

THE HULL UNITARIAN

AUGUST and SEPTEMBER 2014

It is often easier to
fight for principles
than to live up to
them.



-Adlai Stevenson, Unitarian

Magazine of Hull Unitarian Church

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**A Proud Tradition of Over Three Hundred Years of
Freedom, Reason and Tolerance.**

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WHO'S WHO AT PARK STREET

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CHAIRWORDS

Hello All,

It was heartening to see so many at Bernard's service the other day. It was, as always, brilliant. It must be very easy if you are a regular service taker, to get into a rut from where you might not 'give it your all' as it were. But that is no problem for our Bernard.

The garden is looking good and if anyone, any time wishes to enjoy it in peace just ask Mavis to tell you where the key is kept (just make sure it is returned there please).

Michael is keeping busy as usual with the pulpit supply - so busy in fact, that he's had to turn down my offer of taking the Remembrance Service this year which will be taken by Rosemary Arthur.

Another area where he is busy is in making sterling efforts to secure us a minister. We certainly could do with a transfusion of enthusiasm and dynamism as we seem to have been treading water in the current for a while now. But all the while we bear in mind the old saying 'out of the frying pan....' to try and ensure our worst fears do not materialise.

Lately, Michael and I cleared out a good deal of rubbish from out of the loft and filled a mini skip at the front of the church. We were apprehensive, especially when they were a week late in removing it, that it would be overfilled with rubbish from around the area. In fact, the reverse happened and the skip was practically emptied by (I'll be kind and say recyclers) who saved the skip hire people a job.

Among the old carpets and such was a bundle of old scouting equipment from a bygone era which Michael has redirected to make good use of. Also still up there is a lot of our history which we hope to bring down for viewing in the near future.

That's all for the moment so stay well if you can and Keep Believing. (whatever it is that helps you and others along the way)

Best Wishes, Barry.

REACHING OUT

Please note that there will be no Friday Coffee mornings during August.

This will give our hard working volunteers a brief respite before they start again from the first Friday in September (5th September).

CHESTER'S PIECE



Hi Fans ,

I'm sorry we've been rather absent of late but HWMO has been dragging me around public houses and the like where he sings and I sleep; that is, until he starts his infernal whistling. At least Adrian keeps him firmly in check when he's in church.

I don't much like this hot weather – it's not much good for walks but if it's really warm he takes me to the local sand quarry where I entertain him by bringing him sticks. He gets enjoyment from throwing them into the crystal clear water - Bless!) Then I can dry out in the garden from the sun's rays – but that's enough of my tough dog's life, I'm sure others have heavier crosses to bear.

He's getting all excited (bless again) about a series of events being staged in various pubs around the town to draw attention to the plight of our wonderful traditional pubs and the history connected with them and the city.

They are entirely free but very professional. The pubs are Polar Bear, Rayner's on Hessle Rd (23rd when he will sing his own Hessle Rd song Salt o the Earth) The Sportsman on Hedon Rd on 30th July at 7.0 pm is when he will sing his highly tasteful Gertie the Pattie Slapper song. The last one will be at the Bull on Beverley Rd on 8th August (see the 'historytroupe' on Facebook. It seems he's reinvented himself as a folk singer/songwriter and has a CD out shortly – streuth!!!

I just hope all this fame don't go straight to his head and I lose out – he's already collecting a small but growing band of groupies.

Take Care Chester

LOVE

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance here,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lacked anything.

"A guest", I answered, "worthy to be here."

 Love said, "You shall be he."

*"I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee."*

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 "Who made the eyes but I?"

*"Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve."*

"And know you not", says Love, "who bore the blame?"
 "My dear then I will serve"

"You must sit down", says Love, "and taste my meat":
 So did I sit and eat.

George Herbert, 1593-1633

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
 The courage to change the things I can
 And the wisdom to know the difference.

Reinhold Niebuhr

BY THEIR FRUITS.....(A visionary tale of development).

Once upon a time there was a poor fruit picker on a cider apple farm, who was often hungry, but could not tolerate the taste of the fruit he picked. One day he had a vision: he imagined a tree which could grow lots of large sweet apples to feed himself and everyone else on the farm and he thought about how one could grow such a tree.

Next day he started out to taste one apple from each of the trees he picked. When he had three or four which were tolerable, he planted the seeds of these apples to grow small trees. In time the small trees flowered and he cross-pollinated them and when they fruited he selected their sweetest fruits and took these seeds to grow other trees. He repeated this process for several years until he had a tree which produced abundant, large, sweet and satisfying apples.

He and his neighbours fed on the succulent fruits of this tree for many years, but as the years passed the soil became impoverished, the quality of the apples reduced and they grew smaller and more bitter. Fewer people were fed and less could tolerate the taste of the apples, so finally the tree died alone.

