

Christward

The magazine of



March 1st–April 26th
2015

~ From the Minister's Desk ~

There seem to have been a lot of questions recently regarding the role of religion in the world. The Charlie Hebdo killings, and more recently Copenhagen, have highlighted the potential tension between religion and free speech. The perennial issues of religion's role in conflict and war, and its relevance in a Western society which is seemingly abandoning it continue to rumble on. And then the open letter from the Church of England urging engagement in the upcoming election raised issues of religion's involvement in politics. It is this latter development which I am mulling over as I write.

Of course what people mean when they use the word 'religion' is worth brief consideration. Some of us might have issues with the word (and concept) and seek to distance ourselves from it. The institutional associations are strong, and the word carries so many negative connotations that many have abandoned it for substitutes like 'faith' instead. To the wider world though, this is all largely irrelevant; we are people of religion whether we like it or not. It is also a little strange to lump all religions into the one word. I am sure that many of us who exist within that global definition would wish to distinguish ourselves from one another! Once again however, we must accept that religion is a convenient wrapper within which to include us all. This does not trouble me too much, and for the sake of reflecting on the questions raised by these big media stories, I think we can suspend any objections to the word.

I still find the place of politics within church life a funny one. For some churches politics is clearly a 'no-go' area, and whilst I personally feel that is a shame, at least it is clear-cut. Other churches, like ours, are intensely political. Much of our preaching and conversation carries political resonance and many of our activities have political motivations - we just don't label them, or at least not out loud. We might mention the newspapers we read, our general political leanings will be obvious in the issues we discuss, and every now and then we let slip by openly criticizing a particular policy or politician. For the most part, we are clearly a left wing

church - there, I've said it! Whether it is our liberal faith which drives our politics, or our liberal politics which shapes our faith is another question entirely, but we might as well fess up about where we stand. Shouldn't we?

I think the contents of the letter from the Anglican Bishops was largely excellent. It seems a great shame that much of it has been lost amidst the debates about its political leanings. However much its authors profess that it is not telling people 'how to vote', merely explaining 'why to vote', it is clearly full of views which could be described as left wing. This is fascinating given that recent research by Theos indicated that Anglicans are more likely to vote Conservative (Catholics are apparently far more Labour oriented), although that same study indicated that there is no evidence of religious block voting in this country. Incidentally, it is worth pointing out that an analysis of the letter has revealed some praise (although not much) for the existing Coalition, and actually a degree of affinity with the Green Party and the Scottish Nationalists!

I am also sympathetic to the criticism it has received. The National Secular Society agrees that the Church of England has a right to express political opinion, but that its privileged position in our country means that its voice is unfairly loud. Disgruntled politicians are understandably irritated by receiving what they perceive as moral instruction from an institution which has only recently recognised gender equality. The Church must ensure that it has earned the right to speak out. But despite these reservations, I am glad that the Bishops have indicated that it would be an "abdication of responsibility" if the Church did not discuss politics. It makes me wonder however, about how far can this responsibility can extend whilst we still endeavour to separate politics and religion, or perhaps I should say politics and theology.

'Here be dragons!' I hear in my head, but is that concern justified or might it be the unhelpful echoes of Christendom, or antiquated Christianity which sought to scare people away from the blank areas of our religious map? Whatever it is, don't worry, this is just me asking awkward questions again! I am certainly not proposing that churches become openly affiliated with a particular political

party, we must not compromise our ability to dissent against all those in power. Nor am I suggesting that we become mutually accountable for our personal voting preferences, I am committed to being part of a community which can thrive with political as well as theological diversity. What I am wondering however is how far we can integrate our faith and politics without becoming more explicit about the latter?

Should we openly criticise and campaign against certain individuals and party policies, or equally affirm and campaign for others? Should we spend more time trying to apply the teachings of Jesus in the current political arena? Should we take seriously the messages from the more fringe political parties and formulate a theological response? This is perhaps one step beyond what the Church of England is beginning to do with their letter; but there might even be an argument for going further and integrating politics within our core identity.

