

The Link Magazine

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January 2015

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**Happy Christmas & A Blessed
New Year**

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends

I am guessing that most of you will be reading this in early December, a time that the church celebrates Advent. Well at least it is meant to but sadly on occasions it seems to get overlooked and overtaken by early Christmas celebrations and messages. It has been so in the wider world for a long time now, with retail leading the way in deciding how soon Christmas cards, trees, decorations, etc., etc., can be displayed, taking that old proverb about *early birds* to a whole different level. However, we are playing a similar game in church. How soon dare we sing our first Christmas carol? Yes, I am Scrooge when it comes to Christmas carols, but if I were to have us sing "Christ the Lord is risen today..." on Good Friday, Maundy Thursday, or Lent week 3 I'm sure you'd think me mad (and before anyone else says it 'yes, I know you have plenty more reasons to think that'). And yet no one seems to bat an eye if I choose Hark the Herald on 14 December. So as we are now in Advent, that is what I want to share with you now. This is an angel, shepherd, stable, manger, baby, Magi... and certainly donkey free zone.

Advent is of course the beginning of a new church year and, just as a new calendar year is a time for looking back and forward, so too Advent is a time of waiting, of hope, of expectation, of preparation, of reflection.

As we journey together through Advent I invite you to look back over this past year and reflect on your faith journey, where have you come from, how has your relationship with God developed, what new insights have you had about your faith, what's been good, or difficult, or challenging? Then think about the coming year. As we await the story of Christmas, a real story of hope, what might your hopes be for yourself, your family & friends, the church, the community? And as we wait, how might you prepare yourself for the journey you will make this year? Think about who you might share it with, and how might you live out a life modelled on the person of Jesus whose birth we await to celebrate on Christmas day.

In the good old days of the 1970s I used to love the anticipation of a new door on my Advent Calendar for 24 days, the simple but vivid coloured new picture

each day made each day special, no chocolate, or gifts, just a simple picture. So my final challenge to you this advent is how can you find something simple to enjoy each day of Advent as we anticipate the big day?

Wishing you a peace filled Christmas and a new year that offers you a new hope.

Till next time

Andrew

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

There has been some interest in having the Christmas Eve Holy Communion service at 8pm. which is midnight Bethlehem time but some prefer it to remain at 11.30pm. This Christmas it will remain at 11.30pm.

For the last 10 years we have had a children's service at 4.30pm. on Christmas Eve. This has been aimed specifically at small children. This year I aim to change that so that it is more an All-Age service. Hopefully there will still be enough content to maintain the interest of little ones but also mark the beginning of Christmas for adults too, who are unable to stay up until after midnight.

Patricia Davies

EXPRESSING OUR THANKS.

On behalf of all our family I want to sincerely thank everyone at Lidgett Park for all the kindness shown to us during our recent sad loss. We thank Andrew Atkins for all he has done to help us and especially his kind words at Hannah's funeral service. It has been a great comfort to know that so many people have been thinking about us, sending cards, phone calls and remembering us in their prayers. Thank you to all who came to Hannah's funeral and especially those who helped in any way. To all who donated to the chosen charities thank you, we know the money is gratefully received by them to help in the valuable support they give to people ,especially young people with cancer.

May God bless you all

Stephanie Haydock

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

7th Dec	10.30	Rev Andrew Atkins	Communion & Gift Service
	6.30		Service at Chapel Allerton Methodist Church
14th Dec	10.30	Mr. John Clay	
21st Dec	3.00	Rev Andrew Atkins	Carol Service
24th Dec	4.30	Mrs. Patricia Davies	All Age Worship
			"Carols around the Cradle"
	11.30	Rev Andrew Atkins	Holy Communion
25th Dec	10.30	Dr Karen Illingworth	All Age Worship
28th Dec	10.30	Rev Palo Tshume	
	6.30	Rev Susan Greenhart	

WORSHIP IN JANUARY

4th Jan	10.30	Rev Andrew Atkins	Covenant Service
	6.30		Service at Chapel Allerton Methodist Church
11th Jan	10.30	Mr David Laycock	
	4.30	Rev 'ds. Creamer/ Atkins	United Service*
			* Please note that at this service Mary Patchett will be admitted as a Local Preacher so please come and support her.
18th Jan	10.30		Ecumenical Service at St Andrew's Church
	6.30	Rev Susan Greenhart	Holy Communion
25th Jan	10.30	Mr Edward Britton	
	6.30	Rev Andrew Atkins	Ecumenical Service

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men **Luke 2:14.**

PRAYERS FOR CHANGE (Mary Patchett)

December

“Are you ready for Christmas yet – got everything prepared?”

“What!!” So many of you will respond.

What are the things you do in preparation for Christmas?

Pause here Think about them

What do you do in preparation for Christmas?

Will you be prepared to be a receiver? In order for you to be a giver there needs to be someone who is able to receive. Each is as important as the other, for without one the other cannot be.



We celebrate God’s gift of Jesus to us at Christmas. Are we able to receive God’s gift or are we too busy trying to be givers to notice the offering made to us?

