

Christward

The magazine of



March 2nd–April 27th
2014

~ From the Minister's Desk ~

'My wife said: "I want an explanation and I want the truth." I said: "Make up your mind."'

Don't worry, this quote hails from an American comedian and is not attributable to me, but I have recently been mulling over the subject of honesty.

Many of you will have appreciated David Goodbourn's article in the last edition of Christward, and you will not be surprised to hear that its original publication in Reform magazine (published by the United Reformed Church) generated a good amount of response. David wrote a short response recently, in which he says:

'Many of those who wrote to me talked about the article's "honesty". It worries me when honesty is remarked on as surprising. If the Christian community is not a place where we can be honest about our experience and emotions, about what we find believable and what we don't, then where is?'

I wasn't one of those who wrote to David, but I noted with a chuckle that in my introduction to his article I did indeed use the word 'honest'! But he is right; do we find a certain level of honesty to be surprising?

When Sarah was on-call on a recent Sunday morning, she watched a little of the BBC's 'The Big Questions' programme. One of the questions they were debating was "Do religions need gods?". There was a good range of opinions from representatives of all the usual angles, including a very gracious and persuasive female Buddhist monk, a sensible humanist, and a rather weak show from Christians Together and a Baptist Minister – but that is another story! There was also some fascinating statistics mentioned by a professor from Lancaster University.

'It is a misconception that most religious people believe in God. Amongst Anglicans in this country, only about two-thirds believe in God.'

Now I can't substantiate what research this is derived from, and it occurs to me that how they might define 'Anglican' and 'God' is quite significant, but perhaps it is still indicative that Christian faith does not always equate to a standard set of beliefs. I wonder how many of those Anglicans (and other Christians) have made their beliefs public knowledge; or feel that they could be openly honest?

It seems to me that as a wider religious community we are very bad at coping with people who are honest about their faith. Last year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of 'Honest to God'; a book which raised some big questions about our view of God. The furore it created at the time was significant, and would probably not be much less so now. Steve Chalke recently provoked a similar kind of response when he made public his views on homosexuality and gay marriage, and is continuing in this vein of challenging honesty in a paper on how we view the Bible. I can only hope that as more and more people become honest about their experience and convictions, that we will become better at responding to the diversity in our midst which might actually have existed all along.

Now of course many of us will be congratulating ourselves right now that we belong to a church where we are free to be honest about our views; free to express our doubts and concerns about faith without being vilified and rejected. Well, I think this feeling is justified, to an extent. It is true that theological diversity is accepted and it is true that a strong commitment exists to value one another irrespective of differences in faith – and this is invaluable. Whether we are as open with the emotional content which accompanies all these things is perhaps something to reflect on.

What I mean is that deeply held convictions are not just cerebral; they cannot exist merely as thoughts but are imbued with strong emotional responses. They are precious and vulnerable, often having deep connections with relationships and life events. The ability to be open and honest to this extent requires many additional things; a 'safe space', mutual trust and respect, established relationships, a gentle graciousness and empathy – and so on. Perhaps what made David's article so significant in its honesty was

not the fact that it described some frank theological views, but that it was shared in such a personal way. This was not an abstract piece about what happens when we die, but a more intimate struggle to reconcile beliefs and experience in a very real way.

If that is indeed the case, then it does not avoid David's observation; the question merely becomes 'Why is the Christian community not a place where we can be honest to the extent that we become vulnerable?' That is not to say that we should all be 'bearing our souls'! We are individuals with varying needs of privacy, all needing to ensure that we protect ourselves from harm, and all finding support structures that are appropriate to our needs. Nevertheless, perhaps there is a little room to become more honest in church groups?

We might start small. A researcher, Robert Feldman, found that strangers meeting face-to-face for the first time will tell lies three times within ten minutes. Perhaps we might begin by avoiding the superficiality of polite conversation! Then we might recognise that honesty is not primarily about allowing our view to be heard, but about offering others the gift of being listened to. An honesty which builds others up and respects vulnerability, that offers appropriate and gentle challenge without seeking to subdue or correct.

