

**Stalybridge Unitarian Church is a
Free Christian Congregation.**

**A member of The East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free
Christian Churches.**

**A member of The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free
Christian Churches.**

**A member of The North Cheshire Unitarian Sunday School
Union**

A corporate member of The Unitarian Christian Association

THE CHALICE

**STALYBRIDGE UNITARIAN CHURCH
MAGAZINE**

APRIL 2008

**THIS ISSUE OF CHALICE
IS SPONSORED BY
Mr & Mrs Forshaw with greetings from
Rawtenstall Unitarian Church**



MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

I am writing this letter on a very quiet Easter Monday morning. There is very little traffic on the road outside and I haven't yet seen anyone walking past. Even the stray cat that usually comes for his breakfast seems to be having a lazy start to the day. My own cat has just come to see me and has helped me type the first couple of sentences but has now curled up on the desk beside the keyboard and gone to sleep. The only sounds are of the birds nesting in the bushes outside my window. Everything feels calm and peaceful and this has provided me with some quiet time to think back over the last eight days and our series of Holy Week and Easter services.

It was good to be able to welcome so many of you to my other chapel, Dob Lane, Failsworth for our Palm Sunday service and for us to be able to worship on that special day as one congregation. That afternoon we had our Stalybridge churches Palm Sunday service at St Paul's and all Christian denominations and groups in the town worshipped together as the one Church of Christ. On Maundy Thursday I joined the congregation of Bury Unitarian Church for their Communion service and it was good to meet friends old and new and to share in this special form of worship to remember the day when Jesus and his disciples shared what was to be their last meal together. On Good Friday we held a service of Tenebrae at Dob Lane in which the chapel is symbolically darkened as a series of readings lead us to the moment of the crucifixion of Jesus. It is a service of prayerful meditation which is peaceful and very beautiful yet also thought provoking and challenging.

On Easter Eve we held the Unitarian Christian Association Easter Vigil here at Stalybridge. Once again it was a very special occasion and it was good to be able to welcome friends from many congregations throughout the north west. Also this year we had a visiting choir

with us. *Roundelay* are based at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester and they contributed a number of anthems to the service which enhanced the worship for all those present. My thanks to the members of our church who came along on the evening and made all our visitors feel so welcome. On Easter Sunday we had the joy of a baptism in our morning service and it was good to have a full church on this very special day. A special word of thanks must be given to our organist, Norman whose music always inspires us in our worship and who has accompanied all the services at both Dob Lane and Stalybridge this Holy Week and Easter.

The last few days have been busy as the usual activities of any week were added to with the preparations for our special services. Yet that same few days have also brought times of quiet reflection and peace. I am sure that many of you will have experienced the same feelings which can be quite a contrast a times! We are all familiar with such contrasts, life is made up of busy times and quiet times, and they are of equal value to us. Without the quiet times we would not have the energy to face the busy times and without the busy times we would not be able to really appreciate the times of quiet reflection.

Please take a few quiet moments now to think about and to pray for our friends who are unwell at this time. A number of our members have suffered from the flu bug or one of the other viruses that have been doing the rounds. Three of our members have had quite nasty falls this year but I am glad to say that they are now either fully recovered or on the road to recovery and we must always keep in our thoughts those who can no longer join us for worship for whatever reason. Let us hold them all in our thoughts as we send them our love and best wishes at this Eastertide. Wishing you every blessing.

Andrew.

WARDENS NOTES

Have you noticed how many people there are who are in a position where they think they can tell us what to do? Just try going to an airport and you find yourselves surrounded by people in so many different types of uniforms that you could be forgiven for thinking you are in the middle of a coup d'etat in some obscure African country. Having fought your way to the check in desk you are then asked "Did you pack this bag yourself? I desperately want to say "No, I'm a rubbish packer so my wife did it for me", but like the terrorists I answer "yes". Next question "Did anybody give you anything to carry?" the real answer is "Yes my mum gave me something for the grandchildren". But just like the terrorists I answer "no". Then it's security where you are told you can't take a bottle of water or pop with you (even though you can buy as much as you like when you have passed security). Of course you are not allowed to take photographs in the security area; this is because you might accidentally take a photo of an idiot in peaked cap rifling through your underwear. Of course you have to take off your coat, your shoes and, for some strange reason, your belt. Next time I go to the airport I'm going to wear oversized trousers just so they'll fall down at a critical moment. Add to this the four or more people who check your passport and boarding card at various stages and you can see what I mean.