Lord grant that I may have the grace and humility to receive you honestly this Christmas time with welcome and enthusiasm and a grateful heart, through whoever and in whatever way you make your offering to me. Amen

January

“New Year resolutions are a waste of time. “

When we make them we know we are going to break them, so what’s the point? If we didn’t break them we wouldn’t have to keep making them again each January.

Why wait till January, when we can make momentous resolutions.

I am sorry Lord. I’ve turned away from you, forgotten you, ignored you again. Once more I’ve shut the door in your face. I am sorry. Please come back into my life. Take your place at the head of my table, so that I may invite all your guests to come and share bread with you. Amen.

HOW WELL DO WE KNOW OUR MINISTERS

Following on from the articles of the last two issues, Andrew tells us about his role as a contributor to Roots.

The Other Me – Roots Writer

Many of you will know that I have developed a love of writing over the years. This takes various forms including communion liturgies, Advent and Lent liturgies, stories, meditations, monologues and other odd bits and pieces. A few years ago I was asked if I would like to write for the national ecumenical publication ‘Roots’. For those of you who are not familiar with this publication, which I suspect will be many of you, I shall briefly explain.

Roots has three outlets, all of which are aimed at those who preach, lead worship or take a leadership role in children’s work that has an element of worship/Christian teaching. The three outlets are an “Adult and All Age” magazine, a “Children’s” magazine, and a website. The magazines are published every two months and are related to the weekly lectionary readings. The website contains all the information from the magazines, plus some extra content, links to other resources, and a section called ‘Post Script’ – which I’ll explain in a minute.

So, what is my part in this publication?

Well, I write for the “Adult and All Age” magazine and occasionally for ‘Post Script’.

So, what does this involve?

Taking the **magazine** work first. I usually write for one or two issues per year. Each magazine covers two months, eight or nine Sundays, and there are two writing teams per magazine, so that involves writing four or five weeks worth of material per issue. Each team has a Biblical scholar who will write bible notes, one person who writes sermon notes and ideas, one who writes All Age material, one to write prayers and an editor who works across both teams. I began by writing the sermon notes, but after replacing the All Age material writer on one issue that is what I have been asked to write for the last few issues. Each team meet at a two day conference somewhere in the country about 12-14 months before the magazine is published, to come up with coherent themes, topics,

ideas, theological understandings, resources such as films, excerpts from books, etc. based upon the lead reading for each particular week. These are very hard work, with intense sessions, but they are also great fun and learning experiences and I've been blessed with colleagues who share a good sense of humour with me. After the conference we are sent our writing templates (All Age has nine sections per week) and we usually have between five and eight weeks to submit all our completed work. Some of the nine categories I have to prepare are a different way to present the reading, a way of exploring the reading together, four activities to do in an All Age context. This often involves writing scripts, or dramatized versions of a reading which are then posted on the website for churches to download and use.

Post Script is challenging. It involves less work but a much tighter deadline. Between the Tuesday and Wednesday of the current week you have to produce an item on a few pointers of the news of the last 2-3 days, then tie that in with the lead reading for that Sunday by means of a reflection. Then write a prayer, questions, an action for the week and something for young people. This is then posted on the Website on the Thursday ready for use on the Sunday.

Andrew

A THOUGHT TO PONDER

This is the beginning of a New Day,

God has given me this day to use as I will.

I can waste it or grow in its light & be of service to others.

But what I do with this day is important because I have exchanged a day of my life for it:

When tomorrow comes today will be gone for ever.

I hope I will not regret the price I paid for it.

Found by Margaret Leake on a bookmark in a small Methodist Church in the North York Moors.

LOOKING AHEAD.

Faith in Dark Places: A Lenten Journey: Myths and Lies about Poverty

The venue will be St Edmund's Church, Roundhay on **February 21. 2015. 10am to 3.0pm**. A warm church and welcome awaits you! The conference, including tea / coffee and a light lunch, will be free as the overheads in terms of travelling expenses for speakers, publicity, food etc. will be covered by grants and donations. However, at present we still need to raise another £150.00. so any donations will be welcome.

For more information contact the Rev Jackie Treetops at j.treetops@ntlworld.com

Jill Vogler writes:

The idea for this Lenten conference came from two friends having a cup of tea on a cold January morning. This informal meeting resulted in a further meeting of like minded people, who prayed together for guidance and discernment for the way forward. The group discussed the report, ***"The lies We Tell Ourselves :ending the comfortable myths about poverty,"*** produced by the National Baptist, Methodist, URC and Church of Scotland. Research from this very challenging report shows that over 80% of the population believe that "large numbers falsely claim benefits" and that nearly 60% " agrees that the poor could cope if only they handled their money properly." The Church needs to recognize when we are complicit in perpetuating such convenient myths. After prayerful thought an ecumenical working group was set up to organize a conference.

To provoke thought about poverty, it is timed to be during Lent and before the General Election. The conference aims to be informative about the true nature of poverty. The hope is to engage with people who are not frequent conference goers, and to invite them to bring a friend to find out the truth about poverty in the UK today.