I realise that suggesting people be more honest is not without risk, especially if it relates to the ridiculousness of Christianity, the awfulness of church traditions, or the complete overhaul of everything we do together – or other far more important subjects! But on balance, I think the risk is worth it. The chance to know one another better, the opportunity to mould our community in to one of meaning where faith and life naturally intermingle, a place not just of explanations but of truth; honestly, that sounds good to me.

Ian Geere



What are Food Banks?

How will it
work locally?

Interested?

How could I
get involved?

Are there roles that
would suit me?

COME TO OUR OPEN INFORMATION EVENING

7.00pm, Thursday 6th March

St Cuthbert's Hall, 3 Palatine Road, M20 3LH

EVERYONE WELCOME

Contact Colin on 07739 571 991 for any further information

~ A snapshot of Fallowfield & Withington Food Bank so far... ~

- 5 churches in partnership (St Cuthbert's, St Chad's, St Paul's, Union Chapel, Withington Methodist)
- £1500 raised to join Trussell Trust network
- 2 initial session locations being prepared and fitted (St Cuthbert's, Union Chapel)
- £3000 in grants raised, which will enable launch (some others being processed)
- All systems go on Steering Group: establishing referrer network, contacting volunteers, raising awareness, arranging training, buying food and equipment...

...and two important dates for the diary.

VOLUNTEER OPEN EVENING

THURSDAY 6th MARCH

7pm at St Cuthbert's Hall

An opportunity for anyone to come along and find out how a Food Bank works and what volunteer roles are needed. Ask questions and speak to people about the different ways to get involved and work out if anything suits, for instance: food collection, hospitality and speaking with people, administration, stores maintenance, referrer liaison. Then perhaps sign up for Training.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

MONDAY 7th APRIL

10am-3pm, venue tbc

Facilitated by the Trussell Trust, this short day will equip anyone to work in all areas of the Food Bank. You will obtain a detailed understanding of your role (and others), gain confidence and awareness, and hopefully have some fun. Light lunch provided.

If you have any questions regarding these events, or wish to sign up for Training but can't make the Open Evening, please ring Colin on 07739 571 991.

~ End Hunger Fast ~

A national day of Fasting is planned for Friday 4th April. This is part of a new campaign about which more will be available on Monday 24th February and which will formally launch on Ash Wednesday (March 5th). The campaign is supported by Church Action on Poverty, Quakers and the Trussell Trust

A letter, expressing support for a campaign on welfare, wages and food poverty from 27 Anglican Bishops together with Methodist and Quaker leaders, was published in the Daily Mirror on 20th February. The letter read as follows:

Sir.

Britain is the world's seventh largest economy and yet people are going hungry.

Half a million people have visited foodbanks in the UK since last Easter and 5,500 people were admitted to hospital in the UK for malnutrition last year .

One in five mothers report regularly skipping meals to better feed their children , and ever more families are just one unexpected bill away from waking up with empty cupboards.

We often hear talk of hard choices. Surely few can be harder than that faced by the tens of thousands of older people who must "heat or eat" each winter, harder than those faced by families whose wages have stayed flat while food prices have gone up 30% in just five years.

Yet beyond even this we must, as a society, face up to the fact that over half of people using foodbanks have been put in that situation

by cut backs to and failures in the benefit system, whether it be payment delays or punitive sanctions.

On March 5th Lent will begin. The Christian tradition has long been at this time to fast, and by doing so draw closer to our neighbour and closer to God.

On March 5th we will begin a time of fasting while half a million regularly go hungry in Britain. We urge those of all faith and none, people of good conscience, to join with us.

There is an acute moral imperative to act. Hundreds of thousands of people are doing so already, as they set up and support foodbanks across the UK. But this is a national crisis, and one we must rise to.

We call on government to do its part: acting to investigate food markets that are failing, to make sure that work pays, and to ensure that the welfare system provides a robust last line of defence against hunger.

Join us at www.endhungerfast.co.uk.

Rt Rev Stephen Patten, Bishop of Wakefield,
Rt Rev David Walker, Bishop of Manchester,
etc.

