



# Oldham Unitarian Chapel Newsletter September - December 2010



*Autumn and Winter*

**Sunday Services 11.00 am  
All are welcome**

[www.oldhamunitarians.org.uk](http://www.oldhamunitarians.org.uk)

**Dates for your diary:  
Sunday services 11.00 to 12.00  
unless otherwise stated**

## September

- 5 Rev. Dr. David Doel
- 12 Tom Grimshaw
- 19 Rev. R Pounder
- 26 Rev. R Pounder (Harvest Service - with Chorlton)

## October

- 3 Rev. Dr. David Doel
- 10 Rev. R Pounder
- 17 Anna Jarvis
- 23 Induction Service for Rev. R Pounder (5pm)
- 24 Rev. R Pounder
- 31 Rev. R Pounder

## November

- 7 Rev. Dr. David Doel
- 14 Rev. R Pounder (Remembrance Sunday)
- 21 Mike Cuerden (Anniversary Service)
- 28 Rev. R Pounder (Advent Sunday)

## December

- 5 Joint meeting/service at Chorlton (10-30am)\*
- 12 Rev. R Pounder
- 19 Rev. R Pounder (Carol Service)(2 pm)
- 26 Rev. R Pounder

\* Please note the chapel will be closed on December 5<sup>th</sup>

Dear Friends and Members

Welcome to this newsletter which covers the period from September to December 2010.

The Reverend Bob Pounder has been officially our minister since August and I would like to formally welcome him.

The next four months will be a busy period for us; as well as the Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, Anniversary and Christmas services there will be Bob's Induction Service on Saturday 23rd October and a joint venture with Chorlton Church on 5th December. We also have a Theological Reflection Group meeting three times on 22nd and 29th September and 6th October. This is open to anyone to attend.

We are continuing to improve the appearance of the building and grounds as well. There will be some tree-felling or cropping, some bulb-planting and we hope to have new blinds in the social room. Our website is also being updated.

These are exciting times for us - something we've not been able to say for a few years - and we hope everybody associated with Chapel will contribute to moving us in new directions.

T.C.

## A Reflection on The Parable of The Dinner

Luke 14: 6-24

By The Rev. Bob Pounder

The Parable of the Dinner is really about a great Messianic Banquet that was expected God would give one day to the Jews. But in this story it seems that the people who have been chosen and invited are for whatever reason giving their excuses and not attending. And so others who would not have been previously considered are now going to be invited and made welcome. This story it appears has been written with a gentile audience in mind. It's a simple story that involves the preparation and the giving of a party. I think we all know how much work, expense and planning goes into such events.

The Master in Jesus' story was organising a significant event of some size. Therefore the anger he expresses when people who have apparently previously agreed to attend make their excuses is understandable in light of the time, trouble and expense he has gone to. So he says to his slave,

*"Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room." Then the master said to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner."*

I think this story, this parable, comes into its own right at a time of change and transition for this chapel, its a time when the committee officers and the congregation have made a commitment to the future of this worshipping community by appointing a minister so that together we might provide an opportunity also, to bring people to a banquet, metaphorically speaking, a banquet that we will prepare together.

But, we do need to prepare and to plan, and to pray, to spend together, to share our hopes for the future, to become of one mind so that we together have a firm foundation, a common understanding, and shared objectives with the aim of bringing new people into the fellowship, of this community of this chapel.

Make no mistake the time we spend together in reflection and planning will be invaluable. In the most recent issue of The Inquirer, the centre pages feature the Chief Officer, Derek McAuley as he surveys the work and challenges for our General Assembly. And at the end of the interview he says: "I feel that over the last few years we have turned a corner and can look to the future with ambition and purpose. He finished by saying, "I am always encouraged by the well-known words of Margaret Mead,

***'Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has'. And I think when we consider these words of Margaret Mead I think we to should be able to draw inspiration and without being arrogant have a sense of our own importance and our own power to make our own history.***

We would do well to recall that we at Oldham are part of a tradition of non-conformity that can find its roots in the English civil war and how in time we were expelled from the Calvinist, Greenacres Chapel in 1812 and how we went on, to form under the influence and support of the great Unitarian missionary, Richard Wright, a Unitarian community which led to the founding of our chapel in 1813.

Now Richard Wright was an inspiring leader he walked the length and breadth of Britain for the Unitarian cause. He first came to Oldham in 1812, he was then already 48 years of age and in that same year he had walked 3,200 miles and preached in nearly 100 different places. For Richard Wright Unitarianism was not just for the well off. He wrote that many of the congregations consisted of persons of the lower and middle classes, so it's never been the case that the rich and comfortable were the only ones who embraced Unitarian Christianity. And although other missionaries complained of getting rough treatment in Oldham Richard Wright never did, nor after visiting Oldham, did he ever say anything bad about the people he had seen or met. This chapel has had a long history and it can hold its own with the best of them.

It may be true that we are a small chapel, a small congregation but I don't think that's a problem. And so I think our success for the future will not be measured initially by how others see us but how in fact we see ourselves.  
***Let us get ready to prepare that table, to receive our guests who ever they they might be so we may worship God and serve the world***

## Kids' Page

Here's an acrostic about **AUTUMN**.

Alright autumn  
Unlimited leaves  
The fall rocks  
Unbelievable colours  
Making pumpkin pie  
November is a great month



**Maybe you can do a better autumn acrostic? If you can, Bob might give out small prizes at our Harvest service on September 26th!**

**Remember, your acrostic might look better if you decorate it or do some pictures as well.**

**And autumn isn't just about fruits, leaves and pumpkins; it's also about conkers, colder weather, mists, halloween, witches, bonfire night, fireworks, spiders' webs in the garden, birds migrating - I'm sure you can think of more.**

Sonnet 73  
by William Shakespeare (1609)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west;  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.  
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Not one of his most cheerful works! He must have dreaded autumn - or perhaps he was just having a bad day.

Induction  
of  
Reverend Robert Pounder  
at  
Oldham Unitarian Chapel

Saturday 23rd October  
at  
5p.m.

Presiding Minister  
The Reverend Doctor D. C. Doel

Also Present Will Be  
The Reverend J. L. Gould and The Reverend A.  
Bradley

and representing the  
General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian  
Churches  
its vice-president  
The Reverend Doctor A. Peart

all are cordially invited

## Summer Holidays

This year we went to Slovenia in the summer, the destination having been decided by Google, a pin in a map, the relative cost of a cold beer and our wish to travel by car rather than by air. So we ended up in Kobarid, on the edge of the Triglav National Park in the west of Slovenia; a truly beautiful area of mountains, clear rivers and friendly people.

Not until we arrived did it dawn upon me that this part of independent Slovenia had in the past been part of Italy, as well as the Austro-Hungarian empire and the late Yugoslavia. As we drove into the town its name appeared as Kobarid (Slovene), Karfreit (German) and its former Italian alternative, Caporetto.

Now, Caporetto I remembered from Ernest Hemingway's semi-autobiographical novel *A Farewell to Arms*, in which he drew upon his experiences as a volunteer ambulance driver in the Italian army in World War 1. He was hospitalised after being almost killed in the retreat from Caparetto in 1917.

The battle of Caparetto was so devastating for the previously successful Italians that to this day if they want to describe a shambles or a disaster they say "*It was a Caporetto*". The combined Austro-German breakthrough took them to within 25 miles of Venice before stalling. In three weeks spanning October and November of 1917 though, the Italians lost 11,000 killed, 30,000 wounded and 270,000 prisoners. Some of the dead were executed as deserters by their own side during the retreat. The government fell and the commander-in-chief was replaced.

Historians debate the factors leading to the defeat: low morale, harsh military discipline, a 'soldiers strike', communist subversion within the army, cowardice even.

However, most blame it simply on the Italian officer corps failing to match the Austrians and Germans in planning and flexibility. Where have we heard that before?

Between the wars Mussolini wanted a memorial built in Caporetto/Kobarid to honour the Italian dead (and presumably emphasise that it was part of Italy now), so an ossuary or charnel-house stands above the town and the remains of the Italian dead have been gathered there to rest together.

On Remembrance Sunday this year I may think back to my summer holidays and Hemingway's reflections on the use of words:

*"I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it .....*

*.....Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments, and the dates".*

**T.C.**



**The ossuary at  
Caporetto/Kobarid,  
Slovenia**

**Editor's Note:**

**The Editor welcomes contributions to the Newsletter.  
Please submit any items for inclusion to:**

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Special thanks from the Oldham Unitarian Chapel Committee to John Wilkinson of the National Unitarian Fellowship for creating our website:  
[www.oldhamunitarians.org.uk](http://www.oldhamunitarians.org.uk).



**Oldham Unitarian Chapel  
founded in 1813**

**is open to all who wish to worship  
with an open mind,  
in a spirit of freedom, reason and tolerance.**

**We do not all hold the same beliefs,  
rather each person is encouraged  
'to develop his or her faith  
in a continuing search for truth.'**

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