



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.

FEBRUARY 2011

Thoughts for the month

We all have issues with identity – how can we not? We enter the world not knowing who we are, and we leave it little the wiser. It's a given of the human condition that we will never fully know ourselves.

Waldemar Januszczak in the Sunday Times, 23 Jan 2011

Services in February, at 10.30am on 6 February and at 3pm on all other days

6 February	Stephen Carlile
13 February	The Reverend Vernon Marshall
20 February	The Reverend Bill Darlison
27 February	The Reverend Bill Darlison

Rota of Welcomers

6 February	John Goodchild
13 February	Ralph Denby
20 February	Nancy Denison
27 February	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 1 February 10.30am

The Forum meets in the Vestry at 10.30am on 1 February to discuss how far women should be treated differently from men.

The Chapel Trustees, Thursday 17 February 2pm

The annual meeting of the Chapel Trustees will be on 17 February and will take place in the Vestry.

Chapel delegate to the General Assembly's Annual Meetings

Chris Pilkington has been elected to attend the annual meetings at Swansea on our behalf. (Kate Taylor will also be there, as the Press Officer.)

Being Part of Generation Xchange

People who volunteered to be part of this project were invited to an Exhibition centred on 5000 clay sculptures made by children and older folk which is in the Cathedral. Each figure is accompanied by a sentence describing the maker's thoughts and feelings when working on it. These are well worth studying.

We also enjoyed an intergenerational choir of school children from Stanley and older people joining together and clearly pleased to be together. A film was made of other groups in the area helping each other in sporting activities and craft work. The youngsters spoke up really well and the pensioners said how much they were benefiting from the experience. This is a project which should be continued and developed.

Pat Howard

The exhibition, Harvesting our Hopes and Memories, remains in the Cathedral until 4 February. The project was inspired by the work of Antony Gormley and the sculpting took place in schools, libraries and community centres across Wakefield. Participants were either under twenty-five or over fifty. Generation Xchange is organised by Voluntary Action Wakefield District in association with Age Concern, Wakefield Council, and the NHS.

Coping with the wintry weather: The January Forum

December 2010 was the coldest for some 100 years. And we knew it! What tales we had to tell of the problems the snow and freezing conditions had caused us. For long enough, because of the slope where he lives and the absence of any gritting from the local authority, Bill Humphreys had been unable to get his car out for a lengthy period and had learned to rely on taxis. He noted the convenience of a

dedicated phone line in Morrison's store which connected with a taxi rank. John had had a burst pipe in an inaccessible position under floor boards and, in their quest to help, British Gas had damaged his cooker. Kate had to go to the far side of Sheffield to shop for her aunt and had found two feet of snow there; although the local authority had cleared the centre of the road with a snow plough, this had left a wall of snow at least three feet high at the side, blocking driveways and making any parking quite impossible. There had been a burst pipe at the Chantry but Kate had turned off the stop tap. A part that Kate was to have attended at the Bishop's had been cancelled because a burst pipe in the attic, occurring when the house was empty for several days, had done very considerable damage to some of the principal rooms at Bishop's Lodge...

So we talked about the precautions we might take to avert such problems. Because of the decades of milder weather, and because most people now have central heating, we thought that people had forgotten about closing stop taps. We looked back to the days when winters were regularly quite cold and when there was no central heating: we recalled the patterns made by frost on the inside of our window panes, and of filling hot water bottles prior to going to bed.

Having to walk, either because we could not use our cars or there were no buses, was a challenge for those of us who now find walking more than a little challenging. Kate managed to walk as far as neighbourhood shops but on one occasion bought a bag of chips to help her on her way home and on another stopped at a local sandwich bar for time out eating a toasted sandwich! For Pat, who still walks good distances, the exercise was good.

We remarked on the kindness of neighbours. When he was without a means of cooking, one of John's neighbours had cooked their Christmas game birds for them – deliciously. Others had neighbours who cleared their paths of snow for them.

We were all keeping warm enough in our homes but wondered how heavy our fuel bills would be. So we talked about the winter fuel allowance and the additional £10 some of us had received for weeks when the temperature had stayed well below freezing. Whilst we raised the question of the appropriateness of the allowance being given, without any means test, to all older people, we did not rise to the

challenge of debate! We noted that, as we get older, we do seem to feel the cold much more; no doubt our circulation is poorer.

And what about the homeless? We knew that the Baptist Church at Belle Isle, in an inner suburb of Wakefield, was providing overnight shelter and meals for those doomed otherwise to sleep on the streets. But we questioned whether this care should be left to the chance of charity. The long-gone poor law with its workhouses might have been in some respects appalling, but it had always accommodated the homeless as of duty.

Wakefield, we thought, was more fortunate than many places quite nearby in not suffering from the worst of the snows.

Was the winter dooming us to more ‘flu? Kate’s sister’s brother in law had just died, seemingly of swine ‘flu and at no great age. Her son, working as a nurse, had urged her to be vaccinated as he had seen some desperate cases at the hospital.

But we were surviving, and that was the best that could be said!

A Yorkshire Unitarian Day at Westgate Chapel, 22 January

Bill Darlison’s talk to the Yorkshire Unitarian Lay Preachers’ Association on Saturday morning 22 January drew over thirty lay preachers! They were not disappointed. Bill challenged some standard notions of the nature of the address – or ‘lecture’, as some chapels term it, and provided rich advice from his own experience. He urged preachers to draw on their own experiences and to relate anecdotes from their own lives to which others can relate. Inter alia he provided his take on the principles of spiritual living:

1. Concentration - about waking up: don't sleep but pay attention to your life
2. Compassion
3. Awe
4. Gratitude
5. Generosity
6. Transformation

Adrian Worsfold, from Hull, took full notes and, writing as Pluralist, has provided a most useful report in his blog, which can be found at

<http://pluralistspeaks.blogspot.com/2011/01/bill-darlison-on-preaching.html>

In the afternoon, General Assembly president, Neville Kenyon, invited us to identify the ‘clear blue water’ between Unitarianism and other denominations. Do we still have something distinct to offer today, he asked. We split into small groups to discuss such questions as whether first-time visitors are likely to hear about Unitarian values, whether services are tailored to the needs of the local community, and how relevant we thought theology and the Bible are to us today. Another lively account of the event, and plenty of photos, can be found if you cast around Adrian’s blog. Meanwhile the photo on the facing page is not of line dancing! It is of the spokespeople from the groups during the report-back session.

The Chief Officer’s blog

General Assembly Chief Officer, Derek McAuley, has set up a blog (a web log) to provide some insight into what he is doing in his position at Essex Hall and some of the issues currently facing the Movement. You can find this at

<http://unitarianchiefofficer.blogspot.com/>

Lined up to speak. Our photo shows, from left to right, Bill Darlison, Melanie Prideaux, Joan Hill, David Dawson, and Christine Dawson.



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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