them in celebrating, they are having a ceilidh and hotpot supper at Union Chapel on Saturday 12th August. Food will be served shortly after 6pm and dancing will start at about 7pm. To help them plan food and drink, please confirm if you are coming and let them know any dietary requirements by emailing owenejones@yahoo.co.uk by 30th July.

Hilda continues to enjoy visitors from Union Chapel and she was delighted to see her photograph in the last edition of Christward.



~ Fallowfield & Withington Food Bank ~

The Food Bank continues to see a huge decrease in the numbers attending our sessions. The warehouse is overflowing and we continue to struggle for space.

Lots of our student volunteers have returned to their family homes for the summer, which has left us requiring extra volunteers for the Wednesday evening session at Fallowfield Library. If you have some time to spare from 4.30pm until 6.30pm and are able to help please do contact us.

We continue to be involved in working with our local schools and it's always a privilege to be asked to take school assemblies.

This month we shall say a fond farewell to Rev. Jane Wilde from Withington Methodist Church as she moves to a new post in Preston. Jane has been a great support to us we shall miss her but wish her well.



During Ramadan lots of our Muslim supporters donated to us. Bilal was particularly pleased to help us as were the Pupils, Parents and staff of Manchester Muslim Prep school.

There are two sets of minutes in this issue of Christward - our usual set plus the minutes of the AGM. The AGM minutes are published now to keep readers up to date but they will be published again in May 2018 before that year's AGM. Some parts of the minutes have been redacted because of confidentiality.

Copies of the Annual Report can be obtained from Alan Redhouse and copies of the Accounts and of the Minutes from the Church Secretary upon application.

**~ Minutes of the Church Meeting
of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist)
held on Sunday 21st May 2017
at 11.20am.~**

Apologies: Andy H & Enid W; Alan R (with children)

Present: Margaret G (Chair), Gwyneth HR, Gwen M, Margaret E, Margaret R, David G, Geoff W, Michael W, David G, Eileen L, Ted L, Leonie E, Rose B, Beryl D, Irene R, Carole W., Steve R, Nicola H

Minutes of last meeting (printed in magazine) approved, no matters arising.

Notification of AOB: Manse

Linton House:

Discussion on the future of Linton House took place. Thanks were expressed to Jane for all her work in making contacts and pulling this together.

Insurance: The matter of the insurance of the building was discussed.

Interim Minister:

Jane's current period with us expires at the end of July. Her position is somewhat different now she has an NWBA role. The meeting resolved that we would like her to continue, and mandated the deacons to discuss and agree appropriate arrangements if possible.

We are actively invited to Jane's ordination on Saturday 15th July at Poynton.

Finance

No major issues at present. Accounts have been submitted to the auditor and will be presented at the AGM.

Pastoral Support

Currently the Diaconate keeps a watching eye for concerns, with each deacon having a specific list so no-one should be forgotten. We do not have a visitation group of any form. Some concern was raised at the diaconate that this may not be working as well as hoped so it was brought to this meeting. However no concerns were raised so a request stands to bring any ideas or specific concerns to a member of the diaconate, otherwise we will assume all is OK.

Autumn Social Event

An event bringing together all users of the building was proposed for 5-9pm on Oct 14th. Michael W to co-ordinate. Not to be performance-based. We will ask groups to bring food of their choosing to share. More details and specifics to follow.

AGM

18th June. Probably a traditional Church Meeting format, but Gwen and deacons to arrange. Written report as previously, Jane is co-ordinating. A reminder to those who will be contributing to start thinking/drafting.

Sunday Pattern

General approval was received at the Second Session which discussed the current pattern, with alternating Sundays having traditional (that is; what we have been doing for the past couple of years) and simpler quieter format. There was a suggestion that we should look again at the timing of Sunday services, which is noted for future discussion. Similarly suggestions that the quieter format could be advertised as something different as there may be people who might find this format more attractive and accessible.

AOB: Manse

There are issues with the performance of the current letting agent for the manse, and a backlog of repairs are having to be tackled by the Fabric Committee. It was agreed that an alternative agent should be appointed and the matter delegated to the Fabric Committee and/or Deacons.

