



THE WESTGATE UNITARIAN

The Calendar 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**

APRIL 2010

Thought for the month

DIVINE UNITY

Out of the Divine Unity we came.
In the Divine Unity we live and move
and have our being.
To the Divine Unity we will return.

There are no beginnings and no endings,
save those we impose to cope with eternity.
There is no knowledge of the Great Mystery
save the precious fragments we are given in
recompense for our strivings.

For what we receive we give thanks,
and turn our faces to the light.

Cliff Reed in *Sacred Earth*, newly published by the Lindsey
Press at £9

Services in April, at 10.30am on 4 April, and at 3pm on all other days

4 April	(Easter Day)	Stephen Carlile
11 April		Kate Taylor
18 April		David Arthur
25 April		Reverend Vernon Marshall

Rota of Welcomers

4 April	Ralph Denby
11 April	Nancy Denison
18 April	John Goodchild
25 April	Pat Howard

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 6 April, 10.30am

The Westgate Forum will meet at 10.30am on 6 April in the Vestry when we shall discuss what might be meant by 'broken Britain' and whether such a phenomenon exists. Do come.

The General Assembly Annual meetings 8-11 April at the Jubilee Campus, Nottingham University

Pat Howard will be attending the Annual Meetings at Nottingham as our delegate. David Arthur is going as the delegate from the Yorkshire Unitarian Union, and Kate Taylor will be there as the Press Officer. As Nottingham is no great distance from Wakefield, it may be that others will wish to attend at least for the Anniversary Service which is on Friday 9 April at 7.30pm. Members of the National Unitarian Fellowship might consider going to the NUF meeting on Saturday morning at 10.45am when our new Chief Officer, Derek McAuley, and the Principal of Unitarian College Manchester, the Reverend Alex Bradley, will be put on the spot with the question 'Where are you taking us?'

Meetings in the Chapel Vestry, 17 and 24 April

The YUU Executive Committee has a meeting at Chapel on 17 April and the regional Sea of Faith group has a meeting on 24 April.

New curtains and fall for the reading desk

We are very grateful to Stephen Carlile for making the lovely new curtains for the reading desk. Stephen had some fabric left over and decided to try his design skills in making a fall. The image combines a chalice and the Wakefield fleur de lis.

Our new Trustee

Stephen Carlile has kindly agreed to become a member of the Chapel Trustees.

Being Honest

In the grim weather in early January, Jim Timiney took a discussion service in the Vestry for a surprising number of stalwart people. He was focusing on honesty. He produced a questionnaire with twenty-seven questions for us to assess our own honesty in relation to school and the workplace, the marketplace, and with friends and acquaintances. Had we ever called in sick when we were really fit? Would we take office supplies for our personal use? Would we ‘daffy’ our cvs? Would we nick the packets of sugar from cafes? Would we be honest if the cashier charged us too little or have us too much change? Would we download music from the Internet without paying for it? Would we declare everything liable to tax when we went through customs? Would we ‘scarper’ if we scraped a parked vehicle? Would we tell a friend if we saw his/her partner in an amorous clinch with someone else? And would we tell a worship leader how awful we thought his/her service really was?

Jim did not always use quite that terminology, but these were the sort of situations in which our integrity might easily be compromised.

We discussed whether we became more honest as we got older, or whether we were more ready to spare others’ feelings and this told more white lies. Someone might ask our ‘candid opinion’ on whether a tie, a hair-style, a colour of sweater suited them. Was it right to lie to spare people’s feelings? We wondered whether some sorts of theft are acceptable – for example taking something from the office which was in the trash bin or the waste-paper basket.

Perhaps inevitably we spent some time considering the amount of cheating on expenses by Members of Parliament.

We also thought about the increasing opportunities for dishonesty with the development of technology – using computers in the workplace, for example, to send e-mails to friends.

We ventured into considering whether there was a critical difference between breaking the law and being dishonest. Exceeding the speed-limit? Is it dishonest only when we try to argue against the evidence of the speed camera? Not paying at a parking meter when we mean only to be two minutes nipping into the paper shop? (How often have we looked up and down the street to check that there is no warden in the vicinity?)

And we asked whether we expected bosses at work and leaders in society like MPs, or ministers of religion, to set a good example by being rather more honest than other individuals.

Many thanks, Jim. I will not reveal how many of the twenty-seven questions made my own cheeks burn!