In seeking to communicate who we are to the world at large, is it right that our explanations are largely restricted to matters of faith? If we are seeking to use language and concepts that are understandable and accessible to those who can only conceive of us as 'religious', perhaps we need to be more explicit. How do we express our identity in terms of our relationship with Democracy, for example, or Capitalism? Should our leaflets or website include thoughts on the Welfare State, the NHS, Nuclear policy, or Foreign Aid - directly alongside the language of God, Jesus, Spirituality and prayer? The more I read biblical texts chronicling the ministry of Jesus, the more I wonder if the separation of religion and politics would have seemed ludicrous to him.

I am glad the Bishops wrote their letter. I will be happier when such an event causes debate on its content rather than surprise and consternation regarding its source.

Ian Geere

~ Snippets of Hebrew ~

Having started a Biblical Hebrew course at Luther King House in September, which I am thoroughly enjoying, I thought perhaps a taster of the sort of things which emerge from learning the language might be of interest.

The Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible was originally written without vowels. The vowels which are there in modern Hebrew texts, were added by the Masorites in the second half of the first millennium. They realised that the oral tradition could be lost unless they did something about it. So in order to preserve it, they added a system of what are called vowel points. However, they also added accent marks, and there are almost more accent marks than vowels. Most accent marks do more than highlight where an accent should be. They form punctuation or pause marks.

One particular accent is used for marking the turning point in a verse. A turning point in a verse would in many cases determine where an English punctuation mark of some sort would occur. Often the turning point in a verse is quite transparent in English. But sometimes it is not. Take the verse in Isaiah 40:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord. This is quoted in Mark 1:3 as The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord". Whereas the accents in the original make it quite clear that the text should read The voice one crying, "In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord".

Geoff Walker

~ Downsizing ~ or ~ fitting a quart into a pint pot. ~

Moving house is recognised as one of the more stressful things in life - alongside divorce or the death of a loved one. In all of these events there are elements of loss. In moving the loss is about the

surroundings, possibly a garden or a house which has been greatly loved. It can be a loss of one's existing social life, of a familiar neighbourhood, and of enjoyable activities. But the process of putting one's house on the market is stressful in itself. Keeping the house tidy and clean whilst possible buyers tramp through it can be unpleasant, as can the comments of strangers about it. Then when a buyer emerges, the house is subject to a survey and there are many worries at this point - is there damp? is the roof all right? and so on.

After this, usually, comes "the chain". The buyer needs to sell their house to buy yours, but also the person who is buying your buyer's house needs to sell theirs - and so. An error at any point can ruin the whole process, and you are back to stage one.

If everything gets sorted out at this level, the solicitors have to get to work - some work very slowly indeed which can add to the tension.

At the same time, the same process goes on with your purchase. A house has to be found, a survey to be undertaken. The seller is probably part of a chain, and the solicitors never quite work as quickly as hoped.

Stress indeed - and probably there is more. Leaving familiar circumstances also implies venturing into the new. For some people this can be a terrifying thought.

My recent move, however, had few of these reasons for stress. Firstly the only loss was of a house that I didn't like and which had intensely unhappy memories. There was (and is) no loss of social life, or activities. Secondly I had been looking for somewhere to move to for a while. The flat is lovely, and reminiscent of an apartment we lived in when we were first married. Moreover the process was far simpler than usual. Quite amazingly, the first viewer was a cash buyer who offered the asking price and fortunately the house passed the Survey. The flat I purchased was empty. So there was no chain at either side.

Of course there were difficulties - the buyer was pushing to move very quickly. Downsizing from a three bedroom house (with a large garage, stuffed full of "things that might be useful one day" aka junk) to a two bedroom apartment is not the easiest thing to do. I managed to persuade myself that disposing of most of my belongings was actually a

cathartic process. What is left is doubly precious and fortunately fits (nearly) into the flat. I still have to go and look at storage in IKEA and find appropriate cupboards- otherwise there will be more trips to OXFAM. I like the notion that the sale of my cast -offs has contributed to the treatment of people suffering from Ebola. Disposing of other bits and pieces has helped the homeless in Manchester. These things can only be good, and now I wonder why I kept so much that I did not use.