A Methodist, Dr Paul Morrison, author of the above report has agreed to be a key speaker, as has David Rhodes, author of ***"Faith in Dark Places"*** and other books. Ann Morisy, a community lecturer and theologian, has also agreed to open the conference, reflect back at the end of the day's proceedings and give suggestions for future work on issues raised.

Every one present will have the opportunity to join two workshops. The workshops planned are about Homelessness in Leeds, Asylum Seekers, Debt, Food Banks (are they enough ?), the Living Wage, and Work and Welfare. The work shops will have input for 15/20 minutes from a practioner/specialist in the field. In addition we hope to have one or two people who can testify from personal experience. There will be ample time for questions and discussion.

BOOK REVIEW

The Price of Inequality. Joseph E. Stiglitz (2013). London. Penguin Books.

Stiglitz is an economist, formerly Chief Economist at the World Bank and winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001. Despite that formidable CV the book is readable and aimed at the non-economist. Although the analysis is based largely on the American economy, the findings are applicable in varying degree to all Western economies.

The book's message is the Free Market has failed. While the rich have been getting richer, most Americans have seen a decline in real income. The top 0.1% of America's households have an income 220 times that of the average of the bottom 90% and the salaries of chief executive officers (CEOs) are, on average, 243 times that of their employees. In the last three decades those in the bottom 90% have seen incomes rise by 15% while those in the top 1% have seen a rise of 150% and those in the top 0.1% by more than 300%. Similar findings are reported in the UK (see Kathryn Hopkins in The Times, 13th October) where, in the years between 2000 and 2014, the median salaries of the FTSE 100 CEOs rose by 278% but those of their full-time employees by 48%. The disparities have been exacerbated by political decisions such as a move away from progressive taxation, deregulation of the financial sector and reduction in welfare benefits. There are also wider social implications with a decline in social mobility, poorer educational opportunities and poorer health outcomes for those at the bottom of society.

Perhaps the most serious long-term problem is that reward is no longer linked to the usefulness of individuals to society. Stiglitz uses the term 'rent seekers' to describe those who get huge rewards, not by making an overall positive contribution to the wealth of society, but at the expense of others. He sees in such a situation a threat to the foundations of our democratic society.

It is a challenging book and worth reading alongside the conference that Jill Vogler and others are planning to hold at St Edmund's in the New Year.

Stan Pearson

SOME CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Between October 2013 and April 2014 in Leeds:

11,186 food parcels were given out

4,420 individuals were fed

21,308 meals and sandwich batches were given

24,380 meals were served including café provision

Of course, the figures will be higher than this, but this is what was accurately captured.

Steve Carey, Chief Officer for Revenues and Benefits at Leeds City Council, has said that 2015-16 is going to be the hardest yet for people experiencing the effects of changes in the welfare system.

For more information visit www.leedsfoodaidnetwork.org

Taken from the minutes of Leeds Churches Together in Mission (Ed).

ANNUAL PROJECT QUIZ

Copies should be available from the beginning of December (£2 each). This year there are two themes with 50 of the answers having musical connections (terms, instruments etc) and 50 with sporting or games connections. For each theme there will be a few personalities included. There is the option for anyone to compete for the whole quiz or to concentrate on one if the two themes. It will soon be clear which clues relate to which theme. We hope solvers old and new will have a bash.

Fred Langley

Dear Editor

The "Masai version of the Apostles Creed" was excellent so thank you Heather Fry for sharing it with us and I felt that it complemented Colin Watson's article who said "The Christian message is a simple one but a personal one, and that it can be practiced by people of varying degrees of faith and belief".

God gives us faith as a free gift so that we as individuals are on a learning curve, throughout our life, and should not judge or discriminate against others as we follow Jesus, and trust his word and example for ourselves. God is Love and a righteous judge.

JOYCE E. WOOD

WHERE DO THE CHURCHES GO FROM HERE?

There have been items recently on the media relating to two recent reports, one Anglican and one Methodist, addressing the question of falling church membership and attendance. We are encouraged to think about them. They are too detailed for inclusion in the Link, but are available on email from the circuit office (circuitoffice@leedsnandemethodist.org.uk) for those who want to read them.

Clearly we need to think hard about it, but it is also important to recognize that it is not a new nor, indeed, a recent problem, so perhaps our initial reaction shouldn't be one of despair. Twenty years ago the sociologist, Grace Davie in her analysis of changing patterns of church membership since 1945, noted that, whereas many people professed religious belief only a minority attended any place of worship and she coined the term 'believing without belonging'. Even earlier that Don Cupitt (1984) in his book *The Sea of Faith* pointed out that in the mid 19th Century less than half the population attended a place of worship and in the working populations of the large industrial conurbations it was probably closer to 10%. The Vicar of Leeds, W.F. Hook, noted this antagonism to the Church in 1843.

