



THE WAKEFIELD 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.**

SEPTEMBER 2010

Thought for the month

One just hopes that at some particular stage people will just get absolutely fed up of a humdrum materialistic life and in a general way swing back to spiritual values.

Bill Mitchell, former editor of *The Dalesman*, in an article in *The Yorkshire Post Magazine* about failing Methodist chapels.

Services in September, at 10.30am on 5 September, and at 3pm on all other days

5 September
12 September
19 September
26 September

Dr Melanie Prideaux
Kate Taylor
Jan Millington
David Arthur

Rota of Welcomers

5 September
12 September
19 September
26 September

Nancy Denison
Pat Howard
John Goodchild
Ralph Denby

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 7 September at 10.30am in the Vestry

The Westgate Forum will meet on 7 September when the topic for discussion will be The Big Society? What is it? Will it work? Do we want it?

The service on 12 September – Friendship

The theme of the service on 12 September will be Friendship. You are invited to bring something that has been given to you by a friend and which you treasure for that reason. You might like to say a few words about it, or to write something about it (and the friend) to place with the item on the table at the front of the Chapel. If you have nothing you wish to bring, perhaps you could just say a few words about a particular friend whom you value or have valued.

Kate Taylor

Chapel Committee Tuesday 14 September at 7pm

The Chapel Committee meets in the Vestry at 7pm on Tuesday 14 September.

National Heritage Weekend: Events at Flowergate Chapel, Whitby

Flowergate Chapel is marking the September heritage weekend with an exhibition and talk on Francis Haydn Williams, an extraordinary character who was minister at the Chapel from 1888 until his death in 1910. The Chapel will be open on Saturday 11 September from 10.30am to 4pm with an exhibition about Williams's life and achievements. It will be open on Sunday 12 September from 11am until 2.30pm and this will be followed by a talk by the Reverend Margaret Kirk, 'Crusading, Passionate, and Troublesome' at 3pm.

National Heritage Weekend: York focuses on Elizabeth Gaskell

There are many events at St Saviourgate Chapel, York, from Thursday 9 to Sunday 12 September including an exhibition of drawings and collage by Anne Hutchinson, inspired by Mrs Gaskell's work. There are also talks, entertainments, a demonstration of lace-making, and a service at 11am on 12 September, led by the Reverend Andrew Hill on the theme of Horses, pistols and student preaching during William Gaskell's time at York. Details on the Chapel noticeboard or, by e-mail, from Kate Taylor kate@airtime.co.uk

National Heritage Weekend: St Michael and All Angels, Great Houghton

The Church at Great Houghton is to be open from 10am to 4pm on Saturday 11 September. This was formerly a private chapel for Protestant Dissenters and in the 19 century was in the hands of the Milnes family of Fryston Hall. It was subsequently given to the Established Church. But some members of the Chapel might like a chance to see it.

National Heritage Weekend: the Orangery

The account below is taken from an e-mail from Beam, at the Orangery, sent to the Chapel Secretary.

‘Interested in discovering the heritage of Wakefield's Grade II listed Orangery? Then come and take a look around our exhibition where you will find information and images dating back to 1790!

‘The Orangery is a fantastic heritage site in the middle of Wakefield. It's been a bathhouse, a school and a zoological garden complete with a bear! Now it is the home of Beam, a centre for arts, architecture and learning. We will also be showcasing a small range of classic vehicles in the grounds.’

If you would like to see the exhibition, look in on the Orangery on Thursday 9 September or Friday 10 September between 9.30am and 4.30pm or on Saturday 11 September between 11am and 4pm.

City of Sanctuary

On 21st July I represented Westgate Chapel at a meeting of the Wakefield District City of Sanctuary Group held at St Austin's Community Centre. The City of Sanctuary campaign is a national one, the purpose of which is to make refugees and asylum seekers welcome in our communities. At the meeting of the local group a constitution was agreed, officers confirmed and future activities discussed. It would be good if Westgate Chapel could have an ongoing involvement with the group. If anyone wishes to get involved in the group please contact its secretary, Brian Hamill, on brianhamilluk@yahoo.co.uk. For information about the national campaign please see www.cityofsanctuary.org

Chris Pilkington

Thoughts

As I have not been present at every service lately you may like to read about what I have been thinking and doing. It seems rather bitty and inconclusive but may be relevant to our aims.

This year I attended the U3A Science meeting about the dangers of nanotechnology, the A.G.M. of our General Assembly, and the A.G.M. of the World Development Movement, I've helped in a school one morning each week as part of Generation Exchange, been to the Silver Surfers 'Computer classes', and I went to *The Sunday Times* Festival of Education at Wellington College in Berkshire and from there I visited my old school in Maidenhead.

