

THE WAKEFIELD UNITARIAN

The Newsletter of Westgate Chapel, Wakefield
www.ukunitarians.org.uk/wakefield/



February 2016

Services at Westgate

Worship Leaders and Services Times - January 2016

Please note that **all Sunday services are held at 3pm** including on the first Sunday of the month.

Sun 7th February (Youth Sunday) - Stephen Carlile.

Sun 14th February - The Reverend Bill Darlison

Sun 21st February - Gillian Scott

Sun 28th February - Sheena McKinnon

Our thanks as always to our welcomers. It's so important to have someone there to greet members, friends and visitors, and the contribution is not unnoticed.

Presidential Visit

We were pleased to receive a visit from the President of the GA, the Rev John Clifford, who came to us fresh from a visit to the Leeds Unitarians, and en-route to a meeting in London. He shared a meal with me, Chris and Josh in Subway of all places! Alas, Wakefield isn't that easy to find a quick meal on a Sunday dinner time. Still, John seemed unphased and enjoyed his visit, including a look round the catacombs. It was a pity numbers were so sparse, but the snow had fallen the night before. I had even packed a spare service in case the trains weren't running! I hope all who came enjoyed his visit.



We are looking at 'refreshing' our book collection at the back of church. Gillian has been looking at a number of possible purchases. Any further reviews would be welcome.

Book Reviews- Gillian Scott

'Unitarian - What's That?

More a pamphlet than a book. Very much a "nutshell" Question and Answer book. Its the "dip in" type of book with one page per question and answer. Its useful when needing a quick reference and does have a place when needing a thumbnail outline. Very similar in content and usefulness to J & R Goring "The Unitarians" which I found more useful and quite a bit more informative.

The Larger View - Unitarians and World Religions'

A real have to read great background reading for Unitarian students of theology. Unitarians have been described as being "Quaker's with hymns", this book shows Unitarians are way out at the liberal end of the Christian spectrum. So far out in fact that there is a debate as to whether Unitarianism remains a Christian denomination or not. You need to be seriously interested in comparative theology to be into this, but my view is that as Unitarians we are 'post-Christian'. Having said that this book provides a good perspective of where Unitarianism, sees itself today, and how it got there, through the eyes of its ministers,

The Unitarian Life'

I've been reading this book, and I think it's marvellous. I agreed with about 99% of it, and found it very inspiring. A wonderful idea. The book is divided up into sections for ease of reference. Part 1 is Unitarian principles and values, and subsequent parts are about the issues and practicalities of Unitarian life, including "How to live Unitarianly".

The Unitarian Life is a thematic anthology of short texts by a wide range of Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists ,writers past and present,men and women. There is also a good balance of the different perspectives within Unitarianism, as Christian, Earth-Spirit / Pagan, Humanist and Universalist (in the modern sense) perspectives are included. What all these perspectives have in common is the commitment to reason, freedom and tolerance. The book could be read from cover to cover, or dipped into when needed as a source of texts for church services.

'Till The Peoples All Are One : Darwin's Unitarian Connections' Revd Cliff Reed

Unitarians have often made claims about individuals with whom they associated somehow

believing this will bring us modern day credibility. This is another were they or were they not puzzle. Darwin's family tradition was [nonconformist Unitarianism](#), while his father and grandfather were freethinkers. His Mother Wedgewood was a unitarian His fiancée Emma Wedgewood was a Unitarian and Darwin shared his ideas with her in honest letters. She accepted them which showed how she valued his openness in sharing their differences, also expressing her strong [Unitarian](#) beliefs and concerns that his honest doubts might separate them in the afterlife although On 29 January, they were married at Maer in an Anglican ceremony arranged to suit the Unitarians Described as one of the most influential figures in human history; Darwin was honoured by burial in Westminster Abbey.

As an historical book I found it a thought provoking and enjoyable to read. Ironically, Unitarians have been reluctant to lay claim to Darwin. Revd. Reed certainly makes the point that in fact Unitarians should be reluctant to deny him. Their influence on Darwin, at various points in his life, is clear. The section on Francis Ellingwood Abbot and the Free Religious Association is revealing of both the evolution of Darwin's thinking and also that of Unitarianism.

Charles Darwin described himself as an agnostic, but how far was he really a Unitarian? That is the question that the Reverend Cliff Reed explores in this work. It traces the evolution of Charles Darwin's religious thinking throughout the course of his life, baptised and buried as an Anglican but the religious progression is riveting. Relying as far as possible on Darwin's own words, to determine the extent to which Unitarians are justified in claiming the author of 'The Origin of Species' as one of our own.

'12 Steps to Spiritual Health' David Usher

David Usher is a gifted Unitarian theologian, who's literary style has the gift to make atheists, agnostics, searchers and the deeply committed feel welcome and at home.

The simple points in this book concern developing spiritual health which is vitally important. These steps are a neutral look at what should work for the reader. It is aimed at those with enquiring minds who know that there is something more and will help them flesh out their vision and get more from their lives.

Like LIFE SPIRIT this is another book of more questions than answers which really appeals to me and is designed to be read either individually or more beneficially as a group exercise in spiritual development. It also draws on many religious affiliations taken from World Religions

On face value the book appears simply written but this is a deceptive front for a deep, useful but easy to read book that is so empowering. I learned so much and although I have read many similar self help spiritual books over the years this one was readable and made me think and act. Everyone should read this spiritual guide to life. It is rational and accessible to all on many levels.

'Life Spirit' David Usher

This is a book of question and definitely no answers. Questions such as What gives meaning to your life?... Why do you believe what you believe? Are there any moral absolutes? ... Can you be spiritual all by yourself?... Is there a God?... Is it possible to be spiritual without any concept of God at all?...

