



THE WESTGATE UNITARIAN

The Newsletter of Westgate Chapel, Wakefield

Telephone 01924-373307

website: www.ukunitarians.org.uk/wakefield/

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

**SUNDAY SERVICES: 10.30am on the first Sunday of each
month and 3pm on all other Sundays**

MAY 2010

Thought for the month

For the freedom to worship and the freedom to question,

We give thanks.

For the freedom of choice and the freedom of speech,

We give thanks.

For the freedom to reach out and the freedom to hold,

We give thanks.

May we never take this freedom for granted and may we work together so that others may share in the joy of their own freedom, and together build a world where all may be free and all may be equal.

Liz Shaw in *Stirrings* 2010.

Services in May, at 10.30am on 2 May, and at 3pm on all other days

2 May	Dr Melanie Prideaux
9 May	Myrna Michell
16 May	Nicky Jenkins
23 May	Brigitte McCready
30 May	Kate Taylor

Rota of Welcomers

2 May	John Goodchild
9 May	Ralph Denby
16 May	Pat Howard
23 May	Nancy Denison
30 May	John Goodchild

As always, if you are unable to act as welcomer on the day indicated, you are asked to arrange an exchange.

The Westgate Forum, Tuesday 4 May, 10.30am

The topic for the May Forum is 'Role models'. Do we need role models? Who would you try to follow as your role model? Do women need female role models rather than male ones? But is Jesus a role model for us all? Do come!

Chapel Committee

The Chapel Committee meets at 7pm on Tuesday 11 May.

The YUU Spring Festival, Saturday 15 May at Lotherton Hall, 11am onwards

All are most welcome to attend the Yorkshire Unitarian Union's Spring Festival. We meet at 11am in the picnic area at Lotherton Hall. There will be a short service at 11.30am, probably in the open air. At 12.15pm we shall picnic together, although those who prefer their meals provided for them may care to eat in the cafe instead. Then at 1.15pm there will be a group walk in the bird garden. (Shall we strut like peacocks?) After that everyone is free to enjoy the hall and grounds in their own way. Lotherton Hall is off Collier Lane, Aberford, and is one mile east of the A1. It is under the care of Leeds Metropolitan Council. Whilst entry to the grounds is free, there is a car park charge of £3-60 and an entrance charge to the Hall itself, adults £2.95, concessions £1.46, children 98p, family £4.89 (two adults and up to three children). Kate Taylor is able to offer a few places in her car.

The Chapel takes part in the Art Walk, Wednesday evening, 26 May, 5pm to 9pm

Hitherto the Wakefield Art Walk has embraced the Orangery, the Art House and the Theatre Cafe as well as many other venues where local artists can show their work. At Jan Millington's suggestion, and as an experiment, we are going to show paintings in the Chapel, too, on 26 May. Work will be displayed on exhibition stands, on easels or in the pews. Volunteers to staff the building would be most valued! Please let Kate know if you can put in an hour or two.

Treasures Revealed in Wakefield 29 May – 5 June

Treasures Revealed, a celebration of places of worship in the Wakefield area, runs from 29 May to 5 June with a follow-up Treasures Trail on the following four Saturdays. We are taking part in both activities and Wakefield Pagans will be present at the Chapel on a couple of days, too. We should have multiple copies of the pictorial leaflet available in Chapel in the next week or two.

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Broken Britain? The April Forum

We were delighted to welcome Les Darcy, who had been encouraged to come by Pat Howard, to the April Forum and who brought a portfolio of his poems with him.

It was recognised that the term ‘Broken Britain’ had been coined by the Tories as something of a political gimmick. It seemed a little strange that their leader was on the one hand insisting that we live in ‘Broken Britain’ and on the other hand announcing his intention to appeal to the ‘great majority’ of the public – the decent, honest, law-abiding citizens.

But we seemed to accept that Britain might well be broken financially and perhaps spiritually too.