Each Christmas I hear from old friends whose daughter volunteered to work in Africa and eventually settled there working with an N.G.O., a non governmental organisation, trying to encourage communities to empower themselves at grassroots level. As there is a cultural mix I wondered how they cope with religious differences and did some research on the Internet. In Ghana there is a new practice emerging called 'Zetahil' which combines elements of Christianity and Islam. I wonder if that is progress.

I went to the Science meeting in order to show solidarity with the group which I hope to resume attending regularly. I learnt that nanos are like tiny needles measuring on a billionth of a metre, so small that we may not know that they are being used. They can be used for good or evil and could lead to an ungovernable world. Someone began quoting Prince Charles who expressed his concern some years ago.

At our A.G.M. in Nottingham we debated The Enlightenment. Thinking further, I urge people to look at Tony Blair's website, which is at: www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org He is wanting people of faith to join together, and seems to think that any faith is better than none. Then I have had a look at The Mothers' Union web site, which is very well presented, and again at the Alpha Movement site. These are also using local communities and trying to encourage them, doing very worthwhile work in health and social care, but I

wonder if they foster religious divisions. I do not know. I have not travelled widely.

The World Development Movement A.G.M. held in Sheffield also brought together people from all over the country. It emphasises that it is membership led, so we heard speakers on the subjects of Climate Change and Fiscal Meltdown, which we know quite a lot about, but it was very important to them to get feedback. I wonder what the G.C.S.E. and A level courses include nowadays. It is a long time since I saw any papers.

Changes that I have noticed in a Primary school include the security at entry, signing in, and name badges. Blackboards have gone. It is whiteboards now. There is a class with a pupil in a wheelchair, very good for the child and the class, but it takes up space. There is not much space between the tables for the teacher to walk around. Then a stockroom has been turned into a disabled care room, with a toilet, wash basin, changing table and supplies. That has affected other arrangements. Each classroom has a sink and tap. Good, but on each draining board there is a tray with more than 30 named water bottles on it. The children are allowed to get up and get a drink during the lessons. Playtime in a Primary school used to be a time when small children would get knocked by balls being thrown or kicked, or older ones would dash about playing football or netball. Now I notice there is a sort of 'cage', about the size of a third of a netball court, in the playground, and a certain number of children are allowed in, clearly a good idea, but not ideal and when one hears about cuts in education funding it makes me very cross. My old school in the south had much more space AND its OWN SWIMMING POOL!

The Sunday Times organised a Festival of Education over two days in the beautiful surroundings of Wellington College, near Crowthorne in Berkshire. There was an impressive list of speakers. Possibly the main attraction was a debate on : 'You don't need a good education to lead a good life' with Kelvin Mackenzie and Germaine Greer opening it. In all there were about a hundred people leading the sessions. Topics being addressed included : What is the true value today of higher education? Does education offer the right preparation for the workplace? How can schools and universities do more to create greater equality? What role does creativity have in schools? Should schools take the 'well-being' and

happiness agenda more seriously? Will ICT transform education and kill books? I notice how the children find it easy to search on the internet , but the hard part is for them to choose what is relevant when there are thousands of answers, and some may not be accurate. We thought about school buildings. Statistics show that more buildings are going to be needed as the numbers of small children are increasing. There were developers there, some from near here, from Birkenhead it seemed, who thought that it would be quite easy to transform any old buildings. I managed to ask one question, saying that the Anti-Academies Alliance has a web-site which names the businesses which plan to set up academies, and asking if we should allow them to make profits. I have not quite made up my mind about this. Several people thanked me afterwards. It is sad that so many people think schools are failing. Since then I have downloaded the list of about two hundred academies and will look through to see if I can understand more about what is going on, and I am going through the list of speakers , who could be described as ‘movers and shakers’ , to study their writings.

In October *The Spectator* magazine has organised a debate in Church House, Westminster. The subject is : -Taxpayers’ Money Should Not Fund Faith Schools. I have a ticket. It is in two halves, yes or no, and people must give in their choice when they enter. After the vote we will see if the debate has caused anybody to change sides. I have made my mind up, NO. I have come to the conclusion that all religions have one thing in common—Meditation, and schools should have Assemblies based on readings, music and meditation, perhaps like the Quakers, but denominational teaching has no place in schools.

Pat Howard

Confused by Computers?

Voluntary Action, 11 Upper York Street, Wakefield is offering drop-in sessions (free) for anyone who would like to be shown how to use computers and the internet, on Tuesdays (10am-12noon), Wednesdays (2pm-4pm) and Thursdays (10am-12noon).

Who Cares? The August Forum

Our August discussion ranged widely, under the broad heading of Care.

We reflected on the people who have a professional responsibility to care – doctors, nurses, religious leaders, social workers, ‘lollipop’ ladies, postmen, and cleaners were some examples. We then thought about those who are committed to caring as volunteers – for the Chapel grounds, for example, or taking out meals-on-wheels, or assisting in a classroom helping children to learn to read. And we thought about the teaching of Jesus on caring for one’s neighbour or rather for all in need.