David Usher's book aims to help readers to think for themselves and develop their own responses to the questions posed. David Usher states "LIFE SPIRIT will help you to explore not only what you believe, but also why you believe it ideally in community with others who are on a similar quest."

This I agree with wholeheartedly. Further as part of a reading group could make a very good follow on from "Build Your Own Theology" giving a way to go deeper into what we truly personally believe. It is also about what you do as a result of what you believe and feel and experience. It is about how to live so that your own life is spiritually enriched, and how to live so that the lives of others might benefit too

Creationism: Design Errors and Cross Purposes Graham Richards

This is a good analysis of Creationism from a psychological perspective and makes a refreshing change from arguments about Intelligent Design. The author has good academic standing so knows what he's talking about. Worth reading if you're interested in this debate and can tolerate a degree of psycho-babble.

Amen: What Prayer Can Mean in a World Beyond Belief by Greta Vosper

Greta Vosper is a practical academic theologian. What this means to me is that she is easy to understand and writes well for lay people as well clergy, with out dumbing the information down. She has done a great deal of research for this book , in what to some will appear to be out-of-the-way and unfamiliar places. I like that because I like to learn. The first ten or twenty pages could be an uphill struggle for the average reader. It was for me, but after that it gets easier.

The Author worked hard writing this book and there is an definite underlying expectation for the reader to work as hard at understanding it. This is a seriously relentless, hard hitting book that pulls no punches. This book is like none I have ever read before, exciting with a whole new vocabulary, and foundational shift.

Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing -- Emerson -- Parker" introduction by Conrad Wright. This is a powerful collection of speeches. A must read. The three historic "sermons" contained in the book are as follows: William Ellery Channing's interesting "Unitarian Christianity" (delivered in 1819), Ralph Waldo Emerson's wonderful "Divinity School Address" (1838), and Theodore Parker's thought provoking "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" (1841).

The sermons themselves are joyous and fascinating. I found myself agreeing with a lot of what Channing said, though laughing at his mildly sarcastic tone, but there is nothing wrong with sarcasm. I love Emerson's ideas but I don't like his style of writing much, it is a bit staid and stodgy. Parker repeated himself a lot, but his points were well made and his oratory was beautiful and impressive. Conrad Wright's commentary on these three sermons was excellent, sharing the historical context of each sermon and wrote not only about their interaction but also how each sermon affected Unitarianism. I would love to see a new updated edition of this book with additional commentary showing how things have changed in the 50 years since Wright's commentary was penned.

Teacher Guide Companion :Rediscovering Jesus in a Secular World. E. W. Wilkstrom.

Integrating both secular and religious source materials, Wikstrom demonstrates how a close examination of historical findings and the Gospels can lead to a renewed faith. I found that my understanding of New Testament studies, which is dominated by academia, was revitalised by Rev Wilkstrom a working Unitarian minister.

Plenty of food for thought. This borderline academic book I found to be well written and an easy read. It is a terrific book to increase any liberal faith's understanding of Jesus.

Many thanks to Gillian for the reviews, what do people think, and can anyone else recommend a book or two?

Yorkshire Unitarian Lay Preachers Association

We met in Leeds prior to the YUU meeting, and their Minister, the excellent Jo James , was going to be talking about his first year in Ministry



at Mill Hill. Typically all such ideas were scrapped and instead we took part in a discussion and session about space and how we use it. The morning was good not just for those of us who take part in local preaching, but for anyone interested in how we use our sacred spaces. We looked at how people sit in relationship to each other, what we do in church because 'we've always done it that way' and how to creatively use the spaces we have. Plenty of food for thought as we try to make Westgate a relevant and important space in the middle of the city.



Looking for half term ideas?

Consider a visit to the new Animation exhibition at The Civic, Barnsley.

Visitors will get hands-on in AniMotion, a unique and specially commissioned exhibition all about animation.

They will meet Morph, celebrated early star of [Aardman Animations](#), see their face come to life as it flies around with wings, watch friends become skeleton avatars and create their own animations with a little help from the world-famous

Aardman studios.

Gallery@ | FREE ADMISSION

Open Tuesday - Saturday, 10am - 5pm (last admission 4.45pm)

Our thanks to everyone who helps out in the kitchen and brings along buns and biscuits etc. It would be appreciated if people could keep an eye on levels, and if you can help out, then THANK YOU!

The Engagement Group The group chooses a location and theme for each meeting, engaging with one another following engagement group principles. The group has been dormant for a while, so if you are interested please get in touch. Contact Steve (boudicca7@talktalk.net) or Mel at Chapel.

Our Safeguarding Policy is available in the Chapel Vestry, and the summary statement and poster on display on the entrance notice board. If you have any concerns about the safety of our children and vulnerable adults please contact the safeguarding office (Mel Prideaux) immediately. All contact information and procedures are in the policy document.

Fire Evacuation Safeguarding Procedure A chapel fire procedure is available on the notice board. Fire Officer is Paul Dawson, who can be contacted at Chapel with any queries or concerns.

Westgate Chapel was opened in 1752. Its congregation was established in 1662 and became Unitarian in view *Unitarian Universalist Valentines* in the eighteenth century. It has taken a leading part in the economic, social, educational, political - and spiritual - development of Wakefield and its vicinity.

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Any copy for the next edition gratefully received, and though this is put in each magazine, there's not too much coming forward. Please make the views of the magazine as broad as the views of our church generally.

Everyday I thank

(please check one)

- ☐ God
- ☐ The Universe
- ☐ The Unnamed
- ☐ The Spirit
- ☐ Earth Mother
- ☐ All of the Above
- ☐ None of the Above

FOR YOU