



Oldham Unitarian Chapel Newsletter September - December 2011



Oldham Unitarian Chapel: Sunday School Artists



*Sunday December 18th
Carol Service 11am - 12pm*

**Followed by
a
Children's
CHRISTMAS
PARTY AT 2 pm**

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.'**

President: Mr T. Clarke Tel: 0161 344 0364
Treasurer: Mrs M. Nuttall Tel. 0161 287 3371
Secretary: Mrs. C. Hall Tel. 01706 841 798
Minister: The Rev. R. Pounder Tel. 0161 339 6740

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Connaught Street / King Street
Oldham
OL8 1EB
Tel: 0161 620 1810
Lettings Officer: Mrs M. Nuttall 0161 287 3371**

Registered Charity No. 1111295

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

September

- 4 Service at Chorlton Unitarian Church
- 11 Rev. R. Pounder
- 18 Rev. R. Pounder
- 23 Mr. J. Clarke

October

- 2 Rev. R. Pounder
- 9 Rev. R. Pounder (Harvest Service)
- 16 Rev. R. Pounder
- 23 Rev. R. Pounder

November

- 6 Rev. R. Pounder
- 13 Rev. R. Pounder (Remembrance Sunday)
- 20 Mr Ken Johnson, MDA President, Anniversary Service
at 2.30 pm.
- 27 Rev. R. Pounder (Advent)

December

- 4 TBA
- 11 Rev. R. Pounder (Family Service)
- 18 Rev. R. Pounder (Carol Service)
- 25 Rev. R. Pounder

From the Chapel President. . .



Dear members and friends,

Chapel life continues as we slowly modernise the building and introduce new technology to enhance the quality of our worship. We also continue to acknowledge and explore, as only Unitarians can, the mystery that is our shared existence here. Not only in our worship do we do this, but in the range of guest speakers we have hosted, our discussions amongst ourselves and in our efforts to seek fairness for those at the margin of society.

A lot of what we have achieved has been as a result of initiatives that have come from Bob, our minister. Bob is a part-time minister at Oldham but you wouldn't know it from the hours he puts in at Chapel. Once again I would like to publicly thank him publicly for all his hard work and also thank Sue, his wife for her patience and forbearance.

We are still a small congregation but we punch above our weight, as they say, in Unitarian circles and within Oldham. We hope that the openness of our faith will become apparent to more people and I know Bob has plans to make that the case.

Best wishes,
Trevor Clarke.

Jesus Teacher of Prayer

By Rev. Bob Pounder

Praying it seems is not a passive affair but an activity that requires discipline and commitment and patience. Wherever and whenever Jesus preached, the question always seems to come round to the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven:

"Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."



In these words we hear, and in the mind's eye, we can see a great spiritual teacher at work who says:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Those who listened to these words were exhorted not simply to do 'good works' (though they surely were) but essentially, to attend to their own inner life, to seek the Kingdom of God within. Importantly, therefore, Jesus was a teacher of prayer giving sound advice on how this prayer should be undertaken:

"But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you".

Such authentic prayer is known as contemplative prayer, a form of prayer that can be transformational leading us to a wealth beyond the coveted riches of the world. This prayer in surrender to God may lead us to enter the silence of pure consciousness, of transcendence. Such is the power of prayer to bring transformation. And this transformation can arise out of the fact that in reality there is no real division between us and God this is what led Jesus to say:

"I and the Father are one",

"Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?"

In the same way Thich Nhat Han the Buddhist monk writes :

"You and the Buddha are not two separate realities. You are in the Buddha and the Buddha is in you. These seeds of understanding may also be in the Christian tradition and in all other religions, but Buddhism expresses this in a very clear, uncomplicated way. The one who bows and the one who receives the bow, both are empty. Neither has a separate self. So when we pray in Buddhism, we are praying both to ourselves and to what is outside of ourselves; there is no distinction."

When we realise these things it can be like an awakening and in that awakening things might never seem to be the same again. I suppose it's like a sense of being onto something, something deep and more profound leading us to a new understanding, a new revelation.

But this prayer life is not an easy option; it does require a certain discipline a certain mindfulness as Nich That Han says:

'To pray effectively, our body and mind must dwell in the present moment.'

We need to be focussed and relaxed, certainly we cannot pray effectively if we are preoccupied with other thoughts. And we cannot pray when we are angry, we have to find the quiet centre, where our effort in prayer may give us the insights and the sense of transcendence we are seeking. We are of course seeking a profound consciousness of God's presence. By mastering our own thoughts through faith and our own quiet effort, we may find a determination not to give up but to actively seek out the Kingdom of God, to seek out the highest goal.

Within ourselves we have a tremendous power if we would only realise it, and we have the ability to use this power for good or for bad. Someone once said that power misused is a sorry sight but the special power that prayer has is that it can lead us to the fullest realisation so that like St Augustine we may ultimately confess these words:

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

**Asylum
for Abdoulaye Diabate
and
Taha Ghasemi
See our website for details
www.oldhamunitarians.org.uk**



*Marian &
Joan's
Australia Tour
2011
Part 2*

Our next stop was the School of the Air, the first of its kind in the world, was established in 1951. . .

It was the inspiration of Ms Adelaide Miethke and was at that time by radio. Of course now it is by internet. The largest classroom in the world covers 521,000 square miles that's double the size of Texas. Children may enrol in pre-school at the age of four and a half and their education continues to senior school level when some go on to boarding school. The school provides all the satellite and computer equipment

needed, about £11,000 worth fully installed. This must be returned at the end of the enrolment. It follows the national curriculum and is in the top 10% of the education system in the Northern Territory. From there we went to Anzac Hill where the War Memorial stands from where we had a good overall view of Alice Springs.