Kate Taylor

The continuing problems with the Merchant Gate development

The impact of the Merchant Gate development on the Chapel was discussed at the March meeting of the Chapel Committee and Kate was encouraged to send a press release to the *Wakefield Express*. As a consequence, she and John Goodchild appeared in the paper on 19 March. The problems are a) long-term and b) short-term. The main permanent one is the effect of the block known as Building C in its dominating the junction of Westgate and what is to be called Mulberry Way (!), thus screening the Chapel. The block is out of scale for the Westgate Conservation Area. Then there is the damage to our trees, inflicted at the behest of Clegg Construction and without reference to us. The mature Ash tree is to be felled and replaced with an Elm (our choice). The two Sycamores will both require careful surgery to minimise the damage done by Clegg's lopping.

In the short term (though it seems like eternity) there is the daily problem of vehicular access to the Chapel grounds both because of work taking place in Westgate or in the access road, and because of the state of the roadway where the access road and Westgate meet. Dr Prideaux's car was damaged as she tried to drive over the nasty trough created there.

John Goodchild and Kate Taylor had a meeting on 18 March with the gentlemen responsible for the overall management of the project and made clear our dissatisfaction. There have been two meetings, too, with the local authority's Arboricultural Officer, Mark Jennings, who has given very helpful advice about dealing with the affected trees.

In the long term, again, secondary glazing is to be installed on the inside of the Chapel windows to provide some soundproofing as we shall be directly beside the new road.

A new name for the *Calendar*

You can see that the Chapel Calendar has been given a new name, *The Westgate Unitarian*. Our thanks to Chris Pilkington for prompting a consideration of whether we need something that more adequately described our little journal. Of course what the Editor needs is more material – original, meaty, and very Unitarian! Or just good photos.

The virtues and vices of The Enlightenment

As a preliminary to the proposal of our motion on The Enlightenment at this year's General Assembly, we had a special meeting of the Westgate Forum on 22 March to explore the concept of the Enlightenment and possibly to assist the proposer (David Arthur) and the seconder (Pat Howard) with some thoughts for their brief time at the microphone.

It was pointed out that in Britain at least, the Enlightenment (emerging, arguably, in the mid seventeenth century) reacted against a time of dogmatic theology with the suppression of Catholicism and with no tolerated Nonconformity. It was, in part, a revolt against totalitarianism in religion. But it was also a proponent of scientific method. Isaac Newton was among its heroes. It was, essentially, a questioning of attitudes and assumptions: it brought critical scrutiny to what had been accepted before, whether in terms of beliefs or institutions. It fostered the arraignment of a monarch. But it also stopped us burning 'witches'; it was the enemy of superstition.

The effects of the Enlightenment have not all been good. Capitalism and the evils that occurred during the industrial revolution – labour in mills and mines, for example – were among its fruits.

We were reminded that there was a counter-Enlightenment for it was the enemy of the Roman Catholic church.

We were led to focus on the 'fudging' within the Church of England today, and indeed the Church of Rome, by leaders who cannot allow the challenges of reason to their traditional practices and doctrines. We were also led to consider how charities with a strong Christian ethos may provide benefits to communities in third-world countries whilst at the same time setting out to indoctrinate them with fundamentalist ideas.

Our motion to the General Assembly arose, of course, because the Prince of Wales, in a speech in February, argued that the Enlightenment offered no means of handling contemporary problems, in particular in regard to the environment. He wanted, instead, a 'holistic' approach. Some of us were unfamiliar with the term. Others had no idea what it means. But if it

means 'taking into account all aspects or all possible measures', we thought a scientific approach would do that anyway.

We noted that the Prince has recently endorsed the Alpha course. Certainly nothing very enlightened there. Speaking in tongues has little to do with reason and its babble is impossible to deconstruct however skilled your powers of analysis are.

Some of us will keep the Enlightenment!

Four Worms and a Lesson

A Minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.

Four live worms were placed into four separate jars.

The first worm was put into a container of alcohol.

The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke.

The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup.

The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the Minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol - Dead.

The second worm in cigarette smoke - Dead.

The third worm in chocolate syrup - Dead.

The fourth worm in good clean soil - Alive

So the Minister asked the congregation -
What can you learn from this demonstration ?

Maxine , who was sitting at the back, quickly raised her hand and said:
"As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms !"

That pretty much ended the service.

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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