

Christward

The magazine of



May 7th–June 25th
2017

~ Some thoughts from our Interim Minister ~

As I write, I can't believe it's only been three months since I started working with Union Chapel. I feel like I've known you all for much longer and I think that's a testament to the welcoming and friendly nature of the church.

My work over the last three months has been about getting to know you as people, finding out how various aspects of the church work, and beginning to think about what we might need to do to move forwards. It feels very much that each aspect of church I get involved in, whether it is the future of the Linton House site, or looking at the future finance of the church, always comes back to those bigger questions of identity and purpose.

I want to thank all those who completed the focus matrix with thoughts about church. It is clear that people feel the church is a warm, caring and welcoming spiritual family. What also came across consistently, was the sense of the church being a safe space for those who wanted to explore and question, and that people valued the church's liberal theology and progressive outlook. There were other values that were important such as the opportunities to be together to enjoy each other's company, either at regular midweek activities like Open Tuesday, or occasional social events and the annual church weekend. What also appears to be important is the church's clear heart for social justice, acted out in many ways, with examples being the Food Bank and the provision of adult learning opportunities. It seems to me that all these values are important as a basis for ensuring a sustainable church for the future, and we will continue to work together to make decisions that will take us forward.

You may not know, but I volunteer as a chaplain for a few hours a week at a nursing home for those with dementia. I find this an incredibly rewarding, humbling and thought-provoking experience and I am continually amazed at the blessing and refreshment I get from being with the residents. I have been reflecting recently on the nature of 'home' within this context. What it means to be 'in a

home', and for your home to be communal and at the same time unfamiliar and probably nothing like you have experienced before. I am reflecting on what it means for me as someone who goes into the home; do I feel I am entering another person's home or an institution? What right do I have to be there? In what ways do residents provide me with hospitality in the traditional way one might do for a visitor, or strangely, am I the one providing hospitality to them in what is their own home?

I have yet to do more in-depth theological reflection on this, but it strikes me that these are some of the same questions we might ask of ourselves as the church. If we take seriously William Temple's belief that the church is the only institution that exists for its non-members, then how are we to enact this? Do we purely provide hospitality to others; to those who use our building or engage with us in other ways? Or do we allow them to mould and change who we are and who we might be? Might we, like the residents of the nursing home, sometimes feel invaded, in what we consider to be our own home? Or are we able to accept that giving others the right to be here enriches us and enables mutual hospitality? I don't have the answers, but it is perhaps something to think reflect on as we think about the relationships between the church and the wider community.

I am currently reading a book about the Dalai Lama (more about that next time perhaps). He quotes a Tibetan saying, that I think is worth reflecting on and which I would like to leave you with.

'Wherever you have friends that's your country, and wherever you receive love, that's your home.'

And a blessing from me: May God, who is Love, be the home that you need and seek.

Jane Henderson

~ Some musings on praying with God's story ~

Part 2

Last autumn, I shared with you my recent experience of prayer through undertaking the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. Towards the end of that article, I wrote these lines:

“God is constantly surprising me with insights – and demands - as I go deeper into scripture’s story. It is proving a life-changing experience, and in time I hope to share more of it with you.

Now the time has come to complete the story as with great sadness I resign my membership of Union Chapel after - is it 13 or 14 years? I hope this departure, inevitable eventually after my move away from Manchester, will not end my relationship with you all, my commitment to follow your on-going journey and to pray for you, even still occasionally sharing with you in worship. I am deeply grateful to you all for the life we’ve shared together over these years, times serious and fun, awesome and painful – you have given me so much.

But this *is* a resignation not a transfer to another Free Church: for the life-changing experience out of the Ignatian prayer was a call to seek ministry in the Church of England, which has now been confirmed to take place in two stages culminating in ordination as priest before Christmas. If this surprises you, you can imagine how much more it surprised me, and still does! It hit me in one of the meditations, when I sensed this as a stronger call than anything before on my faith journey: it had to be pretty powerful, because nothing was further from my mind than leaving the Baptist family I have been part of all my life. When I subsequently spoke - along the lines of ‘this is crazy isn’t it? I’m a committed Baptist, a minister, and retired’ - with the Rector of the church I’ve been attending when at home, he dashed any hope I’d been harbouring that he’d tell me to go away and not be so daft, by smiling broadly and giving me the contact details of the Derby Diocesan Director of Vocations. Throughout the ensuing months of deliberation, I’ve been

overwhelmed by the warmth of welcome, the collegiality and friendship with which I've been embraced, and the flexibility shown on the pathway to my acceptance.

