

Christward

The magazine of



July 7th–August 25th
2013

~ From the Minister's Desk ~

In the days leading up to the church weekend in Rydal, I was away near Market Harborough attending my Newly Accredited Ministers' Conference. This is a residential course for every 'NAM' minister in the Baptist Union who is roughly half way through their three year post-training period. And so I found myself, along with about seventy other colleagues from across the country, gathering for a time of teaching, sharing, and being equipped for ministry. Given that Union Chapel is an integral part of my ministerial formation, and that I'm sure there might at least be some who are fascinated by such things, I thought I might share some brief reflections from my time away.

It is fair to say I had some reservations before even arriving at the beautiful venue that is Hothorpe Hall. The prospect of sharing a room with a stranger, a programme of fourteen-hour days, and prolonged periods of 'group sharing' are not things that fill me with joy. This kind of structure, although largely practically enforced, highly favours the natural extrovert and is very draining for those of us who aren't. It is also worth understanding that anyone who has accepted a role which involves being 'in the spotlight' has to some degree developed an ego to support this responsibility; those of us with just enough ego tend to make good working partners, those of us with an abundant blessing make others want to punch them!

I am however pleased to report that there were some real highlights to the time away which ensured that I was glad to have been. And so, some scattered thoughts...

First impressions. Baptist Ministry is frustratingly still dominated by us white males, to a huge extent and to our detriment. On the other hand the leadership of both the Union and the course is more evenly balanced, if not more female-oriented, which is good. The average age of ministers seems reassuringly low (I felt somewhere in the middle); energy and enthusiasm could be found in abundance.

I am constantly frustrated by how ministers appear to be so bad at listening, and so keen to 'fix' problems. It is quite possible that when away from their congregations, ministers feel some freedom temporarily to abandon what I understand to be one of the underlying principles of pastoral care – shutting up! Our gift to others is to listen to them, and I mean properly listen, the kind of listening which is impossible if you are constructing a reply in your head or working out an action plan to address the issue being described. The conference was a useful (if aggravating) reminder that we should seek to bless one another with an attentive listening ear, but also a blessing when such a person was encountered.

I knew I would find some of the worship problematic. I don't spend much of my life feeling victorious, or that the next revival is just around the corner, or that everything will be ok if I can just shout louder or display more enthusiasm. I've been there and burnt the t-shirt. On the other hand, it offered me an appropriate reminder that if our worship life is devoid of emotion and ceases to inspire us of what might be, then it is equally shallow. It was not all 'happy-clappy' however, there were moments of profound depth, and one in particular that will live with me for some time – I got 'anointed'. Nothing super-spiritual or weird or contrived, in fact it was as simple as receiving a brief prayer, and a marking of oil on my palms. What made it significant in the first instance was the wise, sensitive, and utterly genuine nature of the older couple who did it; there was no pretence, just honest concern and affection. I then returned to pray with some of my colleagues and realised that the oil was scented. The wonderful smell enriched our spoken words in a way that I can't quite describe, but it was both meaningful and surprising. Perhaps there is a place for more 'bells and smells' in Baptist worship, however strange that may seem at first?

The other thing that I knew would be disappointing was the reminder that I am rather strange. And before you laugh, Union Chapel also shares this particular strangeness! Our theological openness and our willingness to work with such internal diversity both mark us out as very different from the norm. Whilst this minority existence can be lonely, I remain intensely proud of our relative uniqueness. Of course there might have been other

likeminded souls there, but we need some kind of secret handshake to discover one another. I was however pleased to find many people doing absolutely fantastic work through their churches, and I suspect that as many of them love and serve those around them, that the theological move will begin to follow. We on the other hand, must ensure that our theology continues to lead us to action.

And finally, I got nominated by my group to address the whole gathered assembly to explain our utterly radical idea of Second Sessions. It blew people away. And then every mealtime following I was quizzed on how it could possibly work, and how did we feel about doing something so different with our Sunday mornings. So, we might be on the brink of witnessing a sudden explosion of Second Session services taking over the country. If this does indeed become the norm then we must of course respond by thinking up an even more radical way to spend our time together... I might have some ideas on that, do you?