Earlier the Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols, soon to be appointed a Cardinal, said 'the basic safety net, that was there to guarantee that people would not be left in hunger or destitution, has actually been torn apart. It no longer exists, and that is a real, real dramatic crisis.....in this context, the administration of social assistance - I am told - has become more and more punitive.'

In response to the Archbishop the Prime minister, David Cameron, defended the Government's welfare changes saying that they were part of his 'moral mission' for the country and were intended to bring new hope to people who had been written off by the system.

The Joint Public Issues group formed by the Baptist, Methodist and URC denominations published a report last year entitled 'Truth and Lies about Poverty'. In the report they cite six myths we tell ourselves about poverty which enable the majority to live with comfortable assumption that both poverty and wealth are deserved.

The myths are:

Myth 1: 'They' are lazy and don't want to work

The most commonly cited cause of child poverty by churchgoers and the general public alike is that "their parents don't want to work" Yet the majority of children in poverty are from working households. In work poverty is now more common than out of work poverty.

Myth 2: 'They' are addicted to drink and drugs.

Churchgoers and the wider public cite addiction as the second most common cause of child poverty. While addiction is devastating for the families and communities touched by it, fewer than 4% of benefit claimants report any form of addiction.

Myth 3: 'They' are not really poor - they just don't manage their money properly.

Nearly 60% of the UK population agrees that the poor could cope if only they handled their money properly. Statistics show that the poorest spend their money carefully limiting themselves to the essentials.

Myth 4: 'They' are on the fiddle.

Over 80% of the UK population believe that "large numbers falsely claim benefits". Benefit fraud has decreased to historically low levels - the kind of levels that the tax system can only dream of. Less than 0.9% of the welfare budget is lost to fraud The fact is that if everyone claimed and was paid correctly, the welfare system would cost around £18 billion more.

Myth 5: 'They' have an easy life.

Over half of the British public believes benefits are too high and churchgoers tend to agree. Government ministers speak of families

opting for benefits as a lifestyle choice. Yet we know that benefits do not meet minimum income standards. They have halved in value relative to average incomes over the last 30 years. We know that the ill and the unemployed are the people least satisfied and happy with life. Why would they choose this as a lifestyle?

Myth 6: 'They' caused the deficit.

The proportion of our tax bill spent on welfare has remained stable for the last 20 years. It is ridiculous to argue, as some have, that increasing welfare spending is responsible for the current deficit.

In June last year YouGov conducted a survey for the Westminster Faith Debates concerning current social attitudes. They found that 69% of Anglicans and 52% of Baptists agreed with the statement that *'Britain's current welfare system has created a culture of dependency'*. In addition 52% of Anglicans and 39% of Baptists thought that *'the welfare budget was too high and should be reduced'*.

It is becoming obvious that the majority of Christians in the UK are broadly supportive of the Government's strategy of the need for welfare reform. Concerning the Bishops' letter Canon Angus Ritchie of the Contextual Theology Centre, a charity that works with inner city churches said, 'It is a complete misreading that this is an attack on the principle of welfare reform, but there is a feeling that the way the reforms are working is subverting their purpose.'

When the Welfare State was created it seemed as though we had an idea of a society where, through the State, the citizens by paying their taxes could help support and care for each other in health, welfare and education. Now we talk of health, welfare, education reform by which we mean farming out services, for which we should all be taking some responsibility, to charities, churches and private businesses in order to save money for the comfortably off.

The Bishop of Leicester, Tim Stevens said recently ...'it's impossible to read the gospels without seeing that concern for the

poor is absolutely integral to any understanding of what Christian life or Christian values are.....' Yet many of us Christians still believe it is right and just that the poorest in our society should bear the heaviest burden in the current financial crisis.

We are beginning to see that Beveridge's Five Giant Evils of Squalor, Ignorance, Want, Idleness and Disease which we thought the Welfare State had seen off were in fact merely sleeping waiting for their time to come round again.

