

# Christward

The magazine of



September 6<sup>th</sup>–October 25<sup>th</sup>  
2015

## **~ From the Minister's Desk ~**

Being on holiday allows a little indulgence and often a lot of time to read. It is a combination of these factors which enabled me to pick up a recent book by Diana Butler Bass entitled 'Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening'. The indulgence applies to my fascination with the implosion of Church. Not, as you might expect for a minister, in order to avoid the inevitable, but rather to celebrate the end of a lot of useless stuff and the beginnings of something better. This particular book is a little US-centric (where the reality of the End of Church is rather more current) but there is nevertheless much of interest to those of us this side of the Atlantic (where that reality has long since dawned). There are many helpful cultural observations described by Bass; but the two which struck me as I read were grandly entitled 'The Great Awakening' and 'The Great Reversal'. (The knack of naming things seems to be what sells books, and it seems that I am a sucker for it).

The Great Awakening is all about recognising where we might be. It encapsulates a trend of the last few decades which has seen increasing numbers of people admit to mystical encounters; spiritual experiences with the divine (or God, depending on your vocabulary and background). At first this led to a resurgence of people exploring church, either again or for the first time, but ended up leading people to an incredible range of traditions and expressions. Recent statistics note that 51% of British people classify themselves as 'spiritual but not religious', and it is expected that this will continue rising towards 70% which is the norm in many developed nations. Of course there are issues regarding definitions of terms and the degree to which these might be 'easy' or 'shallow' self-designations, but increasingly this is being recognised as a deeply thought out choice made by people who are searching for something different. Not only is it a marker of spiritual searching, but also spiritual discontent. People are not happy with the established ways; the existing institutions are not a good fit for them

and those with public voices are not speaking on their behalf (incidentally, I see something of this in the Jeremy Corben phenomenon).

The first step in Awakening is seeing the world as it is, not as it was. For Bass, this involves seeing that 'conventional, comforting Christianity has failed. It does not work. For the churches that insist on preaching it, the jig is up'. I would add to 'preaching' other words like 'singing' and 'praying' and 'thinking' and 'practising'. I know I'm a pain to keep banging on about this, but if we find something to be comforting or nostalgic, it now almost certainly sounds like utter nonsense to everyone else! Fortunately the Awakening process can quickly lead on to a new awareness of God's energy in the world, new ways of being, new possibilities of human flourishing. This exploration often happens in smaller groups of like-minded people who experiment and question, develop new practices to give life meaning and make the world different. None of this is new, and probably not at all startling to us in Union Chapel, but it is always worth being challenged and excited by it.

Perhaps of more use to us is Bass's main argument that we will be much better equipped to embrace The Great Awakening if we appreciate The Great Reversal. For the last few centuries Western Christianity has worked in a very particular way; belief came first, behaviour came next, and finally belonging resulted. Parents confirmed their child's faith and committed to a certain upbringing, children were schooled in the Bible and doctrine of the church, young adults joined the practices and rituals of the main congregation, and finally as adults they entered the covenant of full membership in to the community. Religious commitment began when one assented to a body of organised doctrines, and this has been the primary consideration of anyone looking for a church.

Unfortunately, this is not really how life works. If you are interested in something you tend to find a group of like-minded people who are also exploring and who could teach and encourage you. You spend time with them, talk with them, learn from them, and begin to form relationships. After you have participated for a while, you begin to

form your own ideas about this subject of mutual interest, you contribute your thoughts and begin to shape the group and allow the group to shape you, together you decide how best to meet and spend your time. Finally, you reflect on how being part of this group enriches your life, how sharing this activity makes the world better for the participants and maybe beyond, you might even invent new theories and practices, begin to write notes and in turn teach others. In other words: Belonging comes first, behaviour then forms, and finally belief results.

If it helps to ground this in our biblical tradition, there would seem to be much supporting material. Jesus did not begin his ministry with questions of belief; he began by forming a community. 'Follow me' he said, and friends and neighbours left their old lives and joined together with him. Thus began a journey of faith revolving around relationships and questions and service and love. Jesus began with the inner life and the transformation of the heart. Love God and love your neighbour. Ask forgiveness just as you forgive others. Early Christian writers knew this, the intellectually inclined Paul declared that even if you know all things, without love you are nothing.