Our towns are no better, Traffic Wardens, Community Police Officers, CCTV cameras, parking cameras, speed cameras, dustbin spies (the list is endless). Wherever you go you are watched.

Even at home some people try to tell us what to do, last week during the bad storms a BBC weatherman suggested we should not go out as it was windy. Have you ever heard anything so stupid? Of course it's windy, it's March you clown!

Of course all these "Little Hitlers" are not allowed to be flexible and woe betide anyone who tries to have a bit of fun with them. When asked to remove your belt you must not say "I will if you will", this only results in arrest and torture.

People by now will be saying I am belittling security precautions and rules and regulations but that's not the case. All I ask is that people are allowed to retain the possibility of thinking for themselves instead of simply following the rules made by some faceless bureaucrat in an office somewhere, without question.

But that is the whole point, Local Councils and Central Government don't want us to think for ourselves, they want us to believe that they know everything and we know nothing. They want us to think that they are making all these rules for our benefit. They want us to forget that all these "jobsworths" are being paid with our money, and that all these stupid irrelevant rules cost money to enforce.

So I've decided to start a rebellion. It's time the sensible majority of people living in this country stood up against these twerps. If we all refused to take off our belt at the airport what could they do? If we all carried a bottle of water through security what could they do? We must bring common sense back into society before it is too late and we all start behaving like robots.

That is why we are lucky to be Unitarian Free Christians. We are allowed to think for ourselves and make decisions based on rational judgement. The General Assembly can not tell us what to do, (in fact it's the other way round but some of them have not realised it yet). Nobody can force us to do anything against our will. This is why Unitarian Free Christianity is more important than ever. We have the wonderful message of Jesus to work with but we do not have to accept everything at face value. We have brains and we can, with help from the Minister and others, come to our own conclusions.

Time to belt up!!

Ken Howard

FUND RAISING AND SOCIAL GROUP



By the time you read this, we will have had our Fashion Night at church which we hope was enjoyed by all. For those of you who were unable to attend, I shall tell you more about it next month.

The Good Friday walk took place with 14 people and 1 dog joining Bill for his well planned walk in Derbyshire. Thanks to Bill for organising it and we look forward to receiving your sponsorship in due course. The weather was kind even though it was a bit blustery, but it was by far the best day of the Easter weekend weather wise and a good time was had by all.

Our Whist Drive this month will be held on Friday 11th April starting as usual at 7.30 pm at church. We apologise for not being able to hold it on the first Friday as we normally do, but we have another commitment on that day so have had to change the whist, we will be back to normal next month when it will be held on 2nd May. Please come along and join us when for £2 you get to play whist, enjoy delicious refreshments and have the chance of winning not only a whist prize but also a raffle prize! You don't have to be experts to play – everyone is welcome.

Sadly, we had to cancel our planned organ recital on Wednesday 12th March as we quite simply did not have enough people able to attend. We plan to hold it later in the year but will have it on a Friday instead when we hope to have more people interested and able to come along. Look out for the new date in a month or so.

Our big event this month will be the Italian Night to be held on Friday 25th April starting at 7.30 pm. This is ahead of Andrew's trip to Rome, but everyone is invited, even if you're not going to Rome. Please enter your name on the list on the notice board to give us chance to get numbers for catering purposes. The cost will be £7 per head and the food will basically be Italian, so please come and join us and help our intrepid travellers get into the Italian spirit!

Margaret Hallsworth is circulating a diary in which you have to put your name on your chosen date for £1. Once the diary is full, a date will be drawn out of a hat and the lucky winner will receive £100. Please contact Margaret if you would like to take part.

In case you didn't all have enough chocolate over Easter, I will keep topical and shall be selling a 'chocolate' quiz over the next month for £1. The person with the most correct answers will win a cash prize, or in the event of more than one person getting them all correct, a draw will take place to decide the winner.