Caring for oneself was thought to be important: if people don’t look after themselves they may well be too unfit to exercise either professional or voluntary care. The message was to be moderate in drinking or smoking and not to take the risks which rather easily lead to injury or disease. If one has a car, it is important to care for that in ensuring that it is fit for the road (but we were a little scathing about those who devote their spare time to washing and polishing their ‘treasure’.

We discussed what it is that prompts people to care. Is there an instinct to care for others or for the environment? We felt that much was attributable to our upbringing and we were concerned about the children of feckless parents who may be part of a cycle of neglect, and perhaps crime.

There was a focus on Members of Parliament. Surely they should serve the needs of the community they represent. And yet we have the ‘carpet baggers’ – people who stand for election in a constituency relatively unknown to them. We compared Wakefield’s last MP, David Hinchliffe, who knew and loved the area, with our present MP, Mary Creagh. Had she the least interest in the locality? One of us was very critical of her apparent disregard for its heritage.

We then talked about amenity societies and other organisations which have caring as a fundamental part of their ethos – Civic Societies, for example.

Can either individuals or such organisations exercise care adequately without being well-informed? How far can ‘doing the caring thing’ become something of an ego-trip? We can do cynicism sometimes!

The Congregational Assessment Process 26-27 March 2011

Members and friends will know that we have applied to undergo the Congregational Assessment Process offered by the Denominational Support Commission. Joyce Ashworth suggests that this should take place over the weekend of 26 and 27 March 2011 and that our visiting assessors will be Dawn Buckle and Martin Whitell.

The Reverend Geoffrey Usher



Geoff Usher is to return shortly to Australia. He is pictured here taking what is likely to have been his last service at Westgate Chapel, on 25 July.

The Chapel windows – additional glazing

Some of the secondary glazing, to soundproof the Chapel windows on the north, east and west sides, was completed in August but much remains to be done. We are now told that the scaffolding will be put up in October.

Splendidly designed litter traps!

Ever since the low wall has been built at the Westgate end of the access drive, it has attracted quantities of litter. This accumulates behind it at the foot of the notice board. But now we have another, much larger, litter trap! Outside the rear gate on the eastern side of the Chapel there is a really substantial ‘well’ between the new steps down from Mulberry Way into Back Lane, and the rear wall of the Chapel grounds. It remains to be seen whether that, too, is regarded by the passing public as the equivalent of a litter bin.

Lay Canonry

The Chapel secretary, Kate Taylor, is to be installed as a Lay Canon at the evening service in the Cathedral at 6.30pm on 10 October. In writing to Kate about this the Lord Bishop of Wakefield, the Right Reverend Stephen Platten, suggests that she might like to invite members of Westgate Chapel to the event. She does!

The Harvest Festival, Sunday 3 October, 10.30am

We shall celebrate the Harvest on Sunday morning 3 October. The service will be followed by a light lunch in the Vestry – ‘harvest’ soup, bread, cheese and fruit. Kate would like bookings for this by Sunday 26 August. What fruit is available will be entirely dependent on what members of the congregation bring for the service. Melons? Apples? Pears? Plums? We could have a splendid display of vegetables in Chapel but, as there is always the question of what to do with them

afterwards, perhaps you would care to bring what you might want to eat yourselves in the following week, so that we can be grateful for the harvest and, effectively, give thanks for the food we eat.

The Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow Fund - Retiring collections in September

Writing in *The Inquirer* of 7 August 2010, the Reverend Ernest Baker, the secretary of the fund, but writing in a personal capacity, reports a very worrying in the shortfall in donations to the fund this year. Their week at the Nightingale Centre can be a life-changing experience for the disadvantaged children who are able to go there. We all give to the fund each Christmas but our President, John Goodchild, suggests that we try to make an extra donation this year by giving money in September. The suggestion has been supported by the Chapel secretary. But it is only a gentle suggestion. If you would like to, you could contribute to a retiring collection on one (or more!) or the first three Sundays in September. If you have had a good holiday this year, perhaps you could celebrate it by giving to the fund. (Alternatively, if you have not had a holiday, you could give a little of what you have saved by not going away!)

The Nightingale Centre – Christmas events 2010-08-26

The Nightingale Centre is offering a weekend walking event from 3 to 5 December when the treats will include the turning on of the village Christmas lights.

Christmas lunches are available in the weeks beginning 6 and 13 December for individuals or group bookings.

There is a weekend house-party from 10-12 December with carols one evening and an entertainment by Flash in the Pan on another. The Christmas Fete on 11 December falls within this weekend event.

To book, contact Stella Burney, 01298 871218 or info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk

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 email.

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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