Regrettably, our apple picker and his neighbours who fed on the fruit did not have the vision to recognise one essential fact about apple trees: then true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple but another apple tree. Unless some of those apples are used to grow more apple trees, you end up with no trees, no apples and no one to enjoy them.

A church is like an apple tree. It is planted in a community and draws its food and nurture from its roots in that community. In turn it will provide them with food and fuel and shelter. However, if the people of that community do not have the vision to use some of the fruits to propagate more trees, to feed more people in other communities, then that which has given them life will wither and died, and they with it.

John Simon, Edinburgh, August, 1986.

submitted by Bryan Burgess

A CONVERSATION ON THE NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP INTERNET FORUM, BETWEEN KEITH BROWN AND NAOMI LINNELL.

(KB) I was interested to read Ken Smith's article about the Golden Treasury of the Bible, which is available as a PDF on the Publications section of the main Unitarian website. As someone brought up in a household deeply suspicious of matters religious, the Bible is a book I have pretty much avoided over the years, associating it with the doom and gloom of Christianity. In that sense Unitarianism has helped open my eyes to it as a historical document of both myth and history, and I am grateful for that and more comfortable in exploring it now.

When I look at the historical theological texts available on the GA site, I am struck, as a relative newcomer, at both their relative radicalism and consistency in their approach to Christianity: no supernatural stuff, Jesus as a human being not god, the concept of the potential for the kingdom of God to reside in every person. Yes, they tend to have a view of God, which might be considered culturally and historically conditioned by their backgrounds, but they tend not to pull their punches. Thus, I find it surprising that there seem to have been divisions about Christianity within Unitarianism. I find no difficulty in enjoying the books of the humanist William R. Murry (e.g. "Becoming More Fully Human"), and yet relishing something like Alfred Halls, "Beliefs of A Unitarian", parts of which, yes, do seem dated. I'm surprised Unitarians don't make more of their version of Christianity, its rich history and its relevance today. Sometimes Unitarians seem to get very uncomfortable where Jesus is concerned and are perhaps terrified that they will become somehow tainted as just another weird Christian church. Or, more provocatively, is it because we can't cope with Jesus as a flawed person, who had some great things to teach us, but who consorted with common workmen, and prostitutes and the sick, and who didn't have a Phd in comparative religion?

(NL) Yes, I think you make some very good points. My religious background is almost the exact opposite of yours. I was a believing, worshipping, orthodox Anglican for decades. When I first slipped out of the C. of E. I was very glad to find Unitarianism not merely as the enlightened reasoned spiritual path that I had encountered previously as a piece of ecclesiastical history, but rather as a

heterogeneous group of spiritual seekers united by common purposes and mutual tolerance.

In this company I personally have never felt the need either to deny my Judaeo-Christian roots or to abandon my devotion to the man Jesus, my chosen spiritual teacher. That many Unitarians do is, of course, a choice they must make if conscience or whatever else drives them along that particular path, which points them in that direction. So long as, and to me this is what crucially holds us all together, each one of us is free to follow his or her own individual path without incurring overt criticism from those who do not think alike. From time to time, such criticism of self proclaimed Unitarian Christians does arise, and this I do find a tad irritating, but then some Unitarians have come to the movement from extremely illiberal and hurtful Christian denominations and backgrounds . .

If you are interested in the values of the Unitarian Christian Association to which some of us belong, their website is at www.unitarianchristian.org.uk. The UCA publishes a quarterly journal, The Liberal Christian Herald, copies of which can be found in the Archives pages of the site. It is very well edited and presented and one of my close atheist friends seems to enjoy it nearly as much as I do. If nothing else, it provides us with hours of robust but happy discussion.

(KB) Yes, as Forrest Church wrote in "A Chosen Faith", "For each of us to grow in faith and understanding, we can do no better than to cultivate and develop the particular meanings reflected in our own traditions and cultures." So that in our culture the teachings of Jesus must have an honoured place in our theologies, even if only because of our history. Therefore, for me every Unitarian is by definition a Christian, by which I mean that we all have access to the Jewish and Christian thought, which can be brought into our Unitarian theological mix.

I am very drawn to Church's "Cathedral of the World" concept and so see Christianity as one of the windows into the cathedral, refracting the light in different patterns upon the floor. Over time, the spiritual seeker may move from window to window, enjoying the different coloured reflections and patterns, but the light is always there, for anyone to return to. It will always be a part of the great Unitarian spiritual conversation. So by definition, the term

Unitarian Christian has no real meaning for me, since we all can explore this light. I worry that separate groupings might result in people's spiritual journeys being as if in railway carriages, travelling along parallel tracks, and waving to those on the adjacent tracks, but unable to really communicate. I would make the same observation about the "Earth, Spirit Network" or other groups. I suspect that, as Forrest Church claims, Unitarianism has expanded beyond a liberal Christian faith to one best described as non-Christian, but as more than Christian. Back in 1962, Alfred Hall noted how he "felt that he has been kept outside other religious communions, not because he has believed too little, but because he has believed too much. Instead of looking up to Jesus as the only Saviour of the world, Unitarians regard him and all good men as saviours. Instead of accepting a few miracles recorded in the Bible, they reverence the great 'miracle' of Creation and of all life. Instead of saying that the Bible alone contains the word of God, they hold that every true and uplifting word is inspired by him (or her or it: my addition)."

(NL) Since as well as enjoying membership of the UCA I am also a member of the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network, the thought of making a perpetual journey strung several feet between two moving carriages is a painfully uncomfortable one. I would much prefer to imagine myself sitting at ease on a large patchwork cushion enjoying both the distinctive and peculiar design and texture of each patch, while admiring the exquisitely fine and discrete stitchery which joins the many disparate pieces into one secure and comfortable whole. Or to put it another way, each individual Unitarian group has the capacity to appeal as one attractive facet of a larger faith or understanding, which does not authoritatively impose restrictive boundaries on any of us or direct us along precisely defined narrow exclusive paths, but opens up a broad welcoming landscape with room enough for everyone to breathe and to freely explore - each to discover his or her own spiritual niche. This, in fact, has largely been my experience, and I am very grateful for it.

(KB) I really like your patchwork cushion concept, that's brilliant! Perhaps not a million miles from Forrest Church's cathedral of the world. I acknowledge that the sceptic in me might have overpowered the optimist as far as special interest groups are concerned.

It's a very elegant and perhaps deserved riposte. The Forum is sometimes good at provoking a rethink or development of ideas and so I've found this discussion helpful.

(NL) Thank you, I have thoroughly enjoyed our discussion. For Unitarians like myself, who, for whatever reasons, are unable to enjoy membership of a gathered congregation, these kind of encounters on the Forum are not only a great pleasure but also crucial for our wellbeing. I daily thank God for Tim Berners-Lee and his Marvellous Mechanical Wonder-Web.

Ken Smith, FORUM Editor's Note:

The lengthy discussion taken from the Forum is included as an excellent example of how some of the different perspectives of the Unitarian movement can be addressed resulting in a way which supports our claim of being united in our differences.

NEXT MEETING OF THE YUU.

The next meeting of the Yorkshire Unitarian Union will be held on Saturday, 11th October, 2014 and will be held here in Hull at our Park Street Church. See you there!

MY CHURCH

"Where's your church?"

"We're standing in it."

"But this is a bookstore and it's a Friday."

"Yes, but you might also choose to see it as a cathedral of the human spirit a storehouse consecrated to the full spectrum of human experience.

Just about every idea we've ever had is in here somewhere.

A place containing great thinking is a sacred space."

—***Robert Fulgham in the Forward to :***

**A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism
by John Buehrens and Forrest Church**

The views expressed in Hull Unitarian magazine are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of Hull Unitarian Church.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

We hold a regular **Friday Coffee Morning**, held in the Church between 10.30 and 12.00 noon. Often this is in support of local charities, (see the Reaching Out item), and everyone is welcome to come along for a coffee and chat.

We meet for worship on **Sundays at 11.00 am. at our Park Street church:-**

AUGUST 2014 ***NO COFFEE MORNINGS THIS MONTH***

Sunday 3rd **Circle Service with Keith Brown, 11.00am.**

Sunday 10th **Service with Stephen Carlile , 11.00am.**

Sunday 17th **Service with Rosemary Frances, 11.00am.**

Sunday 24th **Service with David Arthur, 11.00am.**

Sunday 31st **Service with Rev. June Pettitt, 11.00am.**

SEPTEMBER 2014 ***COFFEE MORNINGS RESTART***

Sunday 7th **Circle Service with Keith Brown, 11.00am.**

Sunday 14th **Service with Bernard McHugh, 11.00am.**

Sunday 21st **Service with, Stephen Carlile, 11.00am.**

Sunday 28th **Service Rosemary Arthur, 11.00am.**

Sunday 5th October **Circle Service with Keith Brown 11.00am.**

Join us for worship. We sing, we reflect, we pray and meditate together. We often listen to an address prepared by the worship leader. We draw from sources of insight both traditional and modern. **You will be very welcome.**

Unitarians

Nurturing Faith

Embracing Life

Celebrating Difference



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