Getting the phone changed and the computer set up has been problematical. But at last the problem of communicating with the outside world has been solved - after four weeks without broad band, I am now reconnected, thanks finally to a very nice voice on the phone who really knew what it was doing. I still haven't registered to vote at the new address - this can be done by phone, or online. I tried and tried to do it by phone, without success.

There are still a number of things connected with the move that have to be done and I really am more than a little bored with the minutiae. Now I just want to sit in the spring sunshine which floods into the flat, or take the dog for walks along the banks of the Mersey.

Overall the process of moving - fitting the quart into the pint pot - has not been difficult. It has taken a lot of time, and a great deal of energy. I won't be doing it again in a hurry. But as far as I can see at this moment, it has been really worthwhile. I am looking forward to life in this new environment.

Margaret Edmonds

~ Fallowfield & Withington Food Bank ~

Some Statistics

Since opening in May 2014

We have dealt with 276 Vouchers and fed 714 people. (417 adults and 297 children)

We have at the moment 45 referrers.

Food Donations:

So far we have collected 10.2 tonnes of food. 4.6 tonnes from Tesco collections and 5.6 from other donors. Union Chapel have so far collected 1.2 tonnes of food.

We have distributed about 6.6 tonnes of food from our two centres. Roughly about half from each centre. (Note the 6.6 figure includes damaged/out of date/transfers to other organisations.)

Vouchers

About a 32% of our vouchers come from the Old Moat ward.

Fallowfield comes next with about 13% Then come Burnage, Didsbury East, Rusholme & Withington all with about 8%.

So about 75% of our clients are from the above wards.

Crisis Types:

Benefit Delay and Low Income are the major crisis type and account for 57% of the crises.

Benefit Changes & Debt account for another 24%.

So ~80% of the people we feed are in one or other of the above four crises.

Other points of Interest

Our clients (*presenting vouchers*) are mainly single (43%), white (65%) and between the age of 25 - 64 (90%). Single parents, couples and families make up 19%, 10% and 18% respectively.

~ Thoughts on Poverty Sunday 2015 at Union Chapel ~

Last Sunday at Union Chapel we noted poverty Sunday with a longer, participative service which included all ages. As Church Action on Poverty is currently focussing on “A Good Society”, we wanted to explore our congregations’ thoughts on the characteristics of a good society. This resulted in a colourful tree that held our responses in yellow buds, green leaves and red fruit.



We initially used the bible readings: Isaiah 61:1-4, Luke 1: 46-55, Acts 2:43-47. The responses included an emphasis on “release and comfort” with the sharing of resources and looking after one another and those in need. There was a mention of “God prepared you to say something”.

We discussed our vision for Manchester in 2020, keeping in mind our responses to the Bible readings.

The results were an emphasis on community, sharing, equality and accepting and embracing difference in individuals and religions.

In looking at how we might achieve this, I was impressed at the focus on small, individual and simple things including holding a meeting to invite the local candidates for the forthcoming election. The responses included: supporting those in need, speaking to our neighbours or people who look depressed or lonely, being welcoming, being more sensitive. There were suggestions for the church to hold a drop in lunch for the learning disabled and social occasions where people can practice speaking English. And more...



I was impressed at how our congregation thought of simple things that we could do make a difference which shows **hope**. There seemed to be little discussion regarding the inequality and poverty which exists in our local neighbourhood and I wonder why ?

Lorna Richardson

~ In the Beginning ~

We have often looked at the history of Union Chapel Oxford Road but less frequently have we heard about Fallowfield Baptist Chapel. So here is a piece about the Chapel which Union Chapel joined with after the Second World War bomb destroyed their Oxford Road building. We are grateful to Eileen Land for providing the the letter appealing for funds which is printed below.

New School Chapel

This new cause is the outcome of an amalgamation of the Coupland Street and Mauldeth Road Baptist Churches. Coupland Street has existed as a Church for 38 years, but the building has been acquired recently by the Manchester Corporation for street widening purposes. The work at Mauldeth Road has been carried on for 32 years in premises quite inadequate to the development of a large progressive cause. In consultation, and with the warm support of the Manchester District Baptist Union, a very happy arrangement has been made between these two churches to establish a new cause somewhat equidistant from the two Churches and in a rapidly developing locality in which a large number of houses are being erected. It is the general opinion that the district is a very desirable one, and the site has been selected with the full approval of the Manchester Free Church Council, under an arrangement to prevent overlapping.

