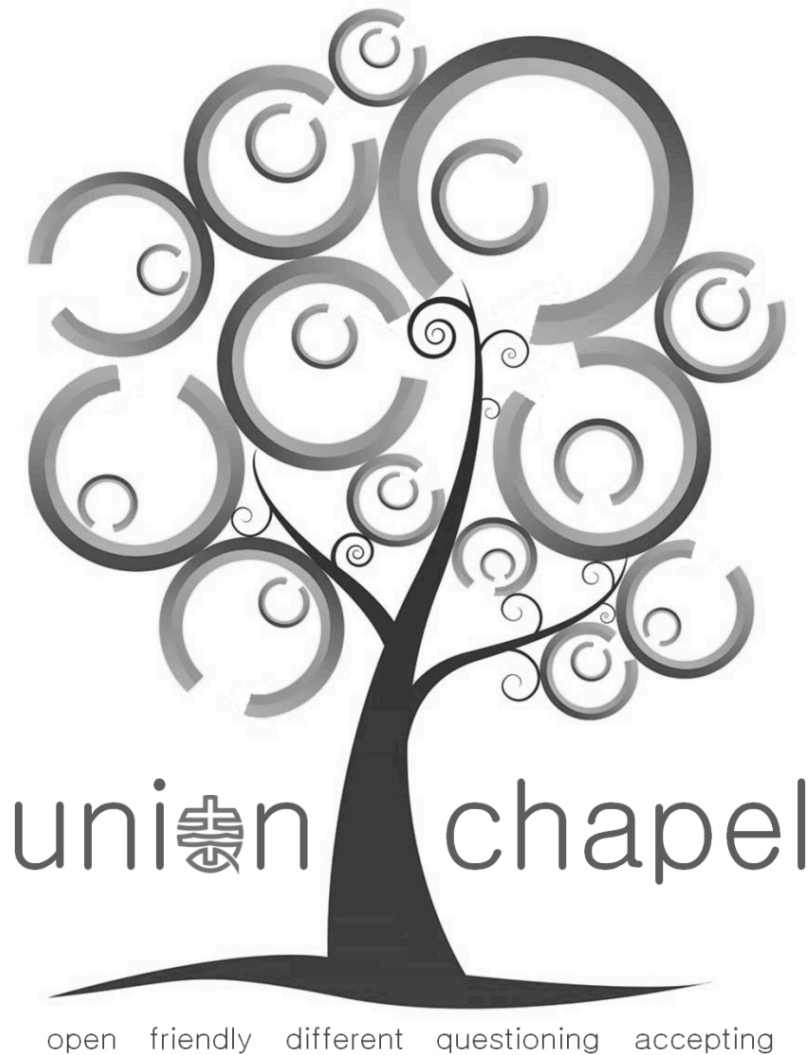


Christward

The magazine of



May 5th–June 30th
2013

~ From the Minister's Desk ~

In the planning for the forthcoming church Away Day we began to consider some 'Why?' questions relating to church, in the end opting to cover singing, praying, Lectionary use, and being Baptist. As I'm writing this we have not yet had those explorations, but I hope that the outcome is a renewed appreciation and understanding of the things we do together that, over time, are easy to take for granted. There are of course other questions that have not made the cut, but there is one in particular that has cropped up in more than one conversation recently, so I thought that perhaps I would offer some thoughts here instead.

'Why do we vote in church meetings?'

There are of course scenario's where a vote is legally required, although perhaps not as many as you would think; the calling of Deacons and Ministers, membership requests, and any Constitutional amendments are the most obvious. In these situations I would obviously not advocate dispensing with voting, but there remains a huge proportion of church life where it is optional.

In many ways the mechanism of putting a proposal to a vote appeals to my sense of order and completeness. It is a clear system, easily understood and recognised, and with it comes a proper sense of closure to a conversation. But despite this, I still feel a distinct unease with the whole idea.

I am not entirely happy with the tendency for people to assume that because we vote, the church is somehow a democracy – if church ever becomes about majority rule, then I'm out. But then I remain unconvinced that a theocracy (or even Christocracy) is an apt replacement, because if the mechanisms and procedures are the same then in reality the difference seems minimal. Theologically, of course we can agree that we are the gathered church (the body of Christ) and we govern ourselves through the corporate discernment of covenanted members (discerning the mind of Christ). Now all

that sounds grand, but what does it mean in terms of a typical church meeting? Well, given the constraints of space, perhaps we might venture just to say that 'discerning the mind of Christ' must have something to do with being sensitive to a common spirit in the meeting; God (as ever) speaking through the voices and lives of all gathered.