Alan Redhouse

You can download the full details about the End Hunger Fast campaign from their web site www.endhungerfast.co.uk

You can access the report 'Truth and Lies about Poverty' issued last year by the Joint Public Issues group on their web site:

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/truthandliesaboutpoverty/>

Details of the Westminster Faith Debates on the web site:

www.faithdebates.org.uk

Details of the YouGov survey on:

http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/4vs1srt1h1/YG-Archive-University-of-Lancaster-Faith-Matters-Debate-full-results-180613-website.pdf

~ The Lego Movie: *** 5 Stars~**

Review by our Arts Correspondent - Rachel Garner

It is Awards season again- glittering red carpet, dresses, catty, too close to the bone award show hosts and the forced fake smiles of congratulation from the runners up, all of which is helping us through this wet and windy winter.

One film that, sadly, has been released too late to be considered for a nomination for the Oscars or Baftas this year but which has captured the hearts of the young and the young at heart all over the nation is The Lego Movie.

Some may say that it even combines the best of all the films tipped in the Oscars:

- Spaceships (take that Gravity)
- Pirates (sorry Captain Philips)
- Evil geniuses dressed up in business suits (so long Wolf of Wall Street)

For those of you who haven't been lucky enough to see this film yet or catch a glimpse of the trailer here is a little insight into what it is all about...

Emmet is an ordinary, everyman hero that even Miller would be proud of (though he is perhaps a little more upbeat and optimistic than your average Miller central protagonist). He lives in a city where everything is ordered and everyone follows the 'instructions' that will enable them to live a happy, healthy and ordered life. The instructions invite you to, amongst other things, greet the day and rejoice in buying overpriced coffee!

However behind this seemingly neat and ordered society is Lord Business who has a secret plan to destroy the world. Emmet, unwittingly, becomes the 'special one' who will find the 'piece of resistance' and save the entire Lego universe. Along the way we meet some other Lego heroes- or as they are called Master Builders- including Michelangelo (the painter) Michelangelo (the teenage mutant ninja turtle) Wonder Woman and the hilariously arrogant and self-centred Batman.

I don't want to give too much away but for those of you who remember the Lego spacemen of the eighties Ben the spaceman will melt your heart- particularly with his chipped helmet and worn badge.

Some cynics have suggested that the film is little more than a 100 minutes long advert for Lego. I would argue that our life is already saturated with advertising (it was recently said that the average

person views 47 adverts a day- if each advert is 30 seconds long that is 23 and a half minutes of adverts. The majority of these adverts seem to convey the message of how easily you can gamble online and win (or lose- see small print) a fortune or they present the image of flawless women complaining of flaws- using magical (yet strongly rooted in science) creams/potions/sprays- which then remove their 'flaws' and leave them more flawless than before. Whether this or the Lego Movie is more likely to corrupt one's soul I will leave up to you- but I certainly know which one I want to watch.

In this world where there seems to be so much outside of our control which can make even the lightest of hearts feel heavy The Lego Movie is a light shining in the darkness reminding each individual of what they can do and what it means to be special. Some have said it has 'echoes of Jesus and Guru Nanak, the father of Sikhism' I am not sure I should comment on that particularly in the church magazine but it does remind us that we each need to be valued, loved and told we are special. Especially the Lord Businesses within our world, and within ourselves. As Jesus said we should love our enemies.

~ In days of old ~

In days of old, don't ask how old, but definitely old, it was the practice for apprentices to sleep under the bench. An apprentice had to be lucky enough to have someone who could afford to pay the master to teach the apprentice. There wasn't any set payment but around twenty pounds was often charged. In some cases it was as low as three pounds, but in other cases rather more than the twenty mentioned.

Most apprentices started at the age of 14, and served 7 years, and so they emerged at the ripe old age of 21 with a trade. Many masters would simply have the apprentice as a dog's body for the first few months. Then he would be introduced to the basic elements of the work, especially the more mundane elements. In the early days, the master would exclude the apprentice from

seeing any of his more tricky work. The master did not want the apprentice to see all his secrets too quickly.

However, that wasn't all there was to this system. It was expected that the apprentice would now go and work for a variety of people in different locations, often travelling considerable distances. The travelling element was reflected in the title of journeyman.