Then comes the action, or behaviour. Jesus was not one for forming a theological huddle where he sat with his followers as they perfected liturgy and doctrine! His stories were brief, often focussed on how to act towards one another and what to do in the world. Healing, hospitality, prayer, challenging traditions, ministering to the sick and grieving – these are the things that began to reveal a vision of God and a world transformed. By *doing* things together, his followers began to *see* differently. By following they developed faith in Jesus, and their faith changed them.

Finally, belief began. Peter's 'confession' comes in the light of shared life and the witness of astonishing events, much more an outburst of the heart than a consideration of the head. Those outside Jesus' community who tried to work out who or what he was were constantly confounded and ridiculed for their ignorance – without the shared life and experience, the theology was nonsense.

Belong. Behave. Believe.

There is so much more to explore, but as always it is worth reflecting on whether there are any implications for us at Union Chapel. I think we do belonging quite well, and that this is the natural starting point for our community, but I might be wrong. The second two are slightly trickier – are we clear enough about how belonging will impact what we do, and how does what we do point towards what we believe? And what about the transition between each stage; is it natural and clear or disjointed and confusing? I am excited about the way in which more and more people are exploring their spirituality, and am certain that we have much to offer. In these times as we continue to think about who we are as a church and what is important to us, it may be useful for us to consider whether our rituals, processes and energy all reflect this reversed path. My considerations might have to wait until after my holiday, I'm off to get a drink and begin a novel.

*Ian Geere*

## **~ The Enneagram ~**

The idea of the Enneagram - apparently a combination of mysticism and psychology - has intrigued me ever since I first heard about it. Recently I had the opportunity to do a three day workshop about it, and what follows is a very shortened and simplified account of those days.

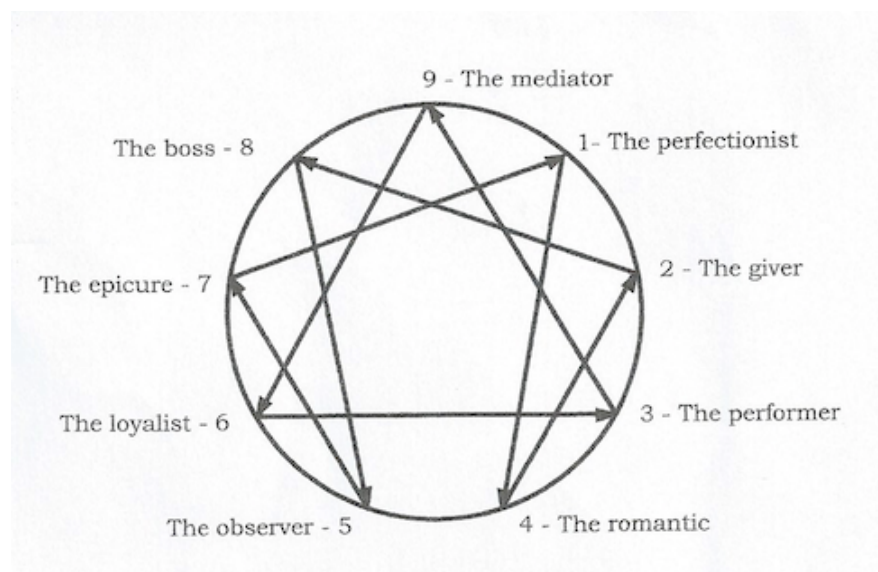
Essentially at its most basic level the Enneagram offers a framework for the understanding of oneself, of one's behaviour and personality. At a more advanced level, however, it becomes more complicated. It can apparently be used for spiritual transformation for the individual. It can also be used to help us understand other people and to enable groups to function better together. The Enneagram is taught in several universities as part of course in

psychology, psychiatry and medicine.

Historically its roots are in the study of key character traits that are found in many traditions and cultures, such as the Buddhist wheel of life or the Christian seven deadly sins. It is related to the nine universal energies suggested by Pythagoras, and indeed to the desert fathers who took to the desert in the third century AD to “discover themselves.” Its origins are also found in sufism which is the mystical tradition of Islam. Various more modern authors have developed the concept and it was written down for the first time in 1984. Since then it has spread quickly throughout the world.