Finally, our Alice Springs Town Tour finished with a visit to the Telegraph Station, which was opened in 1872. The Telegraph Station is midway along the Overland Telegraph Line from Darwin to Adelaide which played a key role in Australia's development. The line dramatically reduced the isolation of Australians from the rest of the world. Messages now took hours instead of the months it previously took by sea. The Station Master was a man of great importance. As well as being in charge of the largest station on the Telegraph Line, he ran the regions Post Office and was the government official responsible for Central Australian Aborigines. As the only magistrate in central Australia, he held court at the station, he sold rations to travelers and he even acted as an emergency doctor, following instructions telegraphed from Adelaide! At this period between 1895 and 1905 the station housed a cook, a blacksmith-stockman, a governess, four linesmen-telegraph operators plus the Station Master and his family. As

horses were the only transport for the people on the station about sixty horses were kept, mainly for the linesmen who maintained the Telegraph Line. A very important busy place.

Our next trip on Monday was a full day trip to the West MacDonnell Ranges. I can't adequately describe what we saw on this trip. It was absolutely mind blowing. The hugeness and immensity of the vistas were incredible, as were the colours of the rock formations. My little camera and me were not up to making a realistic impression of what was before our eyes.

As the tour information said, we experienced the magnificent grandeur of the West Macdonnell Ranges (and that wasn't overstated). The deep red cleft of Standley Chasm, the mystique of Ellery Creek Big Hole, the cultural significance of the Ochre Pits and awesome Ormiston Gorge. We had lunch at Glen Helen and then finished off at Simpsons Gap. What I remember most is the hugeness and the colours of the earth and rocks. Truly remarkable, a day I shall long remember.

Our final trip was a half day to a Cattle Station Homestead Tour. There was only Joan and me on this trip. We drove out of Alice to be shown the Meridian Line and then on to Bond Springs Cattle Station dating back to 1876. The historical element included early pioneer buildings: the first homestead, an old "School of the

Air" classroom, blacksmiths shop, leather room and Kidman Cottage. We drove out to the Todd river which runs through the Station. All the tour drivers carry a big wooden box containing cake, biscuits and brewing up equipment. We sat by the river having our morning coffee. The Todd river comprised of a wide red sandy area with not a drop of water in sight. Someone had recently walked across it, the footprints were there to see. Our guide explained that if you dug down two or three feet you would find water and when the rains come it can be quite a raging torrent. Only a short trip but quite illuminating.



Our last day we just spent walking about the town and gearing ourselves up for our next move to Cairns. But that's another story.

***Playing small does not serve the world
(Nelson Mandela)***

Art and Imagination in Biblical Stories



Here in the Sunday School as we are moving into autumn, we have started working on ideas for artworks to display on the walls in the chapel. Painting is always a popular way for children to illustrate a story and express their ideas and the results often lead to larger scale work than drawing for instance. We are lucky enough to have some great materials to work with to properly show the children's talent and enthusiasm.

Our subject for these paintings will be the stories of well-known characters of the Bible, for example Adam and Eve, Jonah and Daniel. Last week we started in the Garden of Eden and after a discussion about the story, the setting, the main characters and their parts, decided to paint different scenes. We had very pleasing results with wild and beautiful gardens, colourful serpents and apples...but this is just the start!

I have many ideas to introduce and use several creative painting techniques to capture the group's imagination and enable them to work quickly and freely in the limited time we have each session. They include using rollers and sponges, stencils, acrylic and water-colour paints with pastels and markers. Some activities may be quite messy and while I have some aprons, please dress in something suitable. I can see I may be setting up in competition with Bob! But of course, any adults are most welcome to join us.

These bold images will be mounted on card and hung at the back of the seating area in the chapel. Further paintings will be made and the display changed to reflect the latest work. We are hoping to have quite a collection from which we can select several that will be scanned and scaled to reproduce on greeting cards. These cards will be produced by Bob and will have a professional finish and when simply and smartly packaged in sets, can then be sold at events to visitors and friends to raise funds for the chapel. Do look out for them, I'm sure they would make a lovely gift and especially as Christmas approaches when we are all looking to give something special and original.

By Helen Fleming

Helen Fleming is an artist and a qualified teacher of art. Helen takes the Sunay school on the second Sunday of every month. All children and families are welcome to attend.



EQUALS on film: Time of Their Lives

With a combined age of almost 300, Hetty, Rose and Alison love to share their concerns on everything from terrorism and global warming to sex, death and the meaning of life.

Showing at Oldham Unitarian Chapel on Sunday, October 23rd at 2pm
Directed by: Jocelyn Cammack
Year: 2008



The Yes Men Fix the World

A screwball true story about two gonzo political activists who, posing as top executives of giant corporations, lie their way into big business conferences and pull off the world's most outrageous pranks.

Showing at Oldham Unitarian Chapel on Sunday, November 13th at 2pm
Directed by: Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno
Year: 2009



The Age of Stupid

This climate blockbuster (UK box office No 1) stars Oscar-nominated Pete Postlethwaite as a man living alone in the devastated world of 2055, watching "archive" footage from 2008 and asking: why didn't we stop climate change while we had the chance?

Showing at Oldham Unitarian Chapel on Sunday, December 11th at 2pm
Directed by: Franny Armstrong
Year: 2009
Starring: Pete Postlethwaite

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.