There were generally limits as to the number of apprentices a master could train. This limit was imposed by the guild to which he would necessarily belong, especially in London, if he were to have the freedom in the city to trade. It was thought prudent to keep the tradesmen in relatively short demand, to prevent excessive competition. If a master wished to exceed his limit on the number of apprentices, he could, as is the case even today, ease his way by payment of a so called fine. In fact the quarterly payment to the guild for membership, which was called quarterage, clearly wasn't quite enough to keep the guild's administration going, much less pay for the wine consumed at its meetings, so activities resulting in fines were almost encouraged.

When an apprentice had completed his time, he was said to be free of the company, the goldsmiths, clockmakers or blacksmiths as the case may be.

One of the things which frequently happened was that the apprentice married the daughter of the master. It would seem to be a very good idea from the apprentice's point of view. From the

master's point of view, he would have to decide quite quickly whether to keep the apprentice, knowing this was in prospect. If the apprentice wasn't the sort of young man the master wanted in his family, it would be as well to sell the apprentice on before any romantic attachments were made.

As if marrying the master's daughter wasn't enough, the chances were that the apprentice would eventually become a partner in the business, and of course inherit it. Though in quite a number of

circumstances, other members of the family were also involved in the business.

There is a case of an apprentice in Manchester, who got the girl, then moved into the master's house, and was unable to pay the master for his training. Some apprentices really fell on their feet.

We do love Jon, really!

Geoff Walker

**~ Minutes of the Church Meeting
of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist)
held on Sunday 19th January 2014
at 11.20am.~**

Present: Ian Geere (chair), Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, Irene Roberts, Ted Land, Eileen Land, Steve Roberts, Harry Fleming, Rachel Scott, Gwen Mattock, J'Andrea Hood, Colin Marchbank-Smith, Margaret Edmonds, Andy Howes, Margaret Redhouse, Nicola Hamilton, Michael Welford, Enid Welford, Rachel Adebago, Leonie Earnshaw, Alan Dobbins, Sarah Geere, Owen Roberts

Apologies: Alan Redhouse and Owen Jones (with children), Hilda Linton

The Minutes of the November 2013 meeting (in current magazine) were approved.

Notification of AOB: None

Matters arising/updates/information:

The Ceilidh will take place in the Chapel on 22nd February starting at 7pm. The Church Weekend will be on 13th – 15th June and

people will shortly be asked to make definite decisions about attending!

Food Bank: Ian is making update sheets available in the church. A consortium comprising Union Chapel, St Chad's, St Paul's & St Cuthbert's is now part of the Trussell Trust. There will be a meeting on Wednesday 22nd January with a representative of the Trussell Trust. This will include sorting out dates and opportunities for volunteer training. Anyone who is interested will be notified of the dates nearer to the time. The Steering Group is functioning well at present but is still open to new members. The Union Chapel representatives are Ian G, Alan R, Colin M-S and Lorna R. There are several applications for funding to be completed. The group is now into the phase of addressing practicalities. The catchment area is close to being settled. At present, no better facilities are coming to light than the Large Hall. We are looking at using the Green Room (on the far side of the stage from the Chapel) for storage. No fundamental alterations to the building will be needed.

Finance Update: The church is on an even keel financially. The Gift Aid reclaim for last year has been received; this is over £5K so Gift Aid is well worth doing. There has been no major expenditure on Fabric recently.

We are in the course of changing the church's banking from RBS to CAF Bank. Most people who pay in to our account have now made the switch but we will need to keep the RBS account open for the time being. The separate Food Bank account is now open.

Marriage Registrar: Monica D does not feel it is the right time for her to take this role. The Church Meeting resolved to appoint Brenda Marston as the Responsible Authorised Person and to appoint Rachel Scott as an Additional Authorised Person (Michael W will continue as an Additional Authorised Person).

We have received a guidance note from the BU about the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill. If this becomes law in its present form, a church which wishes to conduct a same-sex marriage must re-

register the building and this will require a prior resolution of the Church Meeting.