So what is the Enneagram? It is a system of personality study based on nine types of human behaviour. The main idea of the Enneagram is based on the principle that we all have a central character trait which has developed from a type of defence mechanism, which started in childhood. This can be limiting to our view of the world and to our everyday life. The Enneagram can help us to recognise this and to modify it, if we choose to do so. It gives us the possibility to heal ourselves through knowing ourselves better.

The Enneagram comes with a diagram of a circle enclosing a nine pointed star.



**The Enneagram**

The points of contact between the points of the star and the circle represent the nine types of personality. So one is a perfectionist, two the giver, three the performer, four the romantic, five the observer, six the loyalist, seven the epicure, eight the boss, and nine the mediator. Everyone has a dominant type in this diagram. These are defined so that generally people recognise the group to which they belong. The nine points also represent the contradictory forces that we have inside us. The aim of working with the system is to try and recognise and rebalance these forces. The arrows in the diagram represent the interactions between these forces

There can be some overlap and some change of behaviour when people are under great stress.. This might be expected, but it is odd that the behaviour change is linked to another point on the enneagram. For example the giver might, under stress change to the behaviour of the boss.

This understanding of ourselves can also lead to a greater understanding of other people, making it possible to see people as they really are from their own point of view. There are no good or bad types - just people who can benefit from the use of the enneagram to understand their own type.

If anyone should be interested in finding out more about the Enneagram, the book entitled 'The ABC of the Enneagram ', by Eric Salmon is helpful. There are, I understand groups based on the Enneagram throughout the UK.

*Margaret Edmonds*

## **~My visit to Union Chapel~**

I was visiting my son, Owen, the first weekend in June, and he asked me if I would like to accompany him to church on Sunday. I readily agreed as I had heard such a lot about the church and the people he met there, and how much he enjoyed attending.

As an Anglican I am accustomed to a certain way of worship, even though within the Church of England there is a huge variety of churchmanship (you probably know, they are always falling out), and I had only once visited a Baptist church, so I was eager for a new experience.

I must say I liked the church from the minute I walked in, I understand that the inside of the church has been fairly recently re-ordered, and I found it light, attractive and welcoming. Everyone we spoke to was friendly and ready to chat.

Owen warned me that I may not know the hymns, and he was right, I did not know the words to any of them, but apart from one, knew the tunes, so that was no problem. I very much enjoyed the service, in particular the communion. I found the manner of each person offering the bread to their neighbour, and then for us all to consume it together gave a true meaning to the word “communion”, for that is how we were.

The sermon was fascinating and challenging, and I knew heard two new words – “chreiai” and intercalcations. I showed the liturgy for communion to the Rector at my church, I don’t think he knew what they meant either! It was a bit of a struggle to try and explain to him, as it was a new concept for me. I loved the intercessions with the singing between each prayer, it meant they involved everyone and held them together. You are very blessed with talented musicians who enhanced all of the singing.

I would like to thank Ian, and everyone I met for their openness and their warm welcome, I look forward to my next visit.

*Liz Roberts LPE (Mum of Owen); 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2015*

## **~ St Chad’s Community Orchard ~**

At the beginning of the summer, in June, I really enjoyed the first ever Levenshulme and Longsight Gardens Open Day. Many of my



neighbours' gardens and the local allotments, Acorn Close, were open to the public. In some cases refreshments were available as well. Needless to say, we didn't manage to get round them all! One final piece of homemade cake and cup of tea finished off our afternoon very pleasantly.

One garden on the leaflet which I missed, sadly, was at St Chad's. Whilst driving past sometime earlier, I had noticed their newly created Community Orchard. They have opened a space around the corner by the traffic lights at the junction of Mauldeth Road and Parrswood Road, and planted apple trees. There's seating for people walking by....rather a nice place to stop for a break. This is the third ecological venture for the St Chad's Green Group as apparently they have a "little green roof" on their Community Hall and, in late 2011, they began to organise making a wildlife garden, which is now well established. There's a good description of it from inception to today, on their website. How fantastic!

We are hoping someone from St Chad's will come to talk at one of our Second Sessions in December, and tell us how they went about realising their gardening dreams! In the meantime, anyone who would like a preview of their gardens could go to their Heritage Weekend on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September, from 12noon till 4pm on the Saturday and 2pm till 4pm on the Sunday. The church will be open too, with stalls and refreshments. Their website describes it thus..."Church built in early 20th century with notable Arts and Crafts features, mostly unaltered, and Grade II listed organ. Commemorative exhibition around the 102 names on the local War Memorial in the church. Established wildlife garden and newly created community orchard in church grounds."

I wonder if we could use any of their ideas at Union Chapel? One never knows.

*Carole Walker*

*At this year's Church Weekend we reflected upon the Psalms and during the Saturday Evening Social we were privileged to hear a reading of a new psalm written by Jonathan Roberts. All it needs now is someone to set it to music and it could become as popular as Psalm 23.*

## **~ Psalm 21437 & 5/8 ~**

I am a sheep in the Desert.  
The Lord guides me to green oases  
To contemplate by  
When I am thirsty.

Each night I will jump gates for the Lord  
For his counting.

Your grass is greener Lord!  
I will stick my head through your fence  
And when I get stuck  
It is to you that I bleat, Lord!  
And when my days are done  
I will lie by the mint sauce  
In thy great roasting dish.



## ~ Fallowfield & Withington Food Bank ~

Over the Summer the Food Bank has seen a sharp increase in the numbers attending week by week.

As a result of the increasing numbers we would particularly welcome donations of any of the following items:

Rice pudding, tinned custard, UHT or powdered milk, instant mash, sugar, tinned fruit, rice, UHT fruit juice, Coffee, tinned vegetables.

Alternatively monetary donations may be forwarded via the Union Chapel Church office, Foodbank volunteers will then purchase items which are required.

We are pleased that collection points are now located at Sainsburys Withington, Royal Bank of Scotland Branches in Withington Village and Palatine Rd. Volunteers who might help with delivering food between our distribution centres are now being sort.

Lizzy Clark who has been a regular volunteer on a Tuesday has now obtained an internship at Fairshare London. We will miss her but wish her well for the future.

We have an opportunity to collect food at Tesco Express Oxford House M1 7ED on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20th September. This is a unique opportunity and we are grateful to Dinesh the Manager who also volunteers with the Foodbank.

Please contact Colin on 07739571991 for further information.

*Colin Marchbank Smith*

## ~ News of the Family ~

We are keeping **Hilda Linton** in our prayers. She has been ill for a considerable time but has indomitable spirit as she recently showed.

The wedding of Rachel Garner and Matt Eeckelaers took place on Saturday 8th August at Union Chapel. It was a joyous occasion with just the right mix of solemnity, emotion, hilarity and of course food and drink. We wish Rachel and Matt a long and happy future together.



Our congratulations to psalmist **Jonathan Roberts** on his success in his AS levels.

## **~ Goodbye August ~**

August is over and everything starts up again. All those meetings, classes and groups that you have missed so much during the past few weeks are now once again going to take up your time. As the days shorten you will be able to remember all those things you committed yourself to doing or attending whilst you were caught off guard over the summer. The discussions and services you said you would lead. The rotas you allowed your name to be put on. The

small maintenance jobs at Union Chapel which you said you would be happy to take on. The Deacons' Meetings, the special purpose groups, the catering, the Junior Church, even that article for Christward that you foolishly agreed to write just a few weeks ago, all these things are now gloriously awaiting your attention. It is time to deliver brothers and sisters.

So here are just a few things which are opening up again. (In no order of priority)

**Open Tuesday** starts again on Tuesday 1st September. The sessions to Christmas include discussions on, Freedom of Information, Housing in Manchester, & Being a Muslim in Britain. Also we have Amnesty International and Reuse Recycles workshops, a Bonfire Party, Quiz Night and, of course, our regular Film Nights, six of them.

**The Meditative Prayer Group** starts on Wednesday 9th of September and the Book Group on Thursday 1st October.

The first **Church Lunch** of the the new term is on Sunday 13th September.

Most **O&A classes** re-open during the week beginning 14th September. New classes include Yoga (Mondays 12.10pm, Keep Fit for the 50+ (Thursday 4.00pm), Making Maths Easy (Thursday 12.15pm) and Italian - Drama & Language (Thursday 4.00pm)

Your **rota commitments** are in the Church Information leaflet but we desperately need more people to act as Door Stewards, serve Tea/Coffee and be with the children during the Second Session. If you can help with any of these please contact Alan Redhouse.

If after attending and volunteering for the above you still hunger and thirst for more the Fabric Committee would like to hear from you. Also you should seriously consider therapy.

*Alan Redhouse*

**~ Minutes of the Church Meeting  
of Union Chapel Fallowfield (Baptist)  
held on Sunday 19th July 2015  
at 11.20am.~**

**Present:** Ian Geere (chair), Gwyneth Heritage Roberts, David Garner, Margaret Garner, Andy Howes, Harry Fleming, Rachel Scott, Margaret Edmonds, Eileen Land, Geoff Walker, Carole Walker, Owen Jones, Gwen Mattock, Michael Welford, Leonie Earnshaw, Julie Bryce, Beryl Dykes, Steve Roberts, Margaret Redhouse, Carmen Bowman, Lorna Richardson, Colin Marchbank-Smith, Brenda Marston, Alan Redhouse.

**Apologies:** Hilda Linton, Rose Bell, Irene Roberts, Rachel Adebago, Enid Welford; and Sarah Geere and Nicola Hamilton (with children)

**The Minutes of the April and May 2015** meetings (in current magazine) were approved.

**Matters Arising and Notification of AOB for this meeting:** None.

**1. Notices:**

(a) For the last 2 years we have had a singing and dancing evening in October. The Deacons have decided that it would be best not to try to repeat the event again this year, but we are invited to a Cheese and Wine Evening at Newall Green in late September

which it is hoped that a number of us will attend. Further details to follow.

(b) There will be a Spring Cleaning Day at the church next Sunday afternoon. Bring your own sandwiches.

(c) The Church Weekend 2016 will be at Scargill House. Thornleigh in Grange over Sands is available for 2 weekends in June 2017, either 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>. There was a general preference for the later one. David G to proceed with booking.

## **2. Insurance Inspection**

A representative of our insurers the Baptist Insurance Company has been to visit the church and inspect the buildings. It is 15 years since the last inspection. Generally he was fairly happy with the way we do things but there is a lot of paperwork to pull together in a short space of time as we need a number of written policies which we don't currently have. Lorna R offered to take an online course leading to a Food Hygiene Certificate. Gwyneth HR will circulate a list of the policies that will be needed. If anyone has useful drafts it would be helpful if they could pass them on.

## **3. Fabric Committee**

(a) *Remit*: this has been discussed both at Deacons and at the Fabric Committee. Repairs and maintenance items costing small amounts are the primary remit of the Fabric Committee and they will continue to deal with these. If something significant arises, either because of cost or because it is a new or unusual problem, the Fabric Committee will consult the Deacons. They will also continue to call on wider opinion for specific projects. The Fabric Committee are in constant email contact but are now intending to have regular monthly meetings on the Monday following each Church Lunch.

(b) *The Social Room* chairs are in a bad state, especially the ones with arms. To replace these 14-16 chairs will cost approx £800. We need to get chairs which are properly designed for use for up to



2 hours at a time. It would be good to involve one of the regular users of that room. The meeting voted in favour of progressing the purchase of the new chairs. There were no immediate volunteers to get involved in the project.

*(c) Surplus piano:* we have 3 pianos at present, and no piano class. Can or should we dispose of one of them? The piano in the Chapel is the best of the three, but they all get misused to some extent. Decision delegated to Eileen L and Margaret R.

#### **4. Linton House**

A comprehensive discussion on Linton House, which included a break for lunch, took place. The minute detailing this discussion is available to Church Members on application to the Secretary.

The Meeting closed with a period of silent reflection at 2pm

**Date of Next Meeting: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

## **~ Church Week End at Rydal Hall 2015 ~**





## **~ 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](mailto: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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