I value our Methodist worship, the music, the prayers and the preaching, the joining together as a body of Christian people and get a great deal from it. However, we have to meet people where they are and think about how we engage with them; we need to think about the language and also the media we use. Surely, it is only when people see the relevance of what the Church says to the problems of our world that they will pay attention. This is why we have to be champions of social justice and reconciliation and this is why the things we do outside our formal worship are so important, such as the various projects we undertake. Nationally, the Church must be prepared to speak out in defence of people as they struggle with the problems in their lives. For this reason I draw people's attention to the conference being organized by Jill Vogler at St Edmund's in the New Year around the theme of **Faith in Dark Places**. More details can be found in this issue of the Link.

See also the following two pieces by Gerry Leake which raise some interesting questions.

Editor.

*The following are some notes made by Gerry on a section of the book “**With or Without God**” by Gretta Vosper .*

What the world needs in order to survive and thrive is the radical simplicity that lies at the core of Christianity and so many other faiths and systems of thought – an abiding trust in the way of love as expressed in just and compassionate living.

This core message carries its own authority. It needs no doctrine to validate it, no external expert or supernatural authority to tell us it is right. Love is quite demanding enough as a foundation, sufficiently complex and challenging without the requirement of additional beliefs, unbelievable to many. The church that the future needs is one of people gathering to share and recommit themselves to loving relationships with themselves, their families, the wider community and the planet.

Such a church need not fear the discoveries of science, history, archaeology or psychology; it will only be enhanced by such discoveries. Such a church need not cling to or justify a particular source for its authority; it will draw on the wisdom of the ages and challenge divisive and destructive barriers. Such a church, grown out of values that transcend personal security, could play a role in the future that is not only viable, but transformative, and desperately needed.

In order for such a church to arise, the foundation of the church will have to shift from where it has been to some place quite different, though firmly rooted in our human story. It must shift from its time-based biblical and doctrinal base to a broader base founded on timeless, life-enhancing values such as love, justice, and compassion – a base that must include all peoples of the world who embrace humanitarian and ecologically sound ideals. It is a broad vision, but a beautiful one. And maybe, just maybe, the church will again be important in the minds and hearts of an increasing number of people.

How much of this do we agree with? Gerry poses some relevant questions:

Para 1 – Love, justice, compassion. Are these fundamental? Are they overwhelmingly apparent in existing churches? Are they overwhelmingly apparent in our own lives?

Para 2 – Why is the church distrustful of new discoveries? Why does the church (generally) cling to a theistic external authority?

Para 3 – “ The church must shift to a broader base founded on timeless, life-enhancing values”. Why? Who decides on what these values should be? What should (must) they be? What will the social consequences be? How will this affect how we live our own lives?

SODA WATER—A MEDITATION

What happens when you open a soda can? There's a pop, a hiss, and then the soda begins to lose its fizz. All the effervescence that was contained in the sealed can now begins to dissipate into the air. The unsealed soda goes flat.

We are much the same. Have you ever seen someone almost visibly lose their bubbles? They have a wonderful idea and in the first flush of enthusiasm rush to share it with someone. But the listener is somewhat less ardent. “ That's a good idea, BUT..”, or “ That reminds me of something I read recently ...”, or even worse “ Yes, but this would make it even better ...”. Soon the fizz has gone; the original enthusiasm has been quenched; the genie has fled from the uncorked bottle. You feel deflated.

However, it's not that you have to keep your ideas secret. There is nothing wrong with opening a soda and pouring some out for others. But if the drinks are poured *before* the guests are ready to drink them, then the soda goes flat, the ice melts – the results are disappointing.

So consider this principle when something bubbles up within you. A God-experience. A new idea. A new direction for your life. There's a temptation to pigeon-hole someone straight away to share it with. But ask yourself – is this the right time, the right place, the right person? And what's your motive? To pass on to others gifts that we have received? To grow closer to people we love and respect? Or are we taking the experience and using it to sell ourselves by showcasing how clever we are or that we have special gifts? If so, it might be better, at least for now, to keep quiet.

In a Society obsessed with information exchange – Fax, Email, Internet and umpteen TV channels – it can almost seem a moral duty to blurt out everything. But sometimes what's good for soda is also good for us; keeping things shut up for the time being and kept fizzy.

Are there things that we need to keep shut away for now – or, conversely, brought out into the open because the moment is right?

Gerry Leake.



INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE.

In October there was a successful panel discussion at St Edmund's which addressed the topic of how Christians should try to interact with people of other faiths. The following pieces give feedback from four people who attended. Ed.

Do we all worship the same God? If so why are Christians accepting martyrdom for their faith?

I have always been taught that salvation can only come through Jesus, so how do you accept the churches' acceptance of other faiths so readily?

Should people of strong faith convictions try to persuade others of their beliefs or should we rely on 'actions speak louder than words'? Is evangelism still okay?

These are only some of the questions which the panel had to answer at the Churches Together Interfaith Discussion in September at St Edmunds.

The evening began with a warm welcome and invitation to enjoy a splendid meal (all food was donated by local businesses) with Christians from many different churches. Then the panel members, who represented the Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Reformed churches and The Society of Friends, tackled the questions which had been submitted previously. The answers offered were thoughtful, considered and inclusive emphasizing the generosity of God who is available to all. Even within our own faith there are different conceptions of God and none of us can fully understand what God is like. We were told to talk with and listen to people of other faiths, promoting interfaith dialogue and strengthening our own faith.