Possible Away Day: We have had an Away Day at Platt Community Church during Lent for the last 2 years. The question was, do we wish to do so again? A full day takes a lot of preparation time and if we are going to go ahead then people need to be prepared to commit to come. There was some discussion during which it was suggested that an old-style Church Work Day may be a better idea, though we need to be creative about what the less active can do. In the absence of a clear consensus the matter was referred back to the Deacons for further consideration.

Epilogue: Are we happy to continue with a sung Epilogue? There was no enthusiasm to go back to the “thought for the day” style of Epilogue. Most people were happy with the sung Epilogue, although we still need musical accompaniment unless we know the verse very well. Not everyone likes the tunes! Sarah G made the point that quite often the children are choosing not to come back in because they are engaged in other activities.

Notification of Deacons’ Agenda rotating topics for February:

Christian Aid, activism in issues of social concern, and accounts and balancing the budget. The March agenda will include a general review of admin and “who does what”.

Any Other Business: Thanks to Harry F & Gwen M for re-covering the arms on some of the chairs.

The Meeting closed with a sung Epilogue at 12.04am

~ News of the Family ~

Congratulations to **Hilda Linton** who celebrated her 90th birthday in February and to **Jess Howes** who reached 11 years old.

We send our best wishes to Fergus Walker who has just left Gibraltar en route to South America (as seen from the sea!). Fergus is sailing on a huge container carrier called Laberinto and this is part of his training as a deck officer.

~ Christian Aid ~

Disaster Prevention

Caterpillars: a wise investment?

When disaster strikes, we're all used to seeing urgent appeals for food, water, tents and blankets. But where do caterpillars fit in?

90% of global spending on disasters goes on emergency relief and on reconstruction efforts.

But, as we marked **International Disaster Risk Reduction Day** on the 14 October, it was important to remember that every £1 spent on disaster preparedness can save up to £4 in disaster response costs. And caterpillars can help prevent disaster.



Ivan lives on Marinduque island in the Philippines. His family are farmers. In the past, when the typhoons came - as they did every year - the family would often lose their crops to the storms and

floods, wiping out all their savings and leaving them with no means to feed themselves.

Now Ivan's family farm butterflies. Across Asia, guests often release butterflies at weddings, instead of throwing confetti or rice, so they are in great demand.

When the warning system alerts Ivan's family that there is a typhoon coming, Ivan helps bring all the caterpillars and pupae inside, safe from the storm. Afterwards, the family carry them outside again, and carry on as normal. However fierce the wind and however heavy the rain, their savings are safe.

Christian Aid's partner MACEC helped Ivan's family to start up their butterfly farm and so 'disaster-proof' their livelihood.

This is just one example of the work Christian Aid partners are delivering as part of a £3 million global disaster preparedness project, generously funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID).

The project, *Building Disaster Resilient Communities*, has been helping disaster-prone communities in six countries: the Philippines, Honduras, Bangladesh, Malawi, Burkina Faso and El Salvador.

- Over the last twenty years, three quarters of all disasters have been weather-related. Climate change will only make things worse.

The cost of disasters

- Letting it all happen isn't the cheap option. As television news showed us, disasters cost lives and money
- In 2005, disasters caused more than \$150 billion worth of damage

- The World Bank estimates it will cost \$7.2 billion to make good the damage done to Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India after the Indian Ocean tsunami
- The UN estimates that rebuilding after the Kashmir earthquake will cost \$5 billion
- In Mozambique, one of the poorest and most indebted countries in the world, it cost more than \$600 million to reconstruct destroyed public infrastructure after the devastating floods of 2000.

from the Christian Aid web site

~ Filling Space ~

Part of the problem of compiling the magazine is that in order to produce the A5 version booklet I need the A4 version to be in multiples of 4 pages. So if I find myself with 17 pages I have to fill a further 3 pages otherwise I have empty pages in the booklet. This month I have 19 A4 pages so I need something to fill a space but not too much.

How fortunate that a member of the congregation provided me with some short pieces allegedly from Church Bulletins and culled from the internet. So here in the spirit of the end Radio 4's News Quiz are two space fillers which might raise a smile.

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

Don't let worry kill you off -

Let the Church help.

P.S.

If the above is not to your taste write some copy for the next issue!

~ 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.