

Westgate Chapel Report for the Year 2009-10

Membership of the congregation has remained unchanged during the year. We have continued to hold services every Sunday and have again enjoyed a great variety of ministers and lay preachers including our own David Arthur, Stephen Carlile, John Goodchild, Chris Pilkington, Melanie Prideaux, and Kate Taylor. Jan Millington, who has maintained something of an association with the Chapel, has also taken three services, one of them on Christmas Day. Stephen Lingwood took our anniversary service in November 2009. Other visiting ministers and lay preachers have included Joyce Ashworth, Robin Boyes, David Dawson, Elizabeth Faiers, Nicky Jenkins, Neville Kenyon, Vernon Marshall, Tom McCready, Brigitte McCready, Myrna Michell, Gillian Peel, June Pettitt, Kenneth Ridgway, Jim Timiney, and Geoff Usher. Services have normally been held at 10.30am on the first Sunday of each month and at 3pm on all other Sundays. We have made tentative incursions into the new hymn book *Sing Your Faith*, although Chapel Committee recommended – because of the modest size of the congregation and the challenge of new tunes – that we should have no more than two hymns from it at any one service.

The Pilgrim Trust granted us £22,000 towards the restoration of the organ so that the Trustees were able to place a firm order with Wood of Huddersfield. Meanwhile the organ has lain silent awaiting the firm's availability. We learned in September that work would begin on dismantling it early in October.

Our once-a-month Tuesday-morning Westgate Forum has again met regularly except during the summer months. We had an evening forum in June on Philip Pullman's latest book, *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ* but this drew only members of our own congregation. There was a rather better gathering the previous November for an evening talk by Dr Simon Hardy, of York Unitarians, on One Hundred Years of Darwin's Originality and Influence. In association with Wakefield Historical Society, John Goodchild gave a series of three talks in July on the work of the coroner which drew an average audience of 25.

We took part in the Wakefield Treasures Revealed Festival in June and July 2010 and gained several hundred colourful leaflets, two attractive display boards and one pop-up panel but comparatively few visitors. Thanks to Jan Millington's efforts, the Chapel was also open, with an exhibition, for the Wakefield Art Walk on 26 May; the event drew over 80 visitors.

Pat Howard represented the Chapel at the 2010 General Assembly meetings in April. This year we put forward the motion That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, mindful of the

recent criticisms by the Prince of Wales and others, affirms that the cultural change known as 'The Enlightenment' has been of immense benefit to humankind in its seeking out of knowledge old and new, and that its emphasis on wisdom being derived from many sources, including science and reason, must be maintained. Our intention was to stimulate debate and we were successful to the extent that the Hibbert Trust is financing a seminar on the subject at the Nightingale Centre in February 2011.

Our monthly Calendar was renamed during the year as *The Wakefield Unitarian*. It has been issued regularly sometimes with eight and sometimes with twelve A5 pages.

Quite a number of our services, and meetings of the Westgate Forum, have been noticed in the Societies' columns of *The Wakefield Express*. Chris Pilkington has continued to ensure that our website is hosted by the UKUnitarians network and he ensures himself that it is kept up-to-date by forwarding each month's *Wakefield Unitarian*.

Some of the Chapel Trustees have had a hard time during the year dealing with problems created by the development of Mulberry Way and Merchant Gate. Not least of these has been the breach of the roof of the tunnel across Back Lane when a new water main was laid. We have involved the local authority's arboricultural officer in attempts to remedy, as far as has been possible, the damage to trees on the east side of the drive. There remains the need to replace the new tree which Clegg Construction have planted in an unsuitable place. Flag stones damaged by contractor's vehicles have yet to be replaced. Although secondary glazing to the windows on the north and east sides of the Chapel has long been promised, only two small panels were inserted before the end of the year. The Chapel grounds have been maintained by Stephen Carlile and Ralph Denby. Pat Howard has tended the rockery and Kate Taylor has tended the hosta garden. The Rowan tree, planted two years ago, has flourished. Pat organised a meeting on site with a representative of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and three other members of the Chapel Committee in September with a view to developing the grounds as a wildlife sanctuary. No doubt we shall see the results of this in the coming year.

We have been very well served by our officers and committee. John Goodchild has led us splendidly as our president. Kate Taylor has managed to cope as secretary. Bill Humphreys has served as a meticulous and diligent treasurer aided by the finance secretaries, Ralph Denby and John Goodchild.. Nancy Denison's devoted work, week in and week out, has provided us with very attractive flowers in chapel. Nancy has also served as our Inquirer secretary, ensuring that all subscribers via the Chapel receive their copies regularly. Tina Walsh has continued to keep the Chapel, Vestry, kitchen and lavatories clean and polished.