I have only given you here the barest outline of the story, but those of you who, like me, have deep and long-held Baptist convictions will realise what a drastic step this is, and how much there is for me to process as I lay them down and pick up new things - spiritually, theologically and ecclesially. It has shaken me to the core, but through it I've come to a new awareness of God and the place of the church in God's economy. It also affirms what I've always believed, that retirement from College was not retirement from ministry and that God did have work still for me to do.

So, prayer carries a health warning! God calls us, like Moses, like Mary, like Paul, out of our comfort zones if we will listen – and sometimes God takes drastic steps to overcome our deafness: but God also provides for us as we step out into uncharted territory. My prayer for you at Union Chapel also facing, unexpectedly, an uncertain future, is that God will surprise you too by making clear a pathway you cannot now see, through prayer and wise counsel.

Just as I ended the last magazine article I wrote with a poem so do I now, one by the current leader of the Corrymeela Community of Northern Ireland, which I used recently in a workshop I was leading for ministers in stressful and changing situations. It addresses head-on the realities of the life of faith yet affirms our participation through it all in the story being shaped by and with the triune God however we meet that three-in-oneness in the everyday. It bears much reflection:

Narrative theology 1

And I said to him
Are there answers to all of this?
And he said
The answer is in the story
and the story is being told.

And I said
But there is so much pain
And she answered, plainly,
Pain will happen.

Then I said
Will I ever find meaning?
And they said
You will find meaning
Where you give meaning.

The answer is in the story
And the story isn't finished
Pádraig Ó Tuama

Anne Phillips

Note: *The process of Anne's ordination starts at Derby Cathedral on Sunday July 2nd and continues in Matlock later during the year. Any/everyone would of course be very welcome to attend.*

~ Snippets of Greek ~

The story of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is an example of how a language can be misunderstood. Misunderstandings can occur in any language, even our own!

When Jesus said to Nicodemus that you have to be born again, the Greek word used is Anothén, which can mean either "above", or "again". Clearly Jesus meant to convey that you must be born from "above". But Nicodemus thought the word was meant to convey "again".

So when Nicodemus retorted "Can a man enter his mother's womb and be born again?" his confusion hinges on the double meaning of the word Anothén. No such confusion could exist in Aramaic or Hebrew, incidentally. This begs the question as to whether

Nicodemus understood Greek very well if he confused these two words. Context would have suggested which was the right word. Nicodemus understood the problem with being born again very well.

The irony of this is that countless people today refer to being born again Christians, which is not what the wording that Jesus used was intended to convey. They should actually refer to being “born from above”, and not “born again”, if they want to remain faithful to Jesus’ intended meaning, and not the confused meaning of Nicodemus.

Another question then arises. How should the translators of the NT have rendered this passage? If they used the English words Jesus meant to convey, then the story would not make sense, because Nicodemus’ reply would seem very strange. So obviously they settled for the word that Nicodemus thought Jesus said. But that puts the wrong word in Jesus’ mouth. But that is how the translators managed to ensure we knew that Nicodemus still misunderstood Jesus. But we don’t have the correct words from Jesus’ mouth. Of course the problem for the translators would not be there if by chance the word for “again” and “from above” happened to be the same word in English!

Later in the conversation Jesus says “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, “How can these things be?”

The word for wind and spirit, *pneuma*, also introduces the potential for confusion, and it appears Nicodemus was indeed confused judging by his question at the end of the story.

Geoff Walker

~ Union Chapel Church Weekend ~

Friday 23rd – Sunday 25th June

Thornleigh, Grange-over-Sands.

Theme: Journeying Together

The weekend will be led by Margaret and David Garner and myself but there will be significant contributions from many others as we work together to have an enjoyable time away.

Together we will look at the theme of journeying through life, both individually and corporately:

What expectations do we have about our journeys?