If this is true, then church meetings are about hearing one another; not just listening and planning our response, but really *hearing* other people. The result of this should be consensus. This is important. Consensus is not necessarily personal agreement; it is when all parties consent that a particular decision is best for the group. For some this will mean laying down their personal preference and supporting the alternative. This might manifest in the minority view conceding that the majority view is appropriate, but could potentially involve the majority supporting the minority. It seems to me that the emphasis here is always on the possibility of sacrificing one's own view for the good of the church, holding on to our own convictions more lightly, and I like that.

Voting seems to be the opposite. *My* vote is a possession, a means for *me* to influence, a way to express *my* opinion in whatever way *I* choose. It seems synonymous with debate and argument, seeking to convince, and ultimately ends in victory or defeat based on calculated percentages. Once a vote is called it is difficult to take it back, even if it proves premature. It results in those with doubts having to declare abstentions, instead of placing trust in those whose vision seems clearer on this occasion. It results in proponents and opponents voting for their view in order to register and formalise this view (thereby distancing themselves from each other) instead of graciously conceding that this time they might not have discerned rightly. Unless every vote is delayed until unanimity is reached, every vote will be divisive.

That is all well and good, but how do you quantify and measure consensus, and how do you conclude a conversation cleanly? Well, in a church the size of Union Chapel, you 'measure' consensus simply by regularly asking for a show of hands to indicate the

general feelings in the room – how many of us are feeling positive or negative about the proposal right now? As a conversation progresses it becomes more important to allow any minority to have a voice. Then, there will come a point at which the chairperson might enquire with those gathered whether, having reflected on the discussion, they would feel able to support the prevailing discernment within the meeting whatever that might be. If not, more dialogue may be required.

There remains the critique that a sensitively run voting procedure might avoid many of the pitfalls I outline, and that seeking consensus could be as manipulative and oppressive as any voting system – and I would agree. A system or procedure can never mitigate human nature, but I would still propose that hearing, empathy and graciousness have more room to flourish when decisions are reached by consensus.

But most importantly, what do you think? Have I over-stated the case, fixed a non-existent problem, trampled on tradition? How have you felt when you vote, or have seen others vote? Either way, as long as 66.67% of you are with me, that is fine!

As we say farewell to the Easter season, let me once again express my gratitude to the incredible effort people expended this year. It was lovely to see so many faces on the Thursday and Friday, and the Sunday breakfast and Cross display were incredible. And to everyone who organised and expressed their creativity in making gardens and decorating eggs – it was a triumph!

Ian Geere

~ God the Healer ~

Over a period of months from October to February this year, my wife Vic led a discussion and Bible study at Union Chapel on the relationship between faith and healing, born out of her personal experience first of the diagnosis of lung cancer, and then with the

'healing rooms' movement in Kiev, Ukraine – and Halifax, Yorkshire - and with her close reading of the Bible on this topic. We weren't sure that anyone would want to come, but on each of those Monday evenings a group of us sat together in a corner of the chapel and in a spirit of sensitivity and honest reflection, we explored what might be meant by the idea that God is one who heals. Vic came well prepared, with a Bible bristling with post-its and an exercise book full of references and thoughts. There were many questions to explore: why doesn't God heal everyone? Some people die despite a strong and deep faith. What about people who have lived a long life and are ready for death? We wrestled with these and many other questions, reading the Bible and grappling with great words on faith and hope. At the end of each evening, Vic led a prayer. She has summarised some of the key ideas in the following article for Christward, beginning in a typically forthright and challenging style, and concluding with a prayer.

Andy Howes

Jesus heals today

If you do not believe that Jesus heals today, you are missing one of the fundamental truths and reject the healing which is provided for you. People forget, or more likely ignore, that our main and only healer is God, not a person.

I believe this and I believe that God healed me from incurable illness.