The land acquired fronts Wilbraham Road and is bounded on two other sides by streets. It is a large site, comprising some 3,680 square yards (exclusive of street land).

Owing to the great cost of building it is proposed, for the time being, to erect a School Chapel only, which will front the side street, leaving a large plot fronting the main thoroughfare, Wilbraham Road, for the erection of a Chapel at a later date. This School Chapel, with a number of class rooms, will be very suitable for

carrying on the work of the School and for the holding of Chapel Services.

The land has been purchased, and from the balance of the sale of the existing properties of the two Churches the new building will be erected, but unfortunately this fund will not be adequate, as the land and building will cost at least £6,500, and towards this there is less than £5,500 available.

An earnest appeal is made for contributions, so that the building may be opened free of debt with, if possible, a surplus to encourage the friends of the new Church to look forward to the erection of the Chapel building.

Arrangements have been made for the laying of two foundation stones on Saturday, the 28th June, 1924. One will be laid by Herbert Marnham Esq. J.P., the Treasurer of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and the other (at the united request of the two Churches) by J W Billings Esq., who has been continuously associated with Coupland Street Church and during this year is the President of the Manchester District Baptist Union. A handbill of this ceremony is sent herewith and earnest appeal is made to all interested in the extension of Christ's Kingdom to be present.

Contributions to the Building Fund may be forwarded to the Treasurer, Alderman R. Turner.

It is entirely in keeping with Union Chapel that we should have two foundation stones and they may be viewed on the exterior wall of the Chapel facing Wellington Road

~ News of the Family ~

It's been good to have **Paula, Kim and Pau** worshipping with us over the past few months. We hope that they are enjoying their stay in Manchester.

Margaret Edmonds has moved into a flat in Northenden. (*Her experience of moving is reported elsewhere in this magazine.*) We hope she will be very happy in her new accommodation.

Congratulations to **Laura and Ben Gilchrist**, who were members of our congregation a few years ago, and their new baby girl. We wish them all a joy for the future.

~ Minutes of the Church Meeting of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist) held on Sunday 18th January 2015 at 11.20am.~

Present: Margaret Garner (chair), Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, Steve Roberts, Ian Geere, David Garner, Margaret Redhouse, Alan Redhouse, Harry Fleming, Rachel Scott, Colin Marchbank-Smith, Sarah Geere, B Braglia, Andy Howes, Irene Roberts, Margaret Edmonds, , Ted Land, Eileen Land, Geoff Walker, Carole Walker, Leonie Earnshaw, Owen Roberts, Lorna Richardson, Owen Jones, Nicola Hamilton, Gwen Mattock

Apologies: Enid Welford; and Michael Welford and Rachel Adebago (with children)

The Minutes of the November 2014 meeting (in current magazine) were approved.

Notification of AOB: None.

Harry F made the point that Matters Arising should always be a separate item. There were no Matters Arising for this meeting.

Fabric

David G gave an update on Fabric matters.:

The new carpet has been fitted and is looking good.

The Double Glazing is in hand.

We have a new temporary electric cooker in the Small Hall.

In due course we would like to get a gas hob which would be more robust but at present there is no gas supply to the Chapel.

Installation of a supply pipe is under investigation. Conversion of the heating to gas would be worth looking at in the future.

The drains are a perennial issue. Harry F suggested that we purchase a manual cleaning rod from Argos and this was agreed.

Thanks were expressed to all those who carry out small jobs around the buildings, and to Graham the caretaker for responding very promptly to a recent problem.

Large Hall Room Swap:

Ian G explained that the Food Bank has requested a room swap between the Warehouse (the room to the left of the stage) and the changing room used for Anne Finnegan's Dance Classes (the room to the right of the stage adjoining the car park).

At present, when the Large Hall is in use, food is having to be carried outside round the back of the building. The food is heavy and there is no proper path, so there is a risk of injury. The Food Bank is happy to move its racking and to decorate the new room. The advantage of the change for the Dance Classes is that they will get a recently decorated room and we will re-carpet it for them. The disadvantage is that people will have to walk through the main hall to access the changing room and Anne F would have to rethink how to organise some aspects of the day. The two rooms are mirror images so no different in size.