It was interesting to note how much we share with our Christian friends even when our ways of worship and church organisation are different, however, it would be wise to remember that some of the Christian churches not represented might have had a different response to the questions and offered a more exclusive approach to other faiths.

The success of the evening would suggest that if we are to have an impact on the communities in which we live and work then for churches to come together more frequently to tackle issues like this may be the way forward.

Barbara Belsham

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE CONTINUED

There was a good number at the meeting on Tuesday September 30th organised by CTR to think about our relationships with other faiths. We began with a generous supper, which was provided by local businesses.

The panel was drawn up of 5 people representing the different Christian communities in North Leeds; John Summerwill was the Methodist representative. The panel answered some questions which had been put beforehand. It was thought-provoking and illuminating.

I didn't set out to produce a resume of the meeting but I did jot down some remarks which I thought particularly interesting and would like to share with those of you who were not there.

- The familiar quote in St. John's Gospel: "No-one comes to the Father except through me." is often thought to exclude any who are not Christians. Another interpretation could be that those who are forgiving and self-sacrificing, like Jesus, come to God.
- Each faith has a deep reservoir of spirituality. One can deepen one's own faith in conversations with those of other faiths.
- In looking at other faiths, or even people of one's own faith, one has to be careful not to commit the unforgiveable sin: seeing evil where good is at work.
- To pursue evangelism, actions speak louder than words. Mission should be shaping the world.
- In communicating with those of other faiths, listening should come before speaking. We have to work at communicating to make sure we are really understood.
- Interfaith relationships should be based on tolerance, listening and talking together and working together on some project.

This was a very interesting evening and I hope that someone else will have produced a more complete picture than I have done. These were just notes I made to think about later. I hope that the organisers will be encouraged to hold more of these evenings.

Patricia Davies

I am grateful to Mike Bowers for making a note of all the questions that were discussed Ed.

Question 1: Do we all worship the same God? If so, why are Christians accepting martyrdom for their faith?

Question 2: In Matthew 28, we read 'Go, make disciples of all nations,' in John 14 we find 'No one comes to the Father but by me.' What are we to do with these exclusive texts?

Question 3: "I have always been taught that salvation can only come through Jesus, so how do you explain the church's acceptance of other faiths so readily?"

Question 4: It is clear that people of other faiths have genuine experience of God. How is this? Is the Holy Spirit of God universal, operating in all religions?

Question 5: Should people of strong faith conviction, try to persuade others, of *their* beliefs or should we rely on 'actions speak louder than words'? Is evangelism still OK?

Question 6: How can tolerance of other beliefs and religions, be increased?

Question 7: What does God think about people of other faiths using a Christian Church?

Question 8: Can it be right for Christians to attend other religion's places of worship, and follow their congregations in prostrations or other significant gestures?

Question 9: Are cultural events...music, dance, poetry, dress, food etc., in themselves ways into mutual respect and understanding? When, if at all may such events morph into mission opportunities?

Question 10: Should there be anything distinctive about Christian responses to militant Islam in the U.K.?

Question 11: Assuming that C.T.R. responds positively to suggestions arising from this evenings meeting, what practical measures would you recommend to facilitate our becoming proactive in this mission?

Cont.

Question 12: It took 7/7 for the Beeston and South Leeds religious leaders to bond and work together for understanding and friendship. Do we have to wait for a similar catalyst in Roundhay?

So there you have them all. The answers brought scholarship and stewardship intermingled with humour that reflected a position of righteous ownership of the Almighty by some Christians, which does not stack up with the One Almighty and Mysterious but ever Loving God. Other faiths have a passion for God and a huge reservoir of good. A question from the audience was “Why are we not asking other religions what *they* want from us.” Christians should not adopt ‘megaphone’ diplomacy, but listen (now that is difficult! Isn’t it?), love, make friends and share common concerns. Friendship first and consideration. Speaking of which, the CTR will organise a follow-up meeting at which those of ‘Other Faiths’ will have their say.

Michael Bowers

Joyce Wood highlights the remark of one member of the panel, John Battle, who told of an incident when one of his Muslim friends asked him one Easter to explain what the crucifixion of Jesus meant to him personally. Joyce writes:

How would I and other practising Christians respond? what would our answer be to such a tremendous challenge?

As I think and contemplate the crucifixion my eyes are filled with tears and they roll down my cheeks.

My personal response is "Only Jesus died for me".

One of the hymns that she finds expresses this for her is from the Salvation Army Song Book (292):

No, No nothing do I bring

But by faith I’m clinging

To thy cross, O Lamb of God

Nothing but thy blood can save me.

It seems to me that a starting point must be the things we have in common in our beliefs. I reproduce below the so-called Golden Rule as expressed in different faiths and then the words of the Charter for Compassion which has this as one of its central tenets. Ed.

TEXTS OF THE GOLDEN RULE IN VARIOUS RELIGIONS

Baha'i faith

Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.