Jesus came to fulfil the will of His Father - God's 'good, pleasing and perfect will'. Jesus did not come to destroy, curse or inflict illnesses and diseases. Quite the contrary. Jesus came to save and heal people. Simply look at the New Testament and you will find a large number of examples where Jesus healed people from all kinds of diseases. *'News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them'* (Mathew 4:24)

And so to say that it is God who made us to be ill and there is some purpose in illness, through which God wants to teach people, is totally against what the Bible says. It was only in the Old Testament where God cursed people for their disobedience and sins where disease was a curse (see Deuteronomy 28:16-68). But we live according to the New Testament. We are born again, which means that we have accepted and believe in Jesus as our Lord, and therefore the curse of illness does not apply to us, because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:12-13). No, illness does not come from God.

So, firstly, in order to receive healing you need to be born again. *'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.'* (Romans 10: 9-10). And 'that is the message concerning faith'. Therefore there are two requirements: profess with your mouth and believe in your heart. Both of these must be present in order to receive healing from God. Clearly we cannot believe in our heart without some effort and in some cases, a lot of effort on our part, as our minds are full of information that hinders our faith. This may be connected to previous religious teachings, our education, upbringing, the perceptions of other people, etc. But if you believe in Jesus with your heart, then the next thing is to accept salvation that He provided for us including healing. It would be wrong to accept only some parts of the Gospel, which relate to Jesus' teaching, and reject His healing power. Jesus began healing people at the same time as proclaiming that the Kingdom of God has come near. As soon as He called His first disciples, Jesus 'went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and healing every disease and sickness among the people' (Mathew 4:23).

Please note that Jesus healed all and every disease and sickness. Special cases included leprosy, paralyses, deafness, blindness, etc. All of these are 'incurable' diseases. Jesus had the power of the Lord to heal the sick (see Luke 5:17). That was then - so, what

about now? When Jesus died He took away all our illnesses, He freed us from them. He came 'to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.'" (Mathew 8: 17). And in 1 Peter 2:24 it is written: *'He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.'*

Perhaps it is difficult to grasp, but Jesus has already done this – He has already healed us. And what we need to do is to accept and receive that healing. In fact, we should claim our healing. Jesus gave His life for us. Healing was part of His atonement and not to claim it would be denying His precious gift of life – His life. Since healing has been already provided, we do not need to ask or beg God for this. This would be wrong. The gift is waiting for us and we should accept it. We can do this through His power – the same power that Jesus had when He healed the sick. His power now lives within us – the power of the Holy Spirit, the mighty strength that raised Jesus from the dead. *'What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us... The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit' (1 Cor. 2:12, 14).* So, accept things that come from the Spirit of God. Jesus is alive and we therefore can claim our healing by His power in His Name. Moreover, He instructed us to use this power not just for ourselves, but for others, so that we could heal the sick. When Jesus sent out twelve apostles, He gave them instructions including: *"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Mathew 10:8).*

There are a number of examples where Jesus' apostles used this power. In Acts 3: 6-10 Peter heals a lame beggar and then he says to the amazed crowd: *'By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and*

the faith that comes through him that completely healed him, as you can all see.'

Please note how Peter spoke to the beggar. He said: *"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk"* (Acts 3:6). He did not ask God: 'Please God heal this person'. No, he commanded, he took authority; he used God's power and the Name of Jesus. And that is what we must do. We should talk directly to the problem and cast it out. We should declare our healing. We should command our body to be healed in the name of Jesus. We should command illness to leave our body in the name of Jesus. Jesus told us to do this: *"If anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them"* (Mark 11:23).

'Have faith', 'don't be afraid; just believe', 'everything is possible for one who believes' - these are messages that Jesus left for us. Without faith we do not have God's power and without God's power we cannot get healed. As it is written: *'Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see'* (Hebrews 11:1). *'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'* (Romans 10:17). Faith must be developed in order to be strong. Like a seed, it must be sowed into good soil to grow, so that nothing can choke it, whether these are doctors' prognoses, people's unbelief, your feelings, etc. It must be like Abraham's faith: *'Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, such as it had been said to him'* (Romans 4: 18). And that is powerful. Doctors can take away hope for recovery, but in spite of this you have to have hope and believe that healing is on the way and it will be manifested in your body if you stand firm and persevere in your belief. And that is what God wants us to do: focus not on visible, but on His Word of truth, which will 'become flesh'. Praise God!