We touched on foreign policy. It was urged that Britain had returned to being jingoistic; we needed to be on better terms with other countries; people were unhappy about both the war in Iraq and the current one in Afghanistan. Was the sacrifice of flesh and blood a price worth paying?

Wasn’t ‘Broken Britain’ though just a PR slogan? We commented on the use by political parties of advertising agencies such as Saatchi

But then we focused more closely on what ‘broken Britain’ might mean. Well,, we had lost the great manufacturing base we developed in the late 18 and 19 centuries: in terms of our capacity to invent, develop and export, perhaps something was broken there. We talked too about the appalling conditions in which the poor lived and worked during the industrial revolution. Today’s degradation and slum life is nowhere near as bad, we thought.

We noted the roller-coaster of wealth, poverty, wealth and back to poverty again and the impact, in financial terms, of the two world wars. We had not quite, in the current economic circumstances, returned to the mass unemployment of the 1930s. Not had we seen Government stock at the incredible level of 14%.

If broken Britain exists, we thought it was in the lives of people who feel that they don't really count, they have missed out on the better quality education provided for others, they are excluded from well paid jobs (if, indeed, they have jobs at all) and they feel bitter. Whilst ever there is segregation in education, some will feel cast to one side and will react accordingly.

Or was broken Britain to be found amongst the lonely? But we wondered how far anyone needed to be lonely in modern society.

So then we thought about families on benefits where there may be either one or two parents, and they either married or not, who spend their money on drink, drugs or the lottery, and who neglect their children. How to cope with these? We realised that social workers might well be involved but would have very little time to 'educate' these families. We note that Home Start trains volunteers to work with them, encouraging the development of parenting skills. We wondered whether the payment of benefits (at least beyond a very basic minimum) could be made dependent on the recipients attending training courses, drug treatment centres, or whatever seemed most necessary. Should more be done to discourage the feckless from having children? Was better sex education the best remedy? And should formal sex education be given with strong moral education?

Les emphasised the value for young people of youth clubs where volunteers teach a variety of physical skills, and of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme which promotes character-building. It was suggested that little is more important than spending quality time with young people and giving them encouragement and respect.

We turned to consider the pretty marvellous provision for people in Britain of a pretty good national health service. At least no one need be sick and suffering without access to caring treatment.

Britain might be broken, we thought, in the lack of 'uplift' and a clear moral structure. But then we noted the basic humanitarian feelings so often in evidence across society.

But in talking of broken Britain, were we looking in the wrong direction? Perhaps the real breakers of Britain are not the poor but the banks and other commercial organisations.

Karen Hanley talks to the Yorkshire Unitarian Union



Karen Hanley, a member of the General Assembly's Faith and Public Issues Commission, visited Westgate Chapel on 27 March to speak at the quarterly meeting of the Yorkshire Unitarian Union about the work of the Commission. This was formed three years ago when the old Information Committee was divided into two, the other half now forming the Communications Commission. It has one Panel, which focuses on Penal Affairs.

Faith and Public Issues is, Karen Said, the outward-facing part of the General

Assembly's structure, finding a role in the wider world where Unitarian perspectives are important. The Commission has only a limited budget but it subscribes to bodies such as the Church Action on Poverty, Christian Aid, the Interfaith Network Forum, the Jubilee Debt Campaign, the United Nations Association, and One World Week.

Karen spoke in some detail about membership of Radar. This is an informal group of faith organisations which meets once a month to consider making representations about bills going before either of the Houses of Parliament. Karen referred in particular to the Equality Bill where an amendment in the House of Lords provided for those religious bodies which chose to do so to have the freedom to perform marriages for same-sex couples. The move reflected pressure from the Unitarians as well as Quakers and Liberal Jews.

The Commission has signed up to the new 'Robin Hood' tax campaign which seeks a tax on financial transactions (including share dealing and at a rate of, say, 0.005%). Present trading, she said, damages the underprivileged and increases poverty. It was to be regretted that the Chancellor, in his recent budget statement, had dismissed the idea.

The Commission has not yet signed up to 'More than Gold', a campaign associated with the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2012, to work for social justice in four areas. The first is Human Trafficking: commercial bodies engaged in the sex-trade already have elaborate plans for bringing women into the country to 'cater' for the tourists coming for more games than one. Then there is the impact of the Games on the Environment and the demand for the efficient use of energy. Homelessness, it seems, may be another major issue: unscrupulous landlords will evict tenants if there is a chance to secure a higher rent, if only for a short term, from visitors for the Olympics. And finally Fair Trade is an issue: will Olympic clothing, including footwear, be produced by sweated labour or for a fair payment?

In its campaigning, Karen said, the Commission is dependent on resolutions which have been passed by the General Assembly as the key indication of what the Movement wishes to support.

In her Powerpoint presentation, Karen showed as a photograph of the Commissions banner (heavy and rainproof) with the legend 'Unitarians Celebrate the Diversity of Creation', which can be taken to public events and on protest marches and has so far been used in particular at Gay Pride events.

Karen's purpose in coming was to ask how the Yorkshire Unitarian Union might promote social justice. In the small-group discussions that followed her talk it became clear that so far we are doing little more than holding events in our chapels that may draw a cross-section of the community, running coffee mornings to raise funds for charities, or collecting non-perishable foodstuffs for the disadvantaged. We did have a day's demonstration in Leeds against modern slavery. At Westgate Chapel we cared in a number of ways for a failed asylum seeker. And we collect foodstuffs and toiletries at Christmas for young people just leaving care. But none of it has added up to much – so far!

Our motion on the Enlightenment and its fate at the General Assembly

We put our motion forward rather to stimulate debate than to look for it to be carried or defeated. David Arthur and Pat Howard (Pat is shown seconding the debate on the next page) made splendid speeches and a queue of people built up behind the 'Agree' microphone to support them. But there were dissenters! In particular Robert Ince from Fulwood, Sheffield, thought that we had implied two different interpretations of the Enlightenment, and that we might be seen to be criticising the Prince of

Wales who, he asserted, was really on our side. Ann Peart urged voters to abstain and, although on the count the motion was defeated, 88 people



followed her suggestion. There were many voices of dismay subsequently but the main point seemed to be that this was far too important a matter for Unitarians to be confined to a 20-minute debate. It has now been firmly suggested that we ask the Hibbert Trust to sponsor a seminar on the subject. Chapel Committee will determine whether we wish to follow this up.

Report of the 2010 General Assembly

The 82nd General Assembly was held at Nottingham University, Jubilee Campus, from Thursday 8th to Sunday 11th April.

We were accommodated in study bedrooms which had computer connections, desk and shower room, situated conveniently for the modern glass Atrium where meals were served. Meetings were held in two buildings. We walked outside between them by the water garden and lake where there were geese, swans and even a heron- a very pleasant place to sit.



Participants came from Scotland, Wales, N.Ireland and England (not Kent though,) and there was a good age range. I particularly enjoyed hearing the voices from different regions. I began to meet people whose names or photos I recognise and learnt of their part in the organisation. There was such a lot happening! Beside the main meetings there were offshoots of about twelve affiliated societies hoping for support which interested me and need further consideration.

The business sessions were quite lengthy but necessary and it was helpful to see the Committee members who had done so much to put the impressive Annual Report together. There were others producing reports to be included in GA Zettes each night for the following day, sometimes very amusing

Young people enthusiastically took part in or led the Opening Ceremony and other sessions and their warmth, sincerity and vitality were very encouraging.

The motion proposed by Westgate Chapel produced an amazing response. EIGHTY EIGHT people abstained!!! with 22 for and 24 against. There was considerable interest and queues of people wanting to speak, but not enough time and there is a suggestion that the subject is worth further debate.

The John Relly Beard Lecture was about the challenge of International Ministry. Unitarianism is a collection of indigenous expressions of the liberal religious spirit. That truth combined with economic and varying educational conditions around the globe make international Unitarian ministry very challenging.

The Unitarian Renewal Group discussed "Do we still need rebels?"

The Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry studied the different kinds of member, how we can learn from each other and how we can support each other.

The Women's League learnt about the Annie Margaret Barr Children's Village 2010/11 project in India and also presented a cheque to the Meningitis UK Fund, last year's project.

The District Support Panel introduced Assessment Materials and updates on successes and challenges.

The Unitarian Christian Association launched a new book, *The Man They Called the Christ*, by Rev.Dr. David Doel, which I have and would show you.

There was a meeting to discuss the future format of the G.A. Annual Meetings. Should the time of year be changed? How do we do the formal agenda business? What other sessions should be offered? What do Unitarian Societies need? How do we attract more people from a wider range of backgrounds? How do we reduce the cost? There was lively discussion.

The Worship Panel celebrated 40 years existence and the difference it has made.

Then the Communications Commission showed the work being done to produce a Unitarian Sanctuary at the cultural heart of Sheffield, where Upper Chapel had fallen into a bad state of repair. Julie Dadson showed slides of the problem and told us about the need to understand how to set about the regeneration, sequence of work, time scale and so on. She has experience useful to other chapels.

They also brought us up to date on the use of Twitter, Facebook, RSS, YouTube, Twibe, Flickr, and Blogging on the Internet. These are being used frequently. People like to leave short, quick messages and this is a good way of reaching out to others about our activities and thinking. Yvonne Aburrow and James Barry gave this presentation. At this point I should tell you that James was sporting a fine, handsome beard, not trimmed since he was 17 years old, it was almost down to his waist. Well, one of the bright young things dared to suggest that if there was an offer of £600 if he would have it off, and she kept raising the stakes and encouraged us all to contribute so that he was shorn with much jollity raising more than £4000, and more to come judging by ideas put forward for use for it.



The Reverend Bill Darlison and the Reverend Feargus O'Connor

The Psychological Society's speaker was Feargus O'Connor, Minister of Golders Green Unitarians and a member of The Survival Research Committee of The Society for Psychological Research. His talk was very well received, being of 'great spiritual and theological interest,' referring to the soul, consciousness, mind and the nature of reality, near death experiences and so on.

The Faith and Public Issues and Denominational Support Commission encouraged us to think about 'What the Eye sees: The visual cues a church gives to a visitor for worship'. There were plenty of suggestions, followed by a quiz of symbols showing Accessibility provisions. Perhaps we should have some more signs up.

The International Association for Religious Freedom discussed their planned visit to the Congress in Kerala, India. I have details of this.

The presentation by the Unitarian Historical Society was enjoyed very much, being an account of Unitarianism in Devon from 1662 to the early 19th Century. The history is so important as it is stories of people who tried new ideas-the rebels. They worked as missionaries to spread the movement and found that sometimes responding to negative situations can be effective.

The Hibbert Trust launched a teaching course: "Life Spirit." This is an on-line course of group discussions sessions as diverse as spirituality,

belief and ethics. it may be a liberal answer to the Alpha course. It is on the Internet at <http://go.podia.net/?c=1445>.

The Unitarian Earth Spirit Network had a presentation about "A Pagan Life." Cynthia Dickinson attended.

Last year the Executive Committee were asked to consider adopting a shorter and more dynamic working title for our movement. A workshop was held to consider ideas and what the advantages and disadvantages of them would be. So many people are using the Internet, needing to be able to enter addresses quickly, that the short title of 'Unitarian' is being used frequently. The change appears to be coming organically before any resolution has been passed. There are areas in the country where members are very strongly attached to the full name and being known as 'Free Christian' is important to them and they would be hurt if a change came. There was much talk about cake: if you offer a visitor some cake they need to know what kind of cake it is. Visitors to a church similarly need to know what to expect. It was said that a change of name must not cause division. Someone else thought that we must not give the power of veto to any one congregation. Others thought the change would be acceptable if we continue to put the long name underneath on our notices.

We did not vote and most felt that a short title would inevitably come into use.

A Growth Workshop considered what makes a congregation grow and asked for more ideas. One person said that new members had not attended a Sunday service at first but had joined because they were drawn into other activities. We should try to avoid 'in' jokes, but not let ourselves feel threatened by newcomers. Wearing a 'Unitarian' badge is the best way to let others know about your faith because they will ask you what it means and it gives an opportunity for you to speak. We need to welcome seekers and let them feel that we are a home for seekers. Ministry is what we all do together. We should each tell one other person what Unitarianism means to us. This is what Outreach is about. Participants were asked to write a brief response to the question: "What difference has Unitarianism made to your life?", and the replies showed how much it means to individual members. It was described as an open-hearted faith which has changed and sustained lives.'

A Minister from Kingswood spoke about the growth of that congregation, and another person spoke about the Octagon Chapel in Norwich which is very welcoming. A Growth Scheme can be found at <http://throwyourselflikeseed.blogspot.com>

The Penal Affairs Panel met to hear about 'Enlightened attitudes to illicit drugs.' The speaker thought that money should be spent on health issues surrounding drug use rather than treating users as criminals..

Last year the Executive Committee was asked to compile a set of behavioural principles that can be seen to underpin our theological diversity and there was a workshop to discuss this. This is not easy and ideas are welcomed.

The Education and Training Commission have set up a Revolution Group to train spiritual explorers. Leaders may meet at Great Hucklow for weekend training. They will explore such things as Building Safe Learning Environments, Group Dynamics, Disability Discrimination, Conflict Resolution and so on - much more! This would be very useful training for Youth Leaders..

We have used a Labyrinth in our Chapel. One was used in the G.A. This idea can be used for a wide age-range as it helps to encourage 'mindful' walking.

The younger people had met previously at Great Hucklow and made preparations for their activities. David Warhurst has described the impact the Youth programme of fifty years ago made and how those young people are taking the lead today. Juniors joined in fun, games, craft, drama and music and helped to make the services joyful occasions. The times when we met for worship were inspirational and will leave a lasting impression. There was even a Communion Service when a plate of chocolates was passed round until it was empty. The hymn singing and music sounded great in the Lecture Theatre. The Taize Worship was an experience not to be missed.



The Saturday evening Social was a very lively affair in the Atrium. The Beatles look-alike band got many to their feet and a good time was had by all, even Beardless Barry! I came away feeling optimistic, with much more understanding about Unitarianism and respect for the elders who put so much effort into making the Assembly a success.



Text by Pat Howard, photographs by John Hewardine

Mulberry Way now open

The new road which skirts the Chapel and which (referring to the Mulberry Bush that prisoners are supposed to have gone round at Wakefield Prison) opened in mid-April. As this goes to print, however, the promised secondary glazing, to lessen the traffic noise, has not yet been fitted in the Chapel.

It is by no means easy now to get out from the Chapel access road into the traffic stream. Perhaps yellow hatching would make it less hazardous.

At least there can no longer be the noise of traffic rushing up Back Lane which has always been a nuisance when we have meetings in the Vestry.

The Engagement Group

An 'Engagement Group' consisting of Unitarians and non-Unitarians, is organised by Mel and Steve from Westgate Chapel. The group meets every month, choosing a different location and theme for each meeting, but actively engaging with one another following engagement group principles (see website: <http://www.unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk/>). We explore and discuss spiritual themes, and the beliefs and attitudes which shape our lives. Newcomers are welcome, and should contact Steve (boudicca7@talktalk.net) or Mel (melpx@hotmail.com), either at Chapel or by e-mail.

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The Unitarian path is a liberal religious movement rooted in the Jewish and Christian traditions but open to insights from world faiths, reason and science, and with a spectrum extending from liberal Christianity through to religious humanism. (Prologue to *The Unitarian Path* by Andrew Hill.)

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