

Christward

The magazine of



November 6th–January 1st
2016/17

~ Farewell to the Geere Family ~

On Sunday 25th September we said farewell to our Minister Ian Geere and his family Sarah, Anna and Nathan.



There was a cake and personalised biscuits.



There was a firework



There was even a fireman just in case!



There were speeches and Andy made one on behalf of us all and that is reproduced below:

The Geere family's last Sunday with us is today - after five years of being part of Union Chapel, and being involved in many developments and changes.

Welcome and belonging

The quality of the welcome is important. The photos and the stories being told today are about a family who were welcomed as part of Union Chapel, and who welcomed people in their turn. Quite literally, in the case of Anna on the door, and quite significantly, for all four of 'the Geeres' as we've come to talk about you.. That is the way it is meant to work - the welcomed become the welcomers, we offer hospitality to each other and that is the starting point of the community.

Community was the watchword when you came to preach with a view, Ian. That was there as a commitment - and you've fulfilled that commitment. Now it is time to say goodbye as that commitment to this community comes to an end. Community is bigger than a congregation, bigger than an idea of church in one place.

Over these five years, you have been part of much development in this community. Meditative prayer, more important than some have made time for; the Book Group, wrestling directly with major questions of theology and life; the Food Bank, a partnership built with others locally in a way we haven't managed here for some time.

And the slow, steady exploration of ways and spaces where what we did and didn't believe was expressed and acknowledged, through sermons that developed a questioning line and alternative to the conventional ideas, whether about Christmas, or Easter, or church, or Luke. We have always asked questions here. We've started to gain confidence in asking those questions, and seeing how others are asking.

Presence and community

Then there was the facilitation - of O&A, the strategic thinking, the getting things online, working out a set of words and a symbol that represents a living community. Not everyone likes the tree, I'm sure, but it has been a good metaphor, quietly sitting there on our letterheads, noticeboards and magazines.

You have given a timely lift to people. Not only literally but metaphorically. When both Ted & Eileen were unwell, Ian came round, vacuumed the carpet (it was in the grandsons' playroom and they were visiting), filled Ted's tablet box and handed round the tea/coffee. There has been a timeliness to your pastoral ministry.

You have been there at the time, for many people - when people have been ill, struggling with limits of life, and the ending of life. Finding a way to be alongside is not always easy, but you have been committed to it over the long term, over years not just months or weeks. That has mattered to many.

Tensions and challenges

There have been difficulties - not taking for granted that things which are precious have to stay the same; finding ways to enable development and change whilst maintaining what is necessary for this to remain a living, welcoming, inclusive community. Questions too - who should pay what, how should they pay and when? How should we use the buildings, balancing established patterns and changing context? Who do we owe loyalty to? Who gets left out if we just carry on as we are? You've not shied away from asking difficult questions and that has brought out tensions.

And now there is this last one, this challenge to the accepted order that comes with the idea that perhaps there is nothing left for you in this model of being the church. We have some wrestling to do with that, and you won't be part of that, not directly. Which leads us to question - what do we believe in, how do we practice it, what is worth working for and how. Good questions for a community with so many opportunities. We want to live abundantly.

Looking ahead and looking beyond.

Fear is always the enemy, in a community, in a life. Fear doesn't serve us well in life. Stages and challenges come one after another; we make so much of our own next steps. There is a courage needed to say: enough and no further, and we respect that courage in you, even as we disagree, or are unsure, or are left wrestling with further consequences. Maybe the example will resonate further here, as we work out what is workable and unworkable as against what is just frightening.

So courage, questions, and commitment to live life abundantly.

~ "First Session" - An Alternative Pattern ~

We are fortunate at Union Chapel in having a good number of people who can lead our Sunday Services, and whilst we have no minister, this group have taken on the responsibility for our Sunday mornings – with the help of a few of our friends. This presents some challenges in terms of workload, but also an opportunity to try something different.

We are a small group and often the traditional pattern looks over-formal and to take more effort in preparation than seems justified – preaching from a pulpit to 20 people can seem rather odd. Although for some of us doing what we have always done comes very naturally, to others the expectation of the formal pattern is daunting. We would do well to start exploring ways of gathering together that are more suited to 20 than 200 - and it seems to me that gathering together is what matters to us. Bringing in an outsider merely to fill the pulpit and continue our rituals would not satisfy or lead us forward. We need to meet and share together, not witness a performance.