This will require time, effort, courage and most importantly strong faith in God's power of healing. In fact we should fight for our healing. We live in the world that is full of unbelief based on a number of factors, including, ignorance (not knowing the God's

Word), religious doctrines (God's healing does not exist in present times; it depends on God's will), and reliance on our five natural senses (what you see, hear, smell, taste, feel). Unbelief creates a strong counterbalance to our faith, which can annul our healing. The contradiction is therefore that many people who have faith in God and in Jesus do not receive healing because of unbelief. It is relatively easy to overcome ignorance and religious doctrines, but it is much harder to ignore your natural senses, when your body shows symptoms and you feel pain or discomfort. That is why it is important to stand firm on God's Word and 'renew your mind', focus on the Word of God about healing, rather on what your body says. You remember the story about a man and his son who was possessed by demons and where Jesus' apostles could not heal him. Why could not they do this while they have already healed the sick before? It is most likely that when they saw the manifestation of illness in the boy's body, they were overcome by unbelief. They relied on their natural senses. Not surprisingly, Jesus became quite exasperated with them. *"You unbelieving and perverse generation", Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you!"* (Mathew 17: 17). This is a very straightforward message. Jesus wants us to continue doing His work and if we fail, then we are like His apostles in this case – we cancel our faith with unbelief.

Develop your faith, fight unbelief, take authority over illness, be strong and courageous and praise God!

I want to finish with a prayer:

'Our Heavenly Father, in the Mighty Name of Jesus, we thank You for Your precious gift of life. Thank You for Your great power that lives within us which allows us to withstand sickness and disease and any problem that come to our lives. With Your power through the Holy Spirit we speak directly to the problem and command it to leave our body now, in the Name of Jesus. Sickness and diseases, you do not have the right to be in our body. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; it belongs to Jesus.

Father, we agree with You that we have been healed and we thank You for Your healing. Thank You, Jesus, that You took away our sicknesses and freed us from diseases.

Father, you have provided us with everything that we will ever need. Thank you for Your Spirit of truth, thank you for Your Word of wisdom. You sent your Word and healed us and Your Word will not return to You empty, but will accomplish what You desire and achieve the purpose for which You sent it.

Amen.'

Vika Howes

**~ Minutes of the Annual General Church
Meeting of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist)
held on Sunday 20th May 2012
at 11.30am. ~**

Present: Jonathan Roberts, Steve Roberts, Gwyneth Heritage-Roberts, Nicola Hamilton, Enid Welford, Beryl Dykes, Rosalind Bell, Leonie Earnshaw, Hilda Linton, Irene Roberts, Eileen Land, Ted Land, Carole Walker, Ian Geere, Gwen Mattock, Sarah Geere, Anne Phillips, Rachel Scott, Geoff Walker, Harry Fleming, Connie West, Alan Dobbins, Owen Jones, Margaret Garner (chair), David Garner, Andy Howes (secretary). The children were at the side of the chapel, supervised by Lorna Richardson.

Apologies: Michael Welford, Rachel Adebago, Margaret Edmonds, Alan and Margaret Redhouse.

Minutes of AGM 2011: These were reprinted in the latest Christward: accepted

Matters arising: none

Safe to Grow: Margaret Garner read the 'Safe to Grow' statement.
Annual reminder

There have been substantial changes in the safeguarding system within which churches work. A second session was held recently on this. We are now **all** advocates for the children and young people of the church. We need a 'designated person' to oversee safeguarding processes. Brenda will consider this role, and attend a forthcoming safeguarding meeting with Gwyneth H-R, Sarah Geere, David and Margaret Garner. Vulnerable adults policy is to be produced by this group.

Safeguarding meeting to be set up **MG**

Deacons election Thanks to outgoing deacons Gwen, Colin and Eileen for all their work over their term of office. On a secret ballot, the meeting was overwhelmingly in favour of Enid Welford, Beryl Dykes and Gwyneth Heritage-Roberts becoming deacons.

Fabric committee report: Many thanks expressed to Michael, David, Eileen, Harry for their work in this capacity. Next year, AGM to include a brief report on fabric issues over the year.

Treasurer's report Overall balance £117,000 last year; £128,000 this year. Most expenses are constant, energy costs still high. Our income from users and congregation is quite strong. A full report will be presented to the September church meeting.