Colin M-S reported that access to the Warehouse is now on a daily basis. The biggest problem is on Tuesdays when food has to be moved across to St Cuthbert's. We have got the busiest Foodbank in the North-West, often feeding 30-40 people per session. It is not predictable at this time whether the room requirements are likely to change in the future.

Some concern was expressed on communication issues: firstly that the Foodbank is perceived by some other users of the Large Hall as having “taken over”, and secondly that the Church had not made sufficient effort to communicate with Anne F on the matter.

Gwyneth HR reported that the Deacons had considered the disadvantages to Anne F of the proposal but felt that the safety issues took precedence. It is our responsibility as owners of the Large Hall to manage the different priorities as best we can. The recommendation from the Deacons was that the room swap should go ahead. This was approved by majority vote, subject to appropriate dialogue with the affected parties, with one vote against and 6 abstentions.

Ministerial Review Group:

This is a group with rotating membership which meets with the Minister one a year to ensure that everything in the relationship between the minister and the church is working as it should. Leonie E reported that the Group, this year comprised of herself, Owen R and Steve R, had had a meeting with Ian in November and had discussed the life of the church with reference to several different aspects. The outcomes were all very positive and no issues arose which should be considered by the Church Meeting.

Increase in Minister's Stipend:

The Church has for some considerable time paid the BU recommended minimum stipend plus 2%. The BU recommended stipend figure has risen by 2.36% for 2015. The Meeting approved a rise in the Minister's Stipend to the new recommended figure plus 2%.

The Meeting further approved a “bonus” payment of £500 to Ian in acknowledgement that he has successfully completed his MA and the BU ministerial accreditation requirements, with minimal impact on his work as minister of the Church.

Sarah G abstained from voting on these resolutions.

Forthcoming Events:

The Ceilidh will take place on Saturday 21st February and will follow the same format as in previous years. Margaret G offered to arrive

early to allow the Band to set up. The suggested donation for attenders will be £10 per adult, accompanied children free. The money will first go towards the costs of the event and any surplus will go to the DEC Ebola Appeal.

Easter Services:

The Maundy Thursday evening service will be held at Union Chapel. At present it is intended that the Good Friday service will be held jointly with Withington Methodist as usual and this year will be at Withington. On Easter Sunday it is proposed that we incorporate communion with the Easter breakfast at 9am, to be followed by the service at 10am. Everyone was happy with this.

Church Weekend:

This will be the first weekend in July, at Rydal Hall. Revd Dr Anne Phillips is leading the weekend on the subject of Psalms. Nicola H will be unable to deal with the administration this year in view of the impending addition to her family. Offers of help with the admin would be very welcome. David G to co-ordinate.

Date of Next Meeting: 3rd Sunday in March.

The Meeting closed with the Grace at 12.07pm

~ The Sherman Lectures in Jewish Studies 2015 ~

**Jesus, Judaism and Christianity:
Old Prejudices and New Possibilities
27-30 April 2015, Time: 5:15pm.**

Venue: Arts Lecture Theatre, Samuel Alexander Building

The Sherman Lectures in Jewish Studies 2015 will be given by Amy-Jill Levine (University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies, Vanderbilt University).

Mon 27th April. Lecture 1. Jesus in His Jewish Context: The Importance of Recovering History.

Tue 28 April. Lecture 2. The Mistakes Jews and Christians Make About Each Other.

Wed 29 April. Lecture 3. Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?

Thu 30 April. Lecture 4. Messianic Judaism, Conversion to Christianity, Intermarriage, Inter-religious Households: Disputes for the Sake of Heaven.

7.30pm Sun 26 April. Speaking of the Middle East: Jews and Christians in Dialogue and Dispute. *(at the Manchester Jewish Museum)*

~ 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

Christward Number 475. Published 11th January 2015
The magazine of Union Chapel Fallowfield(Baptist),
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, Leonie Earnshaw, David Garner, Nicola Hamilton, Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, Andy Howes, Eileen Land, Gwen Mattock, and Enid Welford.