Finally, a quick reminder to let you know the Summer Fayre will be held on 21st June starting at 2 pm. Please keep the date free in your diaries and come along and support us on what we hope will be a nice summer day!

Our next meeting will be held on Monday 28th April at 7.15 pm at church which is just prior to the main committee meeting. Please come and join us if you feel you could help in any way.

Sue Howard

LADIES CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY (WOMEN'S LEAGUE)

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday April 2nd at 3 pm
The Rev Andrew Parker has kindly offered to provide tea for the Ladies at this event.

UNITARIAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUP

Leaders for April:

6 th April:	Ruth Mills
13 th April:	Sue Howard
20 th April:	Clare Bullock
27 th April:	Ruth Mills

All young people, whether they attend regularly or are just visiting, are more than welcome to join us at our UYPG meetings which take place during morning service (after the 2nd hymn) every Sunday. If you have any queries, please contact Clare Bullock on 0161 303 8872. Our next few months will be taken up with preparing entries for the Arts & Crafts Exhibition, so we will all be kept busy.

STEWARDS FOR MARCH

6 th April:	Tom Whitehead
13 th April:	Wendy Maher
20 th April:	Ken Howard
27 th April:	Bill Atkin



FLOWERS FOR APRIL

6th	April:	Mrs Kathleen Turner & Mrs Shirley Howarth in memory of Mr & Mrs George Roberts.
13th	April:	Mr & Mrs Alan Swift in memory of Mr Edward Robinson & Mr Frank Swift.
20th	April:	Mrs Liz Griffin in memory of Mr Frank Rhodes & Mr Michael Rhodes
27th	April:	Mrs Kathleen Bradbury in memory of Alice, Eric & Tom Bradbury.

WHIT SUNDAY STALYBRIDGE PROCESSION OF WITNESS

Meet at church at 1.30 on Sunday 11th May 2008 for this important day in the life of our church. This year we will be second in the procession and next year we will be leading. There will be no morning service on this day



£1 A MONTH CLUB

Thank you the everyone who joined in the year. We achieved the sum of £374.50 in the benefit of church funds.

We start the next 12 months in April, so anyone wishing to renew their membership or indeed join for the first time, please contact me on 0161 344 0942, 45 Church St, Dukinfield SK16 4PR. All cheques must be payable to Stalybridge Unitarian Church.

Once again, thank you for all your support.

Beryl Bradbury

DIAMOND WEDDING

Congratulations to Eric and Norah Caton who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 20th March.

BAPTISM

On Sunday 23rd March, Aimee Amelia Horrocks. The Service of Baptism was conducted by the Minister during our Easter Sunday morning service. We welcome Aimee into the church and wish her a long and happy life.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Our entries will be received at church from 7 to 8pm on Thursday 3rd April.

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition will take place at Flowery Field on Saturday 10th May 2008.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Fri 2nd May:	7.30 pm	Whist Drive
Fri 9th May:	2:30 pm	ECU Songs of Praise, Hyde Chapel
Sat 10th May:	2.30 pm	Arts and Crafts Exhibition (Flowery Field)
Sun 11th May:	2:30 pm	Whit Sunday
Sun 18th May:	12.30 pm	AGM
Fri 25 th May:	7.30 pm	Whist Drive
Sat 21st Jun:	2 pm	Summer Fayre
Sun 6th Jul:	11am	Anniversary Sunday
Sun 5th Oct:	11am	Harvest
Sun 19th Oct:	11am	Ladies Sunday
Sun 9th Nov:	11am	Remembrance Sunday
Sat 8th Nov:	TBC	Bazaar

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

*Don't look for the faults as you go through life
But if perhaps you find them
'Tis wiser and kinder to turn a blind eye
And look for the virtues behind them*

APRIL

Thur 3rd	7-8 pm	Entries received for Arts & Crafts at
Sun 6th	11am	Morning Service and UYPG
Fri 11th	7.30 pm	Whist Drive
Sun 13th	11am	Morning Service and UYPG
Sun 20th	11am	Morning Service and UYPG
Fri 25th	7.30 pm	Italian Night
Sun 27th	11am	Morning Service and UYPG
Mon 28th	7.15 pm 8 pm	Fundraising & Social events meeting Committee Meeting