Therefore I have proposed that we attempt to evolve a more relaxed, quieter form of coming together, without the formal set pieces hymn/prayer/sermon sandwich. We can take something from

the Quakers as a model, but grafting on our own traditions of thoughtful preparation and structure, and allowing for our difficulties with prolonged silences. The suggestion from the Worship Team is that we have a go on alternate Sundays between the New Year and Easter, with the other Sundays following our established practice.

I envisage us sitting in a circle around the communion table. We would have some flowers or other symbols on the table. We would mainly sit down – although we might want to stand if we wanted to sing. There would be a loose structure around which we would fit the lectionary readings (to provide continuity and inspiration), other readings, comments and reactions to the readings or current events, or someone's interests or concerns, sharing of concerns, music of various sorts (singing, recorded music, live playing). We would try and learn to take it slowly and accept quiet gaps and silence.

So we might have a structure like: Coming Together – Sharing [News/Notices] – The Readings – Our Concerns – Reflection – Moving On.

Each Sunday would have an allocated leader (or two) who would look at the readings and collate anything that seemed relevant – maybe prompting others to bring something. As we learn how to do it I would envisage that the leader might see a theme and solicit input from all of us. Sometimes the leader will bring or solicit pre-planned input, sometimes we might have the sort of “what do you think?” invitation to reflect on readings. I anticipate periods of quiet music, of meditative reflection. I would hope we could share concerns at somewhat longer length than the token sentences that we often call intercessions. Although the format would be looser, there would be someone – one of us - holding it together for us, so we can relax with no need to be anxious about time or content.

We would work towards creating an atmosphere where people felt able to contribute when invited, but also one in which you could just come in, sit down, relax and feel no pressure to do anything, believe anything, assent to anything. I have a feeling that if we

could create something with this spirit, there are others in our wider communities who would appreciate the space and being with us on a Sunday morning – as I did with a tiny band of Quakers in a guide hut in Chorleywood many years ago.

Finally, we know there are a number of practicalities to be sorted out – we are developing a longer “handbook” document – we won’t get it right from the start, but I think the journey will be interesting and might just lead us to a much better place.

Steve Roberts.

~ Some musings on praying with God’s story ~

Apparently, the BBC has been asked to stop offering a copy of the Bible to castaways appearing on *Desert Island Discs*: along with the complete works of Shakespeare, it’s a standard gift. The Beeb have refused. Interestingly, atheist author Philip Pullman is happy to be given the Bible as, he says, it’s full of such good stories!

As a life-long Bible reader, I never tire of its stories: even the nasty ones (and there are plenty of those) bear sober reflection. It’s a constant source of surprise, even with the most familiar passages.

For the last 6 months, though, I’ve been looking at the Bible’s key narrative in a new way. When some years ago I was writing and teaching a course on spirituality, (which some from Union Chapel may remember attending), I became very interested (probably like those of you in the Meditation Group) in meditative ways of reading scripture – whether Ignatian contemplation or Benedictine *Lectio Divina*. Since Easter, I’ve had the opportunity to undertake the *Ignatian Exercises* using these methods.

In the 16th century Ignatius, founder of the Jesuit Order, created a pattern of exercises inviting others into a transformative experience of God such as he had had on his own spiritual journey, and these

have been adapted over the years to new contexts and people groups (including feminists!). Today, many people set aside 30 days for it at a retreat centre, but there is an alternative called the *19th Annotation* or *Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life* which has been my chosen route. It's a huge commitment, and I'm not at the end yet although expect to finish before Christmas.

The exercises are hard to describe: there's no textbook for the prayer to follow. It is essential to work with a guide (who **does** have a text to work with), and meet with them at least fortnightly. The process is divided into 4 'Weeks' with each 'Week' marking a step on the journey – and each takes far longer than a week! You undertake to read a given passage of scripture, pray through and meditate on it, and then reflect on your prayer for an hour each day, followed each evening by the *Examen* or review of the day.