Confirmation of officers We are in a transition stage regarding officers of the church. David Garner was thanked for his term of office as treasurer, with thanks to Nicola Hamilton for agreeing to take on this role. Andy Howes stepped down as secretary. Thanks were expressed to him. Both David and Andy have acted in these roles for eight years.

Confirmation of fabric committee: Michael Welford, David Garner, Eileen Land, Harry Fleming, assisted by Alan Dobbins and Graham (caretaker).

AH to circulate details of the role of secretary and handover to successor.

Minister's report & Secretary's report:

These two reports were published in full in the July/August 2012 edition of Christward.

Church roll – Membership stands at 55, with Sarah and Ian Geere, and Harry Fleming all having been received into membership this year. **AH** Pass membership secretary role back to Hilda.

BMS Fiona Welch has completed her time in Angola, and is now moving to Mozambique. The weekend in April was the first opportunity to meet her and very welcome. Margaret Garner offered literature to anyone who wanted one. Our website has a link to her site.

Positive reactions to the website.

AOB none. **DNM:** 19th May 2013.

The meeting closed at 12.07

**~ Minutes of the Church Meeting
of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist)
held on Sunday 17th March 2013
at 11.20am. ~**

Present: Ian Geere (chair), Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, David Garner, Leonie Earnshaw, Sarah Geere, Margaret Garner, Margaret Redhouse, Irene Roberts, Ted Land, Eileen Land, Lorna Richardson, Steve Roberts, Jonathan Roberts, Andy Howes, Margaret Edmonds, Brenda Marston, Michael Welford, Harry Fleming, Alan Redhouse, Gwen Mattock, J. Andrea Hood, Hilda Linton, Colin Marchbank-Smith, Rachel Adebago, Alan Dobbins, Rachel Scott

Apologies: Enid Welford and Carmen Bowman (with children), Owen Jones

Notification of AOB – none for this meeting. Confirmed that no spending on new carpet for the Chapel will take place without further discussion.

Matters arising/updates/information:

- (a) ***The Ceilidh*** held on Sat 23rd Feb was a great success. A donation of £293 (plus 2 separate cheques from members) has been sent by the church to Church Action on Poverty and a letter of thanks has been received. It would be difficult for a ceilidh in the Chapel to be a money-making event, but we would be looking to host a similar event again.
- (b) ***Easter arrangements*** – agreed this year not to have an 8am Communion Service on Easter Sunday. Breakfast will be at 9am and Easter Celebration Service at 10am as usual.
- (c) ***Awayday*** booked for 27th April at Platt Community Church – to be planned in detail after Easter, input invited, please contact Ian.
- (d) ***Food Bank proposal*** – a draft letter has been prepared to be sent to local churches and group leaders in the Fallowfield/Withington area. Whalley Range Methodist, Burnage Churches Together and the University Chaplaincies are also looking to start similar schemes in their neighbourhoods. It is still not intended to have the Food Bank as a church-based project long term but we have been advised to start with churches as partners. The Trussell Trust are keen for projects to have a Christian ethos, although they also wish to see other faiths and secular organisations involved. Concerns were raised at the meeting that O&A and ethnic minority churches should be involved, and there was some unease at possibly alienating prospective partners by making it sound as though we think churches have the moral high ground over others when it comes to issues of social justice and fairness. Perhaps a clearer statement of the group's principles is required at an early stage. People interested in

having more specific information and involvement should speak to Ian.

- (e) **“Who does What” review** – the Deacons have decided that it would be a good idea for each member of the congregation to be spoken to individually, to find out what roles and tasks people undertake and whether they are happy with the extent of their personal involvement. This will be happening in the coming months.
- (f) **Christian Aid Week** – it has been decided that this year we will not participate as a church in the house to house collections (though individuals are more than welcome to do so if they wish). Members are encouraged to participate in the supermarket and street collections being organised by Holy Innocents. Offers of help to Michael W please. We also think it would be good to raise money by activities based at our premises such as cake sales to other users of the buildings. We need to think what we are good at and come up with ideas. Suggestions to Ian please. Agreed to host the ecumenical service for Christian Aid Week at Union Chapel on Sunday 12th May at 6.30pm.
- (g) **Other events** – reminder of the forthcoming Baptist Union Assembly in Blackpool, 1st weekend in May. There will be an Evening of Prayer for Manchester on 11th May at the Redeemed Christian Church of God Strong Tower, Oldham Road, Newton Heath – 6.00pm for 6.30pm, followed by refreshments.