DONM: AGM June 18th; next regular business meeting July 16th

Meeting closed with an Alleluia

~ Minutes of the Annual General Church Meeting of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist) held on Sunday 18th June 2017 at 11.20am.~

Present: Margaret Garner (chair), David Garner, Beryl Dykes, Carole Walker, Brenda Marston, Irene Roberts, Geoff Walker, Gwen Mattock, Alan Redhouse, Margaret Redhouse, Phil Paulden, Sue Paulden, Margaret Edmonds, Enid Welford, Michael Welford, Nicola

Hamilton, Carmen Bowman, Andrew Howes (taking the minutes in the absence of the secretary)

Apologies: Steve Roberts, Gwyneth Heritage-Roberts, Jane Henderson, Owen Jones, Owen Roberts.

Introduction

Margaret introduced the meeting, and the annual report, as a moment for looking back and looking forward at the life of the church. Warm thanks were expressed to Alan for his work on the annual church report, which has substantial reports on many of the activities associated with the church. Financial reports were also circulated.

Interim minister

Gratitude was expressed to Jane Henderson for her work with the church over the last six months, and the very effective focus and detail she has made possible in terms of scoping possibilities.

Secretary's Report

Grateful thanks to Gwyneth for all her work, particularly for all the work associated with the Linton House development process. There was appreciation expressed too for such a cheering and positive report from Gwyneth at the end of what for her has been a hugely demanding year.

Finance

Thanks expressed to Nicola Hamilton for her financial report to the meeting, and for all her efficient and effective work as treasurer through her period of office. In response to the vacancy for the post of treasurer, Geoff Walker proposed, Michael Welford seconded, and the meeting was unanimous in voting in David Garner as our next treasurer.

Safeguarding

The child protection policy was read out. A question was raised about whether safeguarding training had been taken up by those

working with young people. Agreed, the need for training (and a note to look out for training close to Manchester in the next few months) but also the regular, minuted meetings held by the Junior Church team in which safeguarding is discussed.

The Adults at risk policy was read out, noting the need to exercise proper care in relation to those at risk. There were no questions raised.

Life in Union Chapel

- Junior church – one member expressed on behalf of the meeting appreciation for the style and organisation of junior church.
- Fabric: looking for help as DG moves into the treasurer role. Thanks recorded to DG for all he has done as departing member of the fabric committee. Noted that there is a vacancy now on the committee which needs filling.
- Lettings: Michael noted that users are contributing to the life of the church in terms of income, which was a further expression of the blessing of being able to share the building
- Music group: appreciation of all that the group adds to the life of the church
- Open Tuesday: particular appreciation of the open nature of the group, newcomers continuing to arrive and feel welcome, and going way beyond the congregation
- Walks continue and all are welcome to join in, occasionally or regularly. First Saturday of every month, 9.30am in the church car park.
- Food Bank is now established as an independent charity and thanks to all that is done through this institution by all those in the different centres, churches and volunteers who contribute.

- BMS world mission: agreed to consider in due course whether we link to another missionary
- O&A: noted that the committee now numbers only five trustees and without additional volunteers from last year. The request went out again to all of us, to consider this role, which would involve coming to at least one meeting a month at 10.30am on Tuesday.

The annual report was very warmly received by the meeting. Thanks expressed to all contributors, to all those behind the reports as contributors to the breadth of activity, and particularly to Alan for bringing it all together.

The diaconate

Thanks to Gwen, Leonie, Andy and Nicola as retiring deacons, for their work on the diaconate.

Nomination forms had been received for three new deacons. Voting slips were distributed, returned and counted by Phil Paulden and Brenda Marston. Colin Marchbank-Smith, Beryl Dykes and David Garner were duly announced as elected by the meeting, and the meeting wished them all well in the role.

Further thanks

Thanks were expressed to Margaret Garner for chairing church meetings regularly and effectively. Thanks also to the members of the worship group for organising and leading worship on Sunday mornings. This is hugely appreciated.

The meeting closed with the sense of this being the end of a turbulent church year, with a lot of exciting things going on and going ahead. We sang a buoyant hallelujah.

DNM June 2018

Stop Press: We have paid in £975 collected during Christian Aid Week; grateful thanks to all contributors

~ Talking to Each Other ~

If you would like to comment on any of the articles in this magazine and so start a discussion or if you would care to write an article for us on a topic of your choosing such contributions would be welcome. Please send them by email to alan.redhouse@virgin.net or by post to The Editor, Christward, Union Chapel Fallowfield, 2b Wellington Road, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 6EQ.

Alan Redhouse

~ Church Weekend ~ End Note ~



Sighting the Promised Land - The End of the Journey

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