Ian Geere

~ WHY - use the Lectionary ? ~

Christianity inherited the idea of lectionary use from Judaism. The Talmud - the collection of commentaries on scripture, completed about 200CE, called the Mishnah, plus the later Gemara - commentaries on the Mishnah claims that from the time of Moses receiving the law, certain parts would be publicly read on specific occasions - Passover, Pentecost, the feast of Tabernacles. Later, there seems to have developed a practice of reading passages from the law regularly on the Sabbath and the Gemara part of the Talmud also speaks of passages from the prophets being read. By the medieval period it was standard Jewish practice for there to be a reading from the Torah - our first five books of the Old Testament and a reading from either the prophets or the historical books. Psalms would also be said or sung,

The lectionary - which might be a one or a three-year version would go through the scriptures in a logical fashion. It seems that the early

church began by using some of the Old Testament scriptures and then added readings from the various letters of Paul and others and then sections of the gospels as they became available.

During the first couple of hundred years of the church there were many documents circulating including lives of Jesus, letters and other writings from a variety of church leaders. By about 150CE the four gospels known to us were accepted as authoritative but it was not until 367 CE that Athanasius, bishop of Antioch, listed the twenty-seven books that we find in our New Testaments today as the complete record. This was confirmed by the Councils of Carthage in 397 and 419. There have remained other documents that have been used down the centuries as part of christian study and devotion e.g. the Didache, The Shepherd of Hermas, Acts of Thomas etc.

From early christian centuries lectionaries began to be developed with the intention of enabling as much as possible of scripture to be heard by worshippers in a logical sequence. There are many different ones some covering different periods of time for example 1,2,or 3 years. The Revised Common Lectionary, which is the one which we and most western christians, both Catholic and Protestant, use was last revised in 1994.

It identifies four readings for each Sunday:

- Old Testament or Acts of the Apostles
- Psalms
- Epistles or Revelation
- Gospel

It runs in three-year cycles and uses the first three gospels as its gospel base. The cycle begins on the first Sunday of Advent and goes like this:

- Year A: Takes Matthew as its base
begins on the first Sunday in Advent 2013, 2016,2019 etc.
- Year B: Takes Mark as its base
begins on the first Sunday in Advent 2014, 2017,2020 etc.
- Year C: Luke as its base
begins on the first Sunday in Advent 2012,2015,2018 etc.

As much as possible of each of these gospels will be read during the year. Parts of John's gospel are inserted into each year at major festivals and occasions as appropriate - Advent, Christmastide, Lent and Easter.

The lectionary follows the CHRISTIAN YEAR

Season	Sundays	Gospel lectionary
Advent	Four Sundays before Christmas	Judgement, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Mary
Christmas	Christmas Day and the two Sundays following.	The Birth stories & shepherds
Epiphany	Four Sundays	Wise Men, Temple Presentation, Flight into Egypt, Nazareth.
'Ordinary' time	Early February to Lent	Jesus' life, calling of the disciples, beginning of His ministry.
Lent	Shrove Tuesday to Palm Sunday	Teaching, healing, beginning of conflict with Jewish authorities
Holy Week	includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday	The last week, Last Supper, Crucifixion & Burial
Easter	Easter Day and Sundays until Pentecost (includes Ascension Day)	Resurrection Stories
Pentecost	Whit Sunday	The Coming of the Holy Spirit
Ordinary' time	Sundays until Advent (includes All Saints 1st Nov)	more teaching, preaching & healing

~ Church Weekend ~

The 2013 Church Weekend took place at Rydal Hall nr Ambleside. The weekend was led by Mark Janes under the heading 'Pilgrims need Passion not Programmes' using some the ideas to be found in John Westerhoff's book 'Will our Children have Faith' Below four participants reflect on the time away together.