Baha'u'llah, Gleanings

Buddhism

Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

The Buddha Udana-Varga 5.18

Christianity

Always treat others as you would have them treat you.

Jesus (Luke 6:31)

Hinduism

This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.

Mahabharata 5:1517

Islam

Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.

The Prophet Muhammad (Hadith)

Jainism

One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated

Mahavira, Sutakritanga

Judaism

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole law: the rest is mere commentary.

Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Sikhism

I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all

Guru Granth Sahib, pg. 1299

Zoroastrianism

That nature only is good when it shall not do to another whatever is not good for its own self.

Dadistan-I-Dinik 94.5

Celia Blackden

April 2012

From Inter-Faith Resources , Churches Together in England (www.churches-together.net).

THE TEXT OF THE CHARTER FOR COMPASSION:

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or distain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

<http://charterforcompassion.org/the-charter>

WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

Within the Bible are some very well remembered numbers such as 12 tribes of Israel; 12 disciples; 40 days and 40 nights; 30 pieces of silver; 5 loaves and 2 fishes; (almost) five thousand men etc.

I am sure readers can add many more of their own. However, I find one number occurring, I think, only in St. John's Gospel to be quite intriguing. That number is 153 and occurs in John Chapter 21 verse 11. I find it intriguing because I cannot see the relevance of such a specific number. We are told, in earlier verses of the same chapter, that 'they were not able to haul it in for the quantity of fish'; 'dragging the net full of fish'; 'net full of large fish so many the net was not torn'. In three instances, therefore, we are told that there was a heavy load of fish. Is there any biblical significance in the number 153? Why was this specific number recorded? Why were the fish counted in the first place?

I will apologise now for being slightly flippant, but within this very momentous event does it seem reasonable for any of the seven disciples present at that cooked breakfast provided by Jesus to be so blasé that time could be taken out from conversing with Jesus to "count the fish". Surely this third appearance of Jesus to the disciples (John 21.14) was of much greater importance than the number of fish caught.

It couldn't be one of the earliest fishermen's tales –could it?

Colin Watson

I have done a bit of research for you. Nobody, of course, knows the answer but there are one or two suggestions: 153 is the total number of different types of fish recognised at that time in the Sea of Galilee, so the significance is that the mission of the church is for all people. Another is that the sum of the numbers from 1 to 17 = 153 and also $10 + 7 = 17$. Both 10 and 7 are numbers signifying a perfect whole, so does it signify a message for all? (I think whoever thought that one up doesn't have enough to do with their time). Ed.

The meaning of the Bible: A young boy coming out of Sunday School said to his father, "I now know what the Bible means!" "That's good", said dad. "Why don't you tell me?". "It's easy", replied the excited boy. "It stands for Basic Information Before Leaving Earth".

A Wesleyan Perspective on Predestination – part 3

This is the last of three articles related to a sermon on Romans 8:28-39 preached by John Summerwill at Lidgett Park in July 2014.

In Romans 8:28-29 Paul says: ‘We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.’

In the previous articles I have argued that Paul believed the gospel was for everyone as it was no longer only the Jews who were God’s chosen people. God’s purpose is that all people should become Christ-like.

These words about God working for good remind me of a construction site. There is a sense that a work is going on. In the first instance it is God who is doing the working. There is the implication that it is not an easy job, nor a quick one, to bring about good. We may reasonably suppose that the work will not succeed without our assistance, and requires our cooperation, our work, as well. And that means doing something: not waiting for something to happen; not praying to God to do for us what we can and should do for ourselves, but getting stuck in to working with God for good — our good; other people’s good; the good of the world.

I do not take these words to be any sort of guarantee that life will easy. There is no promise that we will be free of ‘tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or the sword’ (verse 35). The promise is that these calamities will not separate us from the love of Christ, not that they will not happen. There is repeated mention in this passage of the suffering of Christ, as God’s Son who was not spared but given up for us, and who died. The implication is that we can expect the same. Only the story doesn’t end with Christ’s suffering or ours: it ends with Christ’s resurrection and ours, and with the creation of an unbreakable bond between us and him beyond the powers of evil in the universe to break.

This thinking is very much in line with that of the Old Testament prophets. Some people imagine that their role was to be soothsayers, like astrologers predicting the inevitable future, like *Old Moore’s Almanack*. Really they were commentators on the events of their own time, trying to avert the disasters they believed would ensue if people did not change their ways and live according to the rules of the covenant with God. They did not believe the future was already determined. They believed that people’s actions have consequences. Change the actions, and you change the consequences. Appalled at the immorality and ungodliness of their times, they warned that ‘those who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind’ (Hosea 8:7), urged them to ‘seek good, and not evil, that you may

live' (Amos 5:14), and appealed to their nation to 'seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow' (Isaiah 1:17). We may see such teachings as these as the source of Paul's idea of God working for good with those who love him. That prophetic voice is still needed. I wonder if Israelis today ever read these, their own prophets.

Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God is firmly rooted in that prophetic tradition. His vision of the kingdom is a vision of this world not as it is but as it ought to be — as it would be if all people lived under God's rule. The Kingdom, though, does not lie only in some distant future, about which we pray 'Thy kingdom come.' It is already among us; it is already within us; we may choose even now to live in God's kingdom and enjoy the benefits of being its citizens. Now, that is a gospel that needs some discernment on our part if we are to believe it, trust it and live by it. It takes faith to run the risk of trusting God to stand by us and fulfil his promises when we try to live by kingdom values in a world where others spurn those values and want us to choose greed, consumerism, self protectionism, and the use of force, and especially when our world or our lives are hit by one disastrous blow after another.

Yet there are people who do live in such faith. I read that the Islamic Society militants in Iraq who are destroying churches and trying to force Christians to convert have even destroyed a very famous and ancient mosque supposedly on the site of the burial place of Jonah, a prophet honoured by Muslims as well as Christians and Jews. There is a particular irony that will have escaped these vandals, in that the central message of Jonah is one of religious tolerance. How sad, though, that religious bigotry is so much on the rampage in Iraq today. It reminded me that there was a time in England when iconoclastic bigots vandalised churches in the name of God in Cromwell's Commonwealth. At Staunton Harold in Leicestershire there is a church that was the only one built in that unpromising time, by a man of faith who believed that ultimately the values of God's kingdom would prevail. There's an inscription that names: '*Sir Robert Shirley Baronet Founder of this church anno domini 1653 on whose soul God hath mercy.*' Another over the entrance reads '*When all things sacred were throughout the nation either demollisht or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley Barronet founded this Church whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in the worst times And hoped them in the most callamitous.*'

To do the best things in the worst times and hope them in the most calamitous sums up very well the sort of faith that Paul is encouraging here in Romans. Work with God for good, even when the going is tough, and God will work with us, the people he has called to be made like his Son.

It was in the worst and most calamitous of times, in 1914, that Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy, son of a Leeds curate, became an army chaplain and lived alongside and suffered alongside the men in the trenches of the Western Front. His courage, his caring ministry and his cheerfulness made him very popular with the troops, and his generous supplies of cigarettes were appreciated too, earning him the nickname Woodbine Willie. Even if we knew nothing of the man, we could catch a sense of his deep underlying faith, joy and love just from those sunny words in his hymn, 'Awake, awake to love and work' (HP 631):

' So let the love of Jesus come, and set thy soul ablaze
To give and give and give again what God has given thee;
To spend thyself nor count the cost, to serve right gloriously
The God who gave all worlds that are, and all that are to be.'
That is what it means to work with God for good.

The future has not yet been written: it is for us to write it. Our destiny has not been determined: we shall choose it. If we are wise with Solomon's wisdom, we will ask the Holy Spirit to help us in our weakness, to intercede for us (Romans 8:26), to show us the way to God's will and enable us to do it, allowing God to work for good with us who love him, confident that nothing will ever separate us from his love.

CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH (answers on page 32)

F	S	U	A	L	C	A	T	N	A	S	I
P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S	H	A	E	V
U	M	A	I	J	E	W	S	M	A	R	Y
D	A	C	N	D	O	O	T	R	E	E	R
D	N	M	N	K	E	S	S	G	O	L	D
I	G	B	Y	W	I	S	E	M	E	N	R
N	E	A	H	R	S	N	R	P	A	E	A
G	R	O	H	L	R	U	C	G	H	W	T
I	L	C	E	V	E	H	J	E	S	U	S
R	U	G	D	O	N	K	E	Y	N	U	S
L	N	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S	T
A	U	N	T	S	N	O	W	M	A	N	E

LIDGETT PARK LADIES' GROUP

We meet at 7.45 pm in the Youth Hall at Church on alternate Thursday evenings but note a different venue for the first two events.

- 11th Dec. In the Community Hall at 7.30 pm. Our annual CAROL SERVICE is OPEN to ALL. Please come along, join with the Ladies and sing some of your favourite carols. Refreshments will be provided .
- 8th Jan. Again in the Community Hall at 7.45 pm (usual time). NEW YEAR'S PARTY. Food, drink (of the correct kind!) and light entertainment.
- 22nd Jan. 7.45 pm in the Youth Hall. Our own Barbara Belsham will be here again, telling of her visit to CUBA, and this will be an evening OPEN to ALL as it is a destination which few of us will have visited and should be very interesting.

Lynne Pullein

THE QUIZ

Name that bird.

Find a word for each of these clues, then change one of the letters to give the name of a bird (example: a four leaf one might bring you luck – clover; plover)

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Boring tool (3) | 2. Reserve (4) |
| 3. Superficial (7) | 4. Field attached to parish church |
| 5. Wake up (6) | 6. Precious red stone (6) |
| 7. Requirement to stay indoors for given period (6) | |
| 8. Enjoyable (8) | 9. Yield (4) |
| 10. Hit (6) | 11. Refinement (7) |
| 12. Car fuel (6) | |

For answers see page **32**

Fred Langley

NOTICES WITH UNINTENDED MEANINGS

The Drama Group will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church Hall Friday at 7 PM. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a crèche during Morning Service.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AT THE LEEDS CHURCH INSTITUTE.