Through these weeks, the participant firstly contemplates God's love for the world, then humanity's – and personal – sinfulness before moving on to consider and share, in stages, in the life, ministry, passion and resurrection of Jesus, with the aim of coming to a new or renewed commitment to discipleship. This description doesn't begin even to scratch the surface of the process, though. For all my years of prayer and bible study, personal and academic, I have not experienced anything as profound as this before. Entering the mystery that is God day after day (some days less successfully than others - and you're given a day off every week!), inhabiting and interrogating the text – and being interrogated by it – sometimes with words, most often in the silence of apophatic prayer, has given me a new and more radical freedom to experiment with ideas, interpretation and faith itself. 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.

Philip Pullman recognises in the Bible's many-layered stories, the depth of their transformative potential. Would that more people of faith believed that. Whether following a prescribed scheme as I am doing, or engaging in 'ordinary' reading of the Bible, it has the

power to transform us however familiar and maybe jaded we are with it, if we are open enough to set aside what we thought we knew and let it – and God - speak to us afresh. At the end of the day, Christians are people of the story not the book, and it is to participate in the on-going story that God invites us.

The poet R.S Thomas, who writes so profoundly enigmatically on the spiritual life, reflects thus on the value of silence in prayer:

But the silence in the mind
is when we live best, within
listening distance of the silence
we call God. This is the deep
calling to deep
of the psalm-
writer, the bottomless ocean.
We launch the armada of
our thoughts on, never arriving.

It is a presence, then,
whose margins are our margins;
that calls us out over our
own fathoms. What to do
but draw a little nearer to
such ubiquity by remaining still.

Anne Phillips

~ Thank you ~

A newcomer to South Manchester, I was pleased to be introduced to Union Chapel and am already enjoying going to the Book Group and Tai Chi Beginners' Class.

In a past life in another city, I worked for many years in Further Education and it was sad to see local authority funding withdrawn first for recreational classes and then for the ones that could help

people learn a language or improve their skills and qualifications. I believe strongly in the value of Lifelong Learning Opportunities and it's been heartening to discover that the community here set out to provide these - and continue to do so.

I moved to Malvern on retirement, and took on the voluntary role of Bookings Secretary at the Quaker Meeting House, which hosted regular classes and community events. I learned the importance of keeping the venue in good order, particularly the kitchen! So I very much appreciate the efforts of the team here (volunteers and cleaners) to provide us with a clean and welcoming space and would like to offer them a huge thank you!

Mary Callaway

~ Fallowfield & Withington Food Bank ~

We are still seeing high numbers attending each of the food distribution sessions. If you would like to donate we are currently short of:

Sugar, chocolate bars, size 5 nappies, tinned custard.

We will open a 4th distribution session on a Wednesday from 5pm-6.30pm at Platt Lane Library. The library is now known as The Place and we are thankful to the trustees there for accommodating us. Our need for new warehouse space is now critical if you know of any storage within Fallowfield or Withington please do let us know.

Supermarket Collections: **Tesco Burnage** on **Fri 2nd Dec**: 2.0pm - 10.0pm and **Sat 3rd Dec**: 8.0am - 10.0pm and at **Sainsbury's Fallowfield** on **Fri 16th Dec**: 9.0am-8.0pm & **Sat 17th Dec**: 11.0am - 4.0pm

If you are able to help for an hour or two at either or both of these collections please do let us know.

~ News of the Family ~

Gwyneth told the church on Sunday the sad news that **Debbie Janes** had died during the past week. Mark and Debbie led our Church Weekend a couple of years ago and were much loved.

Irene Roberts has moved into Downing Residential Care Home. The Home is situated on Swinburne Grove just behind the old National Westminster Bank and Withington Methodist Church. She would welcome visitors. The telephone number of the Home is 0161 434 8717 if you want to ring before you visit.

Kris has moved from Linton House into new accommodation. **Valentin** has also moved into his own flat. We hope that they are both settling into their new homes.

Julie Bryce's email address is now: *juliebryce@live.com*

Many thanks to **Ted Land** who has prepared the bread and wine for Communion for many years and is now retiring from the job..

Rosie has returned from Bristol and has rejoined the Food Bank team

~ Minutes of the Church Meeting of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist) held on Sunday 23rd October 2016 at 11.20am.~

Present: Margaret Garner (Chair); Gwyneth Heritage Roberts; Owen Roberts; Carole Walker; Michael Welford; Irene Roberts; David Garner; Eileen Land; Ted Land; Geoff Walker; Margaret Redhouse; Margaret Edmonds; Gwen Mattock; Kris Miyati; Beryl

Dykes; Enid Welford; Brenda Marston; Mathew Higgin; Steve Roberts; Carmen Bowman.

Apologies: Alan Redhouse (children); Rachel Adebago

1. **Minutes of last meeting:** Due to the relative timing of the meetings and magazine, these minutes will be published next week and approved at the next meeting. *(Note: the Minutes of the September Meeting follow this set of Minutes)*
2. **Notification of AOB:** BMS
3. **Updates and review:**
 - a. Thank-you to those who organised and contributed to Ian's last Sunday.
 - b. Thank-you to Nicola for the efficient dealing with all the additional work associated with the end of Ian's employment
 - c. We note that despite not having a minister at present we will still have to contribute to the BU pension fund deficit.
 - d. Thank-you to all who organised, catered, moved furniture and cleared up after the Ceilidh. It was agreed that it was a good and worthwhile event.
 - e. An ad hoc worship team consisting of the Pulpit Secretary (Margaret R) and those who lead services (Gwen M, Michael W, David and Margaret G, Steve and Gwyn HR, Owen R, Andy H, Alan R.) are sorting out a rota of leaders for our Sunday services. They are proposing that we try running our standard Sunday format on alternate weeks, and on the other weeks we try and develop something more quieter and less demanding which emphasises our gathering together. We are proposing we try this pattern from Jan to Easter. More details in the magazine and at next meeting, but any suggestions or ideas should be fed back to any member of the team.
4. **Linton House:**
 - a. A further inspection of LH has been undertaken by our surveyor and the University surveyor accompanied by

Michael W and David G. The result of this was summarised and circulated to members (*copies of the email can be obtained from the Secretary on request*). As the building is near the end of its life and any change of use will require very expensive work to bring it up to current standards, it was proposed that we should cease looking for alternative use and accept that demolition of the existing structure was likely to be the way forward. Proposed MW, seconded GHR, agreed unanimously.

- b. Following further negotiations between our surveyor and the University, the University have proposed a hand-back date in early Feb, prior to which they will clear any blocked guttering and drainage and board up any vulnerable ground floor windows leaving the building secure. It was proposed we accept this deal. Proposed GHR, seconded MW, agreed unanimously.
- c. David G is looking into the insurance arrangements
- d. It was noted that we should celebrate the vision and the achievement of LH over the years. We should think of writing something for the community, the Baptist Times and beyond. A celebration service and exhibition would be appreciated. Steve R agreed to collect and collate material relating to LH and its history to enable such celebrations.

5. **Moderator/Interim Minister:** Our Regional Minister has suggested to us that rather than a traditional Moderator to assist us in the inter-regnum, we look at appointing a (paid) interim minister on a 2-3 days per week basis. This is a novel post and we would be breaking new ground. He suggested Jane Henderson to us, who has completed ministerial training but has yet to be ordained. Five of the deacons have met with Jane and she has been invited to meet with us for a second session on Nov 13th to start to get to know us and explore possibilities. Currently the discussion suggests an observer, enabler role and not one that involves much preaching.

6. **Buildings Administration:** The lettings team need more help and it may be that someone who is not a member of the church might be found to help. It was agreed by affirmation that this was acceptable and Michael could approach potential volunteers. It was stressed that this was a voluntary role and any need for paid assistance would require a separate, and complex debate. It was noted that the role may require the provision of a Church-owned computer which would be the subject of a future proposal.
7. **BMS:** Fiona our current link missionary will shortly be coming to the end of her work with BMS. We agreed we would welcome the chance to meet her on her farewell tour. We will need to consider future links in due course.

The meeting closed with the Grace at 12:14

Date of Next Meeting: 20th November 2016

**~ Minutes of the Church Meeting
of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist)
held on Sunday 18th September 2016
at 11.20am.~**

Present: Margaret Garner (chair), Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, Eileen Land, Ted Land, David Garner, Irene Roberts, Leonie Earnshaw, Michael Welford, Enid Welford, Margaret Edmonds, Nicola Hamilton, Rose Bell, Beryl Dykes, Alan Redhouse, Margaret Redhouse, Andy Howes, Gwen Mattock, Colin Marchbank-Smith, Carmen Bowman

Apologies: Ian and Sarah Geere - with the children

The Minutes of the July 2016 meeting (in current magazine) were approved.

Matters Arising and AOB: None

Main Agenda Items:

1 Notice: There will be an additional Church Meeting on 23rd October.

2. The Meeting was convened at this point as a Special Church Meeting. Resolved that any property (and any trust funds if applicable) currently held in trust for the Church by the North Western Baptist Association shall be transferred to be held by the Baptist Union Corporation Limited as holding trustee.

3. Ian's impending departure - Gwyneth HR reported that she has met Tim Presswood our Regional Minister. Tim recommends that rather than a traditional Moderator, whose role is simply to help us find a new Minister, we consider an Interim Minister who can help more widely with practical problems such as Linton House will raise. An Interim Minister would need to be paid by the Church, perhaps for 2 days a week. The Meeting agreed that it was willing to appoint a paid Interim Minister if a suitable person could be found. Some of the Deacons are having a preliminary conversation shortly with someone whose name has been put forward by Tim P.

4. Linton House – Gwyneth HR reported that the University are now seeking to change the terms of the deal which were agreed months ago and are saying that there are significant leaks which they don't want to repair. Our surveyor is trying to arrange a joint reinspection with the University's surveyor. The Meeting authorised the Deacons to continue to explore all options and pursue negotiations, including paying our professional advisers from Church funds in accordance with normal rates of charge. We are continuing conversations with potential future occupiers from the charity sector.

5. Harvest will be on 2nd October. People are invited to bring their own produce, whether grown or otherwise created. In Second Session we will be packing shoeboxes to send to Link to Hope – reminder that both practical items for inclusion and financial contributions are welcome. Michael W would like us to consider in future years whether transport costs make this an effective way of sending aid.

6. The Ceilidh will be on Saturday 8th October at 7pm. Entry will be free and food will be provided. Donations will be collected for Foodbank.

7. Ian's roles – volunteers were requested to join the Lettings Committee, Fabric Committee and the Trustees of O&A. A direct replacement on the Foodbank Steering Group is not a pressing concern. We also need an alternative contact for safeguarding issues.

8. Keeping in touch with each other – it is now more important than ever to keep in touch with one another. Everyone was urged to provide up-to-date contact details to be shared with other members of the congregation.. We are considering circulating regular email updates and will be careful to get the same information to those not on email.

9. – New Projector – David G reported that a new projector (similar to the one at Didsbury Baptist Church which is very good) will cost approximately £2,500 plus installation costs. It was agreed that the present projector is quite unsatisfactory. The Fabric Committee were authorised to proceed to purchase a new projector.

10 – Christmas Eve Service – Numbers have been falling at the Watchnight service. The Meeting considered bringing the time forward to 7pm, or possible attending the evening service at Didsbury (need to check this is happening). To be discussed further by the Deacons.

11 – Christmas Card – we have several designs done in previous years which could be reused. Other names were suggested of people who may be willing to donate a new drawing. Also referred back to Deacons.

The Meeting closed with the Grace at 11.58am

Date of Next Meeting: 23rd October 2016

~ Remembering Linton House ~

After nearly 50 years Linton House has seen its last student resident. Started by Union Chapel to meet the real need for housing for what were then unwelcome overseas students it has served that community well for many years, but times move on and needs change and it is time to say goodbye and well done. So now we need to celebrate what has been done. Not least the vision and sacrifice back in the '60s to build something to fulfil a need rather than the large edifice of a Church building planned for the site (and aren't we glad now!).

We want to mark this occasion and celebrate the good work done – hopefully in writing, services websites and exhibitions. To this end we want to collate as much material on the history, people and stories as we can to put together in various forms.

- Historical material – anything written at the time. Plans, Timelines and dates.
- The stories that led to recognising the need.
- Recollections of the discussions and church meetings that led to the decision.
- Stories and recollections from people who lived there – particularly in the early days.
- Stories of people who lived there.
- Photographs of the site, building and building we never built

So if you have anything, I have agreed to collate and look after anything. Anything you want to keep personally can be scanned or lent temporarily and I will scan. If you would prefer to talk I'm sure we can record/transcribe. We would be particularly interested if anyone is in touch with former residents from the 60's and 70's who could provide us with material.

Steve Roberts (Steve.roberts@manchester.ac.uk)

~ 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 482. Published 28th August 2016

**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

Deacons:, Leonie Earnshaw, Nicola Hamilton, Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, Andy Howes, Gwen Mattock, Lorna Richardson, Carole Walker and Michael Welford.