So Church Weekend 2013 has been and gone. Eagerly anticipated, thoroughly enjoyed and now history. So what about lasting impressions said Alan, one paragraph or perhaps two, by Thursday please.

This was a lovely Church Weekend. The words of the hymn "let love be real" touched many of us. They represent, I think, part of the essence of Union Chapel. It was noticeable that peoples' faces became softer and happier throughout the two days.

Apart from that, the memorable things for me(no significance in the order) were : -

some interesting ideas, professionally presented; the beautiful surroundings; the Saturday evening entertainment; the excellent organisation; the participation of the children; the food; and, of course, all the wonderful people who were there. Many thanks to all of you.

Margaret Edmonds

P.S. The coffee and chocolate cakes were pretty good too.

I was a last minute addition to the church weekend and I was very excited to be able to come, but I had no idea what to expect. I found myself in the lovely Rydal Hall surrounded by the wonderful and always welcoming group who call Union Chapel home as well as some faces that were new (to me). I got to see a bit of the Lake District and we spent some time together, led by Mark Janes, contemplating questions about church identity and faith. No answers were reached but questions were asked and there was a

sense of agreement that this in itself is a large part of Union Chapel's identity.

This weekend reminded me a lot of Union Chapel's services in that I often felt there wasn't a conclusion decided upon at the end. Mark presented Westerhoff's viewpoint of seeing the growth of faith as similar to the steps of a child's growth. Of these four steps I felt like my previous churches have been full of "associative" believers while Union chapel seems to easily lend itself to the searching category of faith. When I spoke to Mark I thought it was interesting that he observed that in the twenty or so years since he had attended Union Chapel it was still the same. There are good things in this of course, that Union Chapel is still the open and welcoming place he remembered. But with the questioning attitude it seems like at some point a conclusion has to be reached or else what is the point of asking questions.

I think this is particularly true with individual's faith. In order to take the step to Westerhoff's "owned" faith you as an individual have to make a choice and stand for your beliefs. If you don't act on your conclusion it remains simply a thought. According to Westerhoff's book "Faith is a way of behaving which involves knowing, being, and willing." Do Westerhoff's theories extend to church identity? Should only young churches have a questioning identity? Do they need to grow in the way an individual must or is it enough for a church to appeal to a certain type of people? Is there any other way for a church to be? Without a specialization of some kind would it have an identity? I don't have an answer for you, just some questions and I will leave it at that.

J'Andrea Hood

Several times during the the weekend others from Union Chapel came up to Harry or to me and asked if we would like to use their shower. I tried not to take this personally. In fact it was (I hope) because we weren't staying at Rydal Hall with the rest of you but were camping nearby.

There were pros and cons to opting for camping, on the plus side we had a lovely week's holiday in the Lake District, most of it in dry sunny weather. In fact the relentless rain of the weekend pretty much arrived and departed with the rest of you.

On the negative side we had a week long battle with midges (they also thought that a lakeside campsite surrounded by woodland with beautiful views would be a nice place to hang out). Also, after a peaceful week of sharing our campsite with just a few quiet campers, the hordes arrived at the weekend and we knew we were in for a bad nights sleep when at 2pm on Saturday afternoon we heard the lads in the next tent say 'Let's tidy up the tent now before we get too drunk' - it was a long night..... Maybe Saturday night at Rydal Hall was the same? I didn't like to ask, but no one looked too hung over on Sunday morning.

But my main memory of the weekend won't be the midges or the noisy campers but the time spent just sitting and chatting with others and the chance to get to know each other a bit better.

Rachel Scott

I very much enjoyed catching up with everyone and meeting some new people at the Church weekend. What has stayed with me is from the incidentals, rather than the intentionals:

The key roles for vulnerability and reciprocity in relationships

The need for young people to find congruence between we say and what we do

The time to be saved by direct speaking

I found myself wondering if my teenage children would have more positive attitudes towards church if they had grown up among you.

Thank you

Helen Davies

~ The 2013 Annual General Church Meeting of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist) ~

The Annual General Church Meeting was held on Sunday 19th May. The minutes of this meeting will be published in Christward in the issue preceding next year's AGCM.

Matters of Note from the Meeting:

- Harry Fleming, David Garner and Eileen Land were elected to the Diaconate.
- Copies of the Church Accounts for 2012/2013 can be obtained upon application to the Treasurer.
- Gwyneth Heritage Roberts was elected Secretary of the Church.
- The Minister's Report took the form of a slide presentation to mark the events of the last 12 months in the life of our community and to appreciate the things into which people pour their energy and devotion.
- The Assistant Secretary's Report is reproduced below.

Assistant Secretary's Report May 2013

The Secretary's report at the last AGM was given by Andy, and although he resigned as Secretary at that meeting, a successor was not appointed until the September Church Meeting. That successor was Margaret Redhouse, and as she is now also standing down, I must begin by thanking them both for all their work in the role and say how very much we all value everything that each of them contributes and has contributed to the life of the church over many years.

I'd also like to acknowledge how much every member of the worshipping community gives to the life of the church. We mentioned at the last Church Meeting that we would be reviewing the various tasks and roles in the church and who undertakes them. We then compiled a list of jobs, which greatly exceeds in number the personnel available, yet they all get done by someone, so I can only conclude that everyone is doing something to keep the church going and some people are doing an awful lot. There's the Music

Group, the Worship Group, the Publicity Group, the Fabric Committee, the Open Tuesdays Committee, Junior Church, the magazine, the website, the walks, the lunches, the liaison with the users, the finance, the flowers, all the Sunday morning tasks – and that's not the half of it. But let it never be thought that we only value those who do jobs. Everyone who comes to the services or any of the midweek activities enriches the life of the community here.

We are now well into the second year of Ian's ministry with us. Looking back to the minutes of the AGM from 3 years ago, when we had been without a minister for 8 months, Andy commented that there was a hankering after more continuity and a creative relationship between minister and congregation. I think we now have both, and we are all very grateful to Ian for everything has brought and continues to bring to the life and mission of the church.

I'd like to mention just a few things where there have been innovations and positive developments in the last 12 months – adding as a rider at the outset that one of the encouraging changes is that Ian has given us a degree of flexibility and confidence that we can try things – if they don't work it's not a disaster, and if they do work they are not therefore permanent. I don't think we are free yet from approaching church activities as "oughts", but we're getting closer to it, which improves the whole spirit of our life together. The very varied programme of Open Tuesdays and the mix there of people from inside and outside the church is perhaps the prime example of this.

First the Book Group. We have looked at 2 books, Speaking Christian and The Great Partnership, and have had some very stimulating discussions at the kind of length we would never be able to on Sunday mornings.

The Meditative Prayer Group which has been meeting twice a month since September is quite different from anything else we do as a church and shows that even at Union Chapel, talking isn't everything.

The new signage is excellent and has a very positive impact. The five key words – open, friendly, different, questioning, accepting –

are a great distillation of the philosophy of the church and the logo and colours do look as if they belong in the 2nd decade of the 21st century, when so many initiatives which appear under the banner of churches look at least 20 years behind the times from the day they appear.

Ian has brought a different vocabulary to the church conversation, helping us to find better ways of expressing what we mean without resorting to traditional church speak, which in its turn helps to bridge the gap between our Sunday selves and our lives in the rest of the world. He has brought his own vocabulary to the services as well, and I'm always intrigued to discover what he will find intriguing this week! Sometimes it's several things in one sermon.

Looking forward, the requirements of charity regulation mean that we will soon have to adopt a greater degree of formality in the way we operate, adopting more of the procedures which have previously only applied to bigger charities. This is probably our last AGM without a proper written annual report with financial accounts incorporated. This may sound like a negative but it shouldn't be. Some religious traditions have known for centuries that there is a freedom and security in proper organisation and systems. Being always on the last minute is stressful. Anyway, the changes are not optional, so we may as well embrace them cheerfully. It's really a matter of good stewardship.