Leeds Church Institute was founded in 1857 by the Vicar of Leeds, Dr Walter Hook. It is now an ecumenical organisation committed to developing community cohesion and social justice. It has a varied and full programme of events, of which the following is a sample. For those interested in learning more the website is:

<http://www.networkleeds.com/> Telephone 0113 391 7928.

Lunchtime conversation – Tuesday 2nd December 12.30 to 2.30 pm. Light lunch provided. The book *Sabbath as Resistance by Walter Bruggeman*. Leaders Jo and Andrew Lightowler.

RESERVE THE DATE

Friday 19th December at 7.30 pm

**A CONCERT OF CAROLS AND CHRISTMAS
MUSIC**

By

The Wendel Singers and the Lidgett Park Drama Group

**All proceeds will be donated to the Lidgett Park
charity project for this year.**

The Oxford Place Children's Centre.

Tickets £8 including refreshments (children free).

CIRCUIT FORUM MEETING

This will be held at Roscoe on Tuesday 22nd December at 7.30 pm

“MURDER AT MIDNIGHT” SOME WINING ANSWERS

When this Link is published the Drama Group’s run of Irving Theaker’s murder mystery play will be over. It is, therefore, safe to publish some of the prize winning answers to the questionnaire people entered whilst having their refreshments and trying to work out “who dunnit”. Not that these answers would have helped anyone! Over the years we have had some hilarious ideas put forward and have often said we should let others read them, so here are a few of those who got first prize in the recent run.

But first - the cast list for those who saw it so long since they’ve forgotten!

Tom (Irving Theaker), Fred (Peter Harper), Charlotte (Catherine Johnston), Florence (Pat Brooke), Janet (Carol Russell), Debra (Mary Patchett), David (Ian Russell), Penny (Alison Yorke), Brenda (Marion Colbeck)

The first one printed below is unusual in that it is written in verse.

Who has done the dirty deed?

Whoever has been shot

We’ll try our best to work it out

No clues found in the plot.

Penny says she shot Fred

Brenda says Charlotte did it

Fred said – “I’m not dead”

It’s David who took the bullet.

According to the script we heard

It should be orphan Alice

But we’d like it to be Brenda

Who got the poison chalice.

So David has been shot it seems

We still don’t know who’s done it

But we haven’t mentioned Janet yet

So it’s she what’s gone and done it!

Morley

We’ve talked around who done it

And the conclusion we have drawn

Is – it could be any one of them

Who appears to be shot at – midnight.

Many years ago, whilst out foraging in the hedgerows, Florence had an illicit encounter with the local squire. After a few months' "holiday" at her aunt's at Southend-on-Sea, she returned, and continued her life in Pendon as before.

Florence became interested in amateur dramatics, and encouraged other locals to join. Gradually the group grew in size, until one day a man named David joined. There was something familiar about him, but Florence didn't know what...

Brenda, another member of the Pendon Players, who was editor of the local newspaper, was intent on stirring up trouble, so decided to do some detective work. Before long she discovered that David was the love child of Florence and the squire. She decided to publish a no-holds-barred exposé. It would be a story to rock the village.

Florence was given a tip off about the story, and in a half-hearted attempt to end it all, mixed a potion of deadly nightshade juice and ragwort. It left her in a dazed state so she reached into the props box.... Grabbed the gun.... Fired at Brenda.... Missed.... And shot David dead instead!

Farnley

Back stage everybody was arguing and they decided to have a Mexican style stand off with the weapons from the weapons' box, however as there weren't enough weapons Tom decided to wield the cardboard box. Florence came back stage to see the ruckus and decided what they needed was team building exercises and made them all do the conga. They immediately jumped for joy and joined in. Tom was so excited he dropped the box which David (who had previously been holding the gun) tripped over and shot himself, the bullet travelled through the entire conga line narrowly missing Florence at the back. Everybody died.

Kippax

Brenda has been shot. She has acquired the editor's job under suspicious circumstances..... She has the dirt, but what.....?

Florence worked as a nanny for the Carstairs-Flints at Pendon Hall. She was the only person privy to certain information. She knew that Tom was "having it off" with the Lady Carstairs-Flint, and they had a love child.....Charlotte! Florence raised Charlotte in secret, and has been keeping the secret for years. Somehow Brenda has found something out and has planted Penny as an under-cover journalist to get to the bottom of it. Florence, fearing that everything will come out, has shot Brenda to ensure the secret remains undiscovered.

Knaresborough

Florence engineered the play and gave out the scripts. She knew the gun was in the prop box.

She is working with David to get rid of Penny and Penny had a hold over David, knowing that David did something to help a friend. Penny got Brenda to invite her to the meeting, at David's request. The friend is Florence and she has been using her knowledge of dangerous plants to drug the old people in the home and steal their belongings. The gun is a prop – the actual murder was committed by Florence when she tapped Penny/Alice with the wand which had poison on it.

Oakwood

The Good Fairy is really the Bad Fairy. She is seen to have badness running through her. Fred wