

Christward

The magazine of



September 7th–October 26th
2014

~ From the Minister's Desk ~

For the last several weeks my minister's desk has been overflowing with books and papers relating to my MA dissertation. I am very grateful to you all for your understanding during August; you have enabled my church duties to be very light and provided the space for me to complete this final piece of work. Some of you will have a vague idea about what I have been working on (because that's all I have had) and some may have no clue at all. So, for those who might be curious, I will attempt to communicate the gist of it here. Assuming I don't change my mind again in the next couple of days before submission, the current title seems a good place to start. *Old Voices, New Conversations: How might Pre-Christendom church help prepare our churches for a Post-Christendom future?*

And some explanatory words from the Introduction:

'We are not the first Christians to journey through a period of huge cultural upheaval, to experiment with new and relevant ways to worship and gather, and to form a dynamic movement on the margins of society. There are old voices from the other side of the Christendom divide who would impart their wisdom, not through monologue or authoritative decree, that was not their style, but through considered and open dialogue. It is the purpose of this paper to imagine and facilitate the beginning of such a conversation.'

You may have detected some of my reading of ancient sources over the last couple of years, particularly the Didache, a first century training manual for new Christians and a great insight into early church communities. Using this and other sources I proposed three possible models of church inspired by that era. I then went out and interviewed ministers to ask them to reflect and share their thoughts on each model, specifically to what extent was each one possible, desirable, and relevant to the future.

I must say that this process was fascinating, which is a great bonus when completing a piece of academic work! It is also something

which I believe is vitally important. There is so much about church that is broken that I fear to begin making a list, and yet there is so much possibility that I want to be a part of a solution. How do we see our future, and how are we preparing for it? We don't want to lurch from one trendy idea to another, but neither do we want to assume that all new ideas are useless and opt for the status quo. We need to find sources of wisdom that resonate, the awareness to apply them appropriately, and the courage to change.

Some more words, this time from my final reflections:

'I have been aware that during the writing of this paper there have been many contrasting moments of enthusiastic optimism and miserable despondency. Delving into the life of the earliest Christian communities has at times been truly inspiring; to see the growth and adaptation of their faith as they attempted to form their theology and live Jesus-inspired lives – the results of which began changing their world. On the other hand it was sobering to consider how short-lived this innocence was and how quickly a progressive and inclusive faith became tainted by power struggles and internal persecution. During the interviews there was excitement that our forbears might reveal hidden wisdom that would assist us in enlivening our churches and re-envisioning their purpose and place. Then again, the magnitude of the task also became clear, and there were grave doubts that many churches would be able to break centuries of habit and make the transition in to something new.'

I would be happy for anyone who is interested, or who struggles with insomnia, to read the thousands of words between these two quotes. I can't assure you of any profound insights, or at this moment whether it will even pass, but I will enjoy talking about the ideas with anyone who is willing! It is not my intention that this becomes an academic exercise that I can forget about as soon as the 'submit' button is pressed, but that the questions framed within it might continue to reverberate through my ministry. You've put up with my questions for almost three years now – perhaps we can move on to some bigger ones now!

Anyway, if you fancy pondering the same issues that my interviewees did, then here are the three models I mentioned. See what you think.

1. Church as ‘Worshipping Household’

An extended *household* held together by relationships and common life, where learning and experience are passed on from old to young, and practical and spiritual lives are indistinguishable. A group whose *worship* centres on dialogue and sharing (often at the meal table) with an expectation that all can contribute openly, where no institutional authority exists, and responsibility for oversight is distributed widely.

2. Church as ‘Creative Heretics’

A theologically aware and independent group with the freedom to express their faith *creatively*, particularly in the formation of contextual liturgy and the exploration of sacred texts (canonised or otherwise). A community where doctrine never crystallises, where teaching is judged by the life of the teacher, where the orthodoxy of collective wisdom and tradition are valued but never at the expense of the heresy of diverse expressions of faith.

3. Church as ‘Alternative Society’

An open community living out values which it hopes *society* itself will mirror, growing through networks of relationships not because of abstract belief, but because of its practical care and support. People who together are committed to embodying an *alternative* vision of the world, who are prepared to count the cost of dissenting against prevailing culture and living generously.

In relation to each description:

- To what extent do you feel that this is *possible* in church?
- To what extent do you feel that this is *desirable* in church?
- To what extent do you feel that this is *relevant to the future* of church?

Ian Geere

The Editor would be glad to hear readers answers to the above questions relating to the models described by Ian in his article. Please send your contributions to alan.redhouse@virgin.net before 23rd October which is the deadline for the next magazine.

~ Fallowfield and Withington Food Bank ~

Update

The Food Bank is becoming more established as the weeks go by. We are beginning to get known by our referrers and expect the number of people requiring food to increase considerably over the coming months. So far we have fed 176 people including 107 adults and 69 children.

We have had 4 tonnes of food donated, half of which came from a three day collection campaign at Tesco's Burnage. As part of this National Tesco's campaign we will also receive from the store vouchers to use to purchase more food. The Union Chapel collection point has provided about 380kg of food for which we are very grateful.

We are still looking for volunteers to help with the Food Bank. There are many jobs which need doing and not all of them have to be carried out during Food Bank opening hours. If there are any members of the congregation or other users of the Chapel who might be interested and would like to know more please contact Colin on 07739571991 for more information.

~ What does that mean? ~

Looking through some old editions of 'Christward' Gwyneth Heritage Roberts came across, in the February 1989 edition, an article which set out the real meaning of words and phrases which were used by

members of the congregation of Union Chapel at that time. Gwyneth and Steve were then editors of Christward so they have kindly suggested the real meanings of words which are currently in fashion at Union Chapel.

Definitions 2014

Post Christendom - method of communicating with members not on email

Iona Song - composition by those unfamiliar with the concept of scansion

Foyer Table - Horizontal waste paper basket

The Message - Lost in Translation

Intriguing - an idea Ian has come across this week

Introduction - something Ian has found on the internet

Church Website - where the duster hasn't reached

Multi-Voiced Church - it's your turn to do a reading

Baptist Assembly - Church furniture from IKEA

Is it on? - Traditional prelude to any comment at a Church Meeting

Pastoral - previous examination

Now for some of the definitions given to words and phrases in 1989. Readers will notice that some definitions seem very familiar e.g. Notice Board, Rota, Junior Church, Sign the List.

In order to make some of the definitions more intelligible to newer members of the congregation the following information might be helpful:

The main church buildings at that time were riddled with dry rot. Plaster was off the walls in the chapel, small hall and kitchen. Everywhere was full of dust and the Sunday service was held in the Large Hall.

What to do about the dry rot occupied much of the church's mind.

The Minister was Eric Bray and the Secretary was Alan Redhouse.

The morning began with coffee and what we now call the Second Session was held before the Service which started at 11.15am.

Read on.....

Definitions 1989

Temporary - Permanent

Coffee - Excuse to delay Early Session

Early Session - Getting-later Session

11.15am - 11.20am

Morning Service - Running-into-afternoon Service

Rota - Haphazard arrangement

Sign the list - ignore the list

Urgent - probably within the next 18 months

Notice Board - vertical waste paper basket

Deacons' vestry - Eric's vestry

Desperate - Alan Redhouse word meaning 'not very good'

Pretty desperate - Alan Redhouse word meaning 'less than ideal'

Church Life - Dry Rot

Chapel Steward - Rot Warden

Junior Church - excuse for large numbers of adults to leave the service

Church Magazine - semi-legible monthly publication for the propagation of the views of the editors (*Note: Some things have definitely changed. Ed.*)

Pulpit - What they do when recycling newspaper

Agenda - Something to be put off until the next meeting

If anyone would care to add to the 2014 list of definitions their contributions would be gratefully received by the Editor - alan.redhouse@virgin.net

~ Sometimes people just want to be heard. ~

I have been reading Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's latest novel 'Americanah'. It is a romantic love story involving two Nigerians Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze. After college in Nigeria when you think their relationship might blossom Ifemelu goes to pursue postgraduate studies in the USA and Obinze, eventually, to seek work in the UK. They lose touch and only meet again after a decade or so back in Nigeria where Obinze has become a successful married business man and Ifemelu has returned after becoming an American citizen.

However the novel is not a simple love story but it is also a clinical dissection of three societies, Nigeria, USA and the UK, focussing on

Race and in particular attitudes towards Black Racism. Adiche puts forwards Ifemelu's views on the subject by allowing her to write a well received blog whilst in America in which she attempts to instruct Non-American Blacks into the mind set of American people both Black and White. Furthermore she exposes the views of white, wealthy, well educated liberals in the USA in a series of dinner parties where they reveal their inability to understand what it means to be black in America and the UK. In Nigeria Adiche describes the wide gulf between the rich with their love of money and things white and western and those Nigerians who can only dream.

The book is passionate, important and deserves a wide audience especially in the UK and USA. This is perhaps best illustrated by quoting from one of Ifemelu's blogs entitled 'Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness'

'Don't say "Oh, racism is over, slavery was so long ago." We are talking about problems from the 1960s, not the 1860s. If you meet an elderly American black man from Alabama, he probably remembers when he had to step off the curb because a white person was walking past. I bought a dress from a vintage shop on eBay the other day, made in 1960, in perfect shape, and I wear it a lot. When the original owner wore it, black Americans could not vote because they were black (And maybe the original owner was one of those women, in the famous sepia photographs, standing in hordes outside schools shouting "Ape!" at young black children because they did not want them to go to school with their young white children. Where are those women now? Do they sleep well? Do they think about shouting "Ape"?) Finally, don't put on a Let's be Fair tone and say "But black people are racist too." Because of course we're all prejudiced (I can't even stand some of my blood relatives, grasping, selfish folks.), but racism is about the power of a group and in America it's white folks who have that power. How? Well white folks don't get treated like shit in upper class African American communities and white folks don't get denied bank loans or mortgages precisely because they are white and black juries don't give white criminals worse sentences than black criminals for

the same crime and black police officers don't stop white folk for driving while white and black companies don't choose not to hire somebody because their name sounds white and black teachers don't tell white kids that they're not smart enough to be doctors and black politicians don't try some tricks to reduce the voting power of white folks through gerrymandering and advertising agencies don't say they can't use white models to advertise glamorous products because they are not considered "aspirational" by the "mainstream".

So after this listing of don'ts, what's the do? I'm not sure. Try listening, maybe. Hear what is being said. And remember that it's not about you. American blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don't understand ask questions. If you're uncomfortable about asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It is easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place. Then listen some more. Sometimes people just want to feel heard. Here's to possibilities of friendship and connection and understanding.'

And before you say "Oh that's America and we're British." Think monkey chants at black football players in the Premier league. Think riots in UK cities over the shooting of a young black man. Think black people six times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white people. Think black children who are being systematically marked down by teachers who are unconsciously stereotyping them. Think the Ford advert where the faces of five members of ethnic minorities working in Dagenham appeared in a picture to show the racial mix of Ford's workforce and then were mysteriously replaced by white faces when the picture was used to advertise Ford in Poland.

'Try listening maybe. Hear what is being said. And remember that it's not about you.'

Alan Redhouse

~ News of the Family ~

Hilda Linton is in hospital at the MRI after suffering a stroke. Hilda is in Ward 31 (Stroke Unit) and visitors are welcome from 6pm to 8pm. Hilda is very much in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

Rose Bell has gone to Jamaica for three weeks. Rose is still having some problems with her knee after her recent operation. We send her our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Jonathan Roberts has received the results of his GCSE examinations and we are pleased to report they were excellent. Congratulations Jonathan.

~ Minutes of the Church Meeting of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist) held on Sunday 20th July 2014 at 11.20am.~

Present: Ian Geere (chair), Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, Steve Roberts, Margaret Redhouse, Harry Fleming, Rachel Scott, Colin Marchbank-Smith, Michael Welford, Sarah Geere, Hilda Linton, Julie Bryce, Andy Howes, Irene Roberts, Margaret Edmonds, Beryl Dykes, Ted Land, Eileen Land, David Garner

Apologies: Gwen Mattock, Margaret Garner, Rose Bell, Owen Jones, and Enid Welford and Alan Redhouse (with children)

The Minutes of the May 2013 AGM (in previous magazine) were belatedly approved.

The Minutes of the May 2014 Meeting (in current magazine) were approved.

Notification of AOB: None

Matters arising/updates/information:

- (a) **The date of the October Social Event** has been changed to Saturday October 11th. This is a singing and dancing evening and is intended as a participation event.
- (b) **Harvest** – no date has been set as yet. Ian G, Eileen Land Enid W will liaise on this.
- (c) **Summer Arrangements** –
 - (i) offers of help wanted from people willing to spend time with the children during the services in August – please speak to David G.
 - (ii) Ian will be working on his MA during August (submission deadline 31st), so he will not be taking services but will still be around and about.
 - (iii) The 2nd Sunday in August will be a Church Lunch on a bring-your-own basis.
- (d) **Linton House** – an agreement on terms for a feasibility study has been reached between the University and the Church's surveyor and this will now go ahead.

Tea and Coffee Money:

Enid and Michael W administer this. The money collected for tea & coffee is used to buy new supplies of drinks and to deal with other kitchen-related items such as repair of the water boiler. £600 worth of cups and plates have recently been purchased from the fund and the surplus is being run down. It was proposed that the suggested cost should increase to 30p per cup. Approved by the Meeting. Michael W to discuss with O&A also. The Meeting also decided not to put the contributions pot out on Sunday mornings after services as most regular attenders don't put money in and it is awkward for visitors.

Buildings Usage Team Update:

The Buildings Usage Team started meeting last Autumn. The members are Michael W, Eileen L, Ian G, Margaret R, Leonie E, Rachel S and Gwyneth HR. The Team has been looking at the whole picture of what goes on between the Church and the people who use our buildings. The overall aim is to make the process easier to follow and implement. The items covered already are:

- Notes taken of current booking process
- Creation of new Booking Terms (in line with BUGB suggestions)
- Creation of new Booking Forms for both regular and one-off groups
- Review of Users' Handbook (more will be required)
- Review of charging structure

Proposals include the adoption of more structured charging and payment arrangements for new users, and items remaining for discussion include how best, and when, to apply the new systems to the existing user groups.

There are no specific proposals to be brought to the Church Meeting at this point.

Network Connections – postponed to future meeting.

Fabric – Formation of Capital Projects Groups

A proposal was put to the Meeting to set up separate ad hoc Project Groups for discrete projects involving capital expenditure, similar to Margaret E and Beryl D taking responsibility for the replacement of the Small Hall Curtains. The Fabric Committee would continue to deal with all matters of routine maintenance and repair, take an overview of larger needs and strategic planning, and recommend priorities for capital projects. Michael W put forward stage by stage proposals as to how this would work. Gwyneth HR suggested some minor modifications. After some further comments by others it

was felt that the Meeting did not have sufficient time to give the proposals the consideration they deserve. The Meeting approved a proposal to proceed with the principle of capital projects being run by Project Groups in liaison with the Fabric Committee – and in the expectation of an overlap in membership. The “Terms of Reference” for the first Project Groups will be set when the projects are approved, using Michael’s proposals as a basis. It was noted that the members need time in advance to consider detailed proposals. Several people took the opportunity to thank the Fabric Committee for their work over the years.

Fabric – Path Repairs

We have estimates from 2 competent contractors to carry out the outstanding work. The Meeting decided to go with the lower quote up to an approximate figure of £2,500 (allowing for contingencies).

The Meeting closed with the Grace at 12.10pm

~ From the Christian Aid Web Site ~

Will you set a place for us this Harvest?

This Harvest, as families in the UK get together to break bread and give thanks for what they have, we’re focusing on a baker called Nyipock living in the village of Alok in South Sudan.

The UN Security Council has warned that the food crisis in South Sudan is now ‘the worst in the world’ and that the ‘catastrophic’ situation could soon tip over into famine. According to UN children’s agency UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP), nearly one million children aged under five face acute malnutrition. Unless swift action is taken, 50,000 children could die from malnutrition this year, the agencies warn.

Alok is in an area unaffected by the current food crisis in other parts of the country. Donations to our Harvest appeal will support poor communities all over the world and will not be restricted to South Sudan.

You can donate on the Christian Aid web site:

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/harvest/index.aspx>

or by sending your donation directly to Christian Aid, PO Box100, London, SE1 7RT. Mark your donation 'Harvest Appeal'.

Donations still urgently required for the Christian Aid Gaza Appeal

Gaza Crisis Appeal: unimaginable suffering

On 26 August (16.00 GMT), a long-term ceasefire was agreed to end hostilities between Israel and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

We welcome this cessation of hostilities.

The destruction and devastation witnessed in the past seven weeks has been unprecedented and will require unparalleled support to rebuild lives free from fear and violence. However, this ceasefire cannot be the end of the road. It must be the first step in creating a permanent situation where people can rebuild their lives in the knowledge that they will not be threatened again by conflict.

To ensure that this is the last ceasefire that will ever need to be negotiated, it must tackle the root causes of conflict and end the untenable situation that existed prior to recent hostilities.

We believe that for this to happen, the climate of impunity must come to an end, and every individual and collective action must be accounted for.

If Israelis and Palestinians are to be truly secure, and to end the poverty that degrades the lives of so many, the occupation must end and everyone must be treated equally.

There is still much work to be done. Thousands of Palestinian homes have been destroyed. It is already estimated that over 108,000 Palestinians are now homeless with limited access to water.

An estimated 373,000 children are showing symptoms of increasing distress and will require specialised psychosocial support.

These are pressing needs and though the sounds of violence might have stopped, the nightmares haven't gone away. Restrictions on access must be immediately lifted to support people in Gaza to address the desperate need resulting from this most recent violence.

Our partners are working tirelessly to provide urgently needed medical aid, clean water and food. Our work is not over. Please give today.

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/current/gaza-emergency-appeal/index.aspx>

~ For Your Diary ~

Dancing & Singing for Everyone

Our Autumn Social Event will take place on

Saturday 11th October at Union Chapel

Time: 7.00pm to 9.30pm

Donations to Fallowfield & Withington Food Bank

~ 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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