How do we equip ourselves to deal with what we might encounter?

How do we find our way and how do we react when something unexpected surprises or challenges us?

And how do we relate to those we journey alongside?

The weekend is an opportunity to reflect on these and similar questions in an informal and fun environment. Having not experienced a Union Chapel church weekend before, I am very much looking forward to the much talked about impromptu sketches and activities, and getting the chance to get to know people better from both Union Chapel and the wider community of friends.

If you haven't signed up already then please let Andy Howes know you would like to come and please be assured that cost will not prevent anyone from being able to share in the weekend. You may speak to Andy in confidence if finance is an issue.

Andy can be contacted by email on ajhowes@hotmail.com.

Jane Henderson

~ So Many Beauties ~

On the evening of 6th April some people from Union Chapel joined a large audience in Manchester Cathedral for the first performance

of a new piece of choral music. The piece was composed by Holly Marland and people with dementia, and celebrated creativity.

Holly is a Music for Health practitioner as well as a registered music therapist who is passionate about music's transformative power. She set up the Adages Project to give people with dementia the chance to create a beautiful new piece of music which celebrates their creativity. Working with people in local dementia care settings through singing, poetry-writing, dancing, improvisations using percussion instruments and conversation Holly and they composed this choral music titled 'So Many Beauties'.

The work was performed by a number of local choirs, soloists and instrumentalists with the audience joining in with rhythmic clapping, singing, and on occasion (some members) dancing. It was a joyous entertainment going through the four seasons of the year with appropriate solo and choral pieces with a momentum which swept performers and audience up into one great ensemble.

Holly had done wonders with the music but for me it was the lyrics that captivated. Yankety Tankety was a recitative written by Jean, a resident in one of the care centres, which caught the spirit of the evening just being creative with the sounds and emotional feel of words.

*'Yankety tankety, tankety toe, chic-a-choc, under up, oh what a way!
I raised a cup on her head in a day, praying, what I see is coming
today!'*

The title of the work 'So Many Beauties' was provided by a Polish lady with dementia who spoke those words as music was played to her at her bedside. She was also responsible for the words of a fine song 'Moja piekna, moja piekna' she kept repeating as music was played to her - 'My beautiful, my beautiful'

The evening was beautiful and I hope the piece will be performed many times in the future - it deserves it.

Alan Redhouse.

~ Christian Aid Week 14th - 20th May 2017 ~

It's not long now to Christian Aid Week, and this year their focus is on the plight of refugees. Nearer the time there will be a display in the church entrance hall, telling one family's story.

Maybe we could have a small table selling preloved items/unwanted gifts near to the display during that week only, with envelopes for purchasers to put their money into, and post through the office door. If you like that idea and have any such things, please bring them to church any Sunday before 14th May.

We are also having two cake sales....one on Sunday 14th May (which is the first day of CA week and also a church lunch) and the second at Open Tuesday on the 16th.

Any offers to bake would be welcome, please let me know asap. We can sell whole cakes and slices from tray-bakes.

Thanks to One and All!

Carole Walker

~ News of the Family ~

Jane's Ordination

Jane Henderson, our interim minister, will be ordained on Saturday 15th July, 2:30pm at Poynton Baptist Church. Jane invites all Union Chapel people to come and help celebrate and recognise her call both to Nationally Accredited Ministry in the Baptist Union and specifically to the role of Transition Minister with NWBA. Please let Jane know if you would like to attend so that numbers can be accommodated for seating and refreshments.

We are pleased to report that **Rachel Adebago** is now back in her own home after an extended stay in hospital. We wish her all the best.

Hilda Linton sends her best wishes to all at Union Chapel and when this photograph was taken it was suggested that it might feature in Christward to which Hilda agreed.



~ Fallowfield & Withington Food Bank ~

It's been another busy two months. Our annual statistics were published last week which show we have provided food for 2002 people in the last year a 20% increase.

We are still looking for additional warehouse space. Our local councillors are assisting us and we hope that something suitable will be found very soon.

I was invited to join the Lord Mayor of Manchester for afternoon tea at the Town Hall. This was to enable the Mayor to say thankyou to voluntary groups in Withington



Do you have a spare hour to join us at Sainsburys Fallowfield on Saturday May 6th 10-4pm as we collect as part of the Charity of The Year. Please let me know if you can help.

None of what we do can be achieved without the amazing support we receive from Union Chapel. It's a great privilege to work together as we work to alleviate food poverty.

Colin Marchbank Smith

~ Church Walk - Surge in numbers ~

The walk in April saw attendance treble over the previous month.



The circular walk included a stimulating climb up Winter Hill topped with its huge transmitter aerials and with spectacular views over the surrounding countryside. What better way to celebrate the coming of Spring?

OK, it was drizzling as we began and by the time we reached Rivington Pike, Winter Hill and its moorland approaches couldn't be seen because of the mist. Yes, of course, the moorland was one great bog and we got very wet and muddy as we slipped and sometimes fell. But Andy led us over this Slough of Despond until suddenly a portion of one of the aerials became visible, momentarily, high up in the air, and we knew that we were not far from our Celestial goal and the trumpets sounded and we passed over onto the other side. Well not quite but it did stop raining as we ate our lunch at the top.



As we descended and approached the end of our walk the sun came out and we found a nice converted school room which sold tea and cakes.



So why not join Andy and the increasing numbers who find this kind of thing enjoyable.

You don't have to be a masochist, but it helps, and if nothing else it provides a metaphor for the Christian life which is worth a dozen sermon illustrations.

Our next walk is on Saturday 6th May. Contact Lorna 225 3835 for details.

Alan Redhouse

**~ Minutes of the Church Meeting
of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist)
held on Sunday 19th March 2017
at 11.20am.~**

Present: Andy Howes (Chair); Jane Henderson (Interim Minister); Gwyneth HR, Gwen M, Steve R, Jonathan R, Alan R, Margaret R, Owen R, Lorna R, Irene R, Ted L, Eileen L, Margaret G, Brenda M, Matt H, Leonie E, Geoff W, Nicola H, Carole W, Enid W, Michael W, Carmen B, Colin MS, Beryl D.

Apologies: Rose, Margaret E, David G (children)

Minutes of previous meeting, previously circulated in the bulletin, were accepted. No matters arising

1. **Anne Phillips** has resigned as a member in order to pursue ordination in the Anglican Church. Accepted with sadness, amazement and our best wishes. Gwyneth to write and express our best wishes.
2. **Fabric:** Front porch wet rot repaired. Kitchen boiler replaced. Slow progress on Manse repairs. New (large) bin ordered.
3. **Church Weekend 2019:** Suggested we return to the now upgraded Beechwood Court. Agreed.
4. **Foodbank Storage:** A request was presented to use the garage area of Linton House to store non-perishable items on temporary basis until more permanent storage found, subject

to insurance, feasibility and regulations. Food Bank would pick up any costs and dispose of any rubbish. Agreed in principle.

5. Linton House future: Jane H presented a series of options for future use of that site:

- Option 1 : Demolish & clear the site
- Option 2 : Find a charity to take on the building as it is
- Option 3 : Sell the building and land for commercial development
- Option 4 : Sell the building and land for charitable purposes
- Option 5 : Keep the land & redevelop with/without rest of site
- Option 6 : Do nothing

The deacons recommended option 1 and after a good discussion it was proposed from the chair and seconded by Michael W. that the Deacons be asked to move forward with the practicalities of demolition, finding the appropriate professional help. If other proposals are forthcoming to continue to utilise the building for social housing or a combined demolition and rebuilding scheme for charitable purposes these should be pursued in parallel. A formal decision will come to another Church Meeting when fuller costings are available.

6. AGM: This is scheduled for June. There will be 4 retiring deacons (Andy, Lorna, Gwen, Nicola) and it will be the end of Nicola's term as treasurer. Particular thought as to a replacement treasurer is required. The annual report will need collating – offers please. [Update: Jane H has now volunteered – thank-you!]

7: Ministry: It was noted that as far as the Secretary and Deacons are aware, there is currently no great desire to move forward on planning for and recruiting a minister. Therefore nothing is being done to this end.

Date of the Next Meeting: 9th April

Meeting closed with the singing of Jubilate Deo.

~ 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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