One of the things we have to do is review the membership roll. Officially I have to report that the membership since the last AGM remains static at 55. We have sadly lost Mair Walch by death and have gained Rachel Scott. However this figure of 55 includes a number of people who are no longer around in Fallowfield. This is a conversation for another meeting.

The confirmation of officers - including the election of a new Secretary – follows shortly, and since, as far as I am aware, there is only one candidate for the vacant Secretaryship, it's perhaps appropriate to end with a brief comment on my take on what the job will involve – especially as the BU description of the post reads like a full-time job description for a fully accredited saint. First of all, it's a quite different role from the Buildings Co-ordinator. It is a role

essentially within the church and serving the church community. Secondly, unlike both Andy and Margaret, I'm not a people person, so the pastoral aspects of the traditional role are clearly not going to be my strong point, and I'm going to need everyone to look out for each other – but I think we already do – or at least intend to – Union Chapel is small enough! I'll do my best on the rest of the job spec but no promises!

Gwyneth Heritage Roberts

~ News of the Family ~

We send our best wishes to **Owen Jones** who starts a new job shortly. Owen will be working in the Manchester office of Ove Arup & Partners a firm of consulting engineers. This means Owen will be with us for a while yet for which we are very grateful.

We are glad to have **Rose Bell** with us again after her recent absence in Jamaica.

Our congratulations to **Daniel Hodgkins** who has gained an award to do a DPhil at Oxford University.

Hannah (née Kidd) and **Phil Jones** will be moving to Sheffield where Phil is going to do a PhD. We wish them well.

It was good to see **Helen Davies** at the Church Weekend and catch up on her news. Helen is teaching Social Studies at Lincoln University.

Connie West has gone to live near her daughter in Wales and is living in a house with a beautiful view over the River Conway. For anyone who would like to write to her or ring her up the address is: Cartref - y - Borth, Betws Rd., Llanrwst, CONWAY, LL26 0HE
Her telephone number is: 01492 641 432

If anyone is over in that direction she would be very glad to see them.

Carmen Bowman has not been well. We wish her a speedy recovery

We hope that Carmel & Wouter Verboom will be happy in their new house.

~ Church Weekend Picture Gallery ~



I wish we'd gone to Florida.



Maybe she has a point.



Steve refuses to pretend he actually enjoyed getting drenched on Loughrigg Fell



Rydal Hall caters for the elderly and infirm



Owen ponders how Rachel, J, Sarah and Anna managed to knock him out of the Chapel Poker Championship



Will I like this?



Only way to find out - eat it.

~ A Word of Praise ~

I go to several classes at the Union Chapel and enjoy them very much indeed. I can't praise the Union Chapel highly enough for their interest in and commitment to the local community. People are so friendly and the building is very well appointed with excellent kitchen and toilet facilities. Everything is super clean and well kept. I go to Italian, Spanish , French , Art and T'ai Chi here and I have made so many good friends, as well as learning a lot.

Janet Isherwood

~ 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

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2b Wellington Road, Fallowfield Manchester, M14 6EQ

Web Site: www.unionchapelbaptist.org.uk

Editorial Group:

David Garner: e-mail: david.garner@mac.com

Steve Roberts: e-mail: steve.roberts@man.ac.uk

Alan Redhouse: ☎445-0020; e-mail: alan.redhouse@virgin.net

Minister: Revd Ian Geere. email:ian@unionchapelbaptist.org.uk

Mobile: Tel: 07552 788 733

Office ☎225-4226

Secretary: Gwyneth Heritage Roberts; ☎431 4446

Treasurer: Nicola Hamilton ☎270 0087

Users & Buildings Co-ordinator: Eileen Land. ☎445-7694

Deacons:, Beryl Dykes, Harry Fleming, David Garner, Nicola Hamilton, Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, Eileen Land, Lorna Richardson, and Enid Welford.