Church Weekend 2013 at Rydal Hall – final call for booking forms. Numbers required by the venue this week.

Membership request – Rachel Scott has asked to become a member of the church. Gwyneth HR and Margaret R have visited her and are very happy to commend her to the meeting. Request agreed unanimously.

Advance notice of forthcoming Deacons’ elections – Margaret R retires from the Diaconate in May and will be standing down as Secretary. Gwyneth has agreed to take on the role of Secretary.

There will be 2 or 3 vacancies on the Diaconate. Members are invited to consider possible nominations.

Call for suggestions for Autumn topics and events – ideas to the Deacons please.

Notification of Deacons' Agenda rotating topics for April & May

April – Union Chapel and other Christian organisations eg Home Mission, BMS, local churches – not scheduled to include discussion of the church's 10% charitable donations

May – Harvest and Autumn Events, the Manse.

Comments on these topics invited – to be made to any member of the Diaconate prior to relevant meeting.

Meditative Prayer Group – Rachel S spoke about the format and activities of the Meditative Prayer Group which has been running twice a month since September. This is an open group and new participants are welcome. Next meeting 3rd April 7.30pm at Union Chapel.

AOB – suggestions for future church weekend venues – Bawtry Hall, Doncaster and Grange over Sands.

The Minutes of the January 2013 Meeting (*in magazine*) were approved.

The Meeting closed with the Grace at 12.05pm

~ A Word of Praise ~

Over the past few weeks I have been taking part in the Keep Fit Class on a Monday morning at your chapel. Whilst waiting in your foyer I picked up your "Christward" magazine. My eyes were drawn to the adjectives under the drawing of a tree. I saw "open", "friendly" and "accepting", these certainly apply to the welcome I

have received by members of your community I have chatted to. I had a lovely conversation with Eileen about the building. I have been impressed by the respect and care given to the fabric of the building, it is well planned and caters for a wide variety of groups.

Thank you

Kay Wood

~ News of the Family ~

We send our best wishes to **Jonathan Walker** on his marriage which took place in the Ukraine recently. We hope that Jonathan and his wife will have a long and joyous time together.

Also we send our best wishes to **Sarah Geere** who has recently changed jobs. Sarah remains in Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, but moves from a Primary Mental Health service management role into a similar position in the Eating Disorders service. Having taken the former through a significant development process and put it on a sure footing, she is keen to do a similar thing with another team and department.

Congratulations to **Margaret Garner** whose application to gain a place on a Music Therapy course has been successful.

We were sad to hear of the death of **Rose Bell's** mother. Rose returned to Jamaica for the funeral and is very much in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

Connie West is having an extended stay in North Wales to be near her daughter Lindsay. We send her our best wishes for the future.

~ Situations Vacant ~

O&A is looking for a book-keeper with computer knowledge to assist their Treasurer.

The Union Chapel Community would like to find someone willing to help with the checking and replenishing of the first aid kits.

For both of the above contact Eileen Land on 445 7694 for further information.

~ O&A Summer Programme ~

The summer programme of O&A will open with a Coffee Morning on Saturday 29th June. This will take place at Union Chapel from 10.00am until 12.00pm. A programme leaflet will be available giving details of the variety of events which will be occurring over the summer. The topics covered will be wide ranging and include ones from the areas of Art, History, Current Affairs and Film. We look forward to welcoming you on the 29th.

Judith Rack

~ Church Weekend ~

The 2013 Church Weekend will take place at Rydal Hall nr Ambleside. The weekend will be led by Mark Janes under the heading 'Pilgrims need Passion not Programmes'. Mark will seek to help us ask searching questions about the kind of culture we create within our churches and the way this forms everyone who participates in them; and to explore this with an eye to some of the significant cultural changes that are occurring in British society. Some of the ideas will come through John Westerhoff's book 'Will our Children have Faith?'

Further details from David Garner (434 4984) or Nicola Hamilton (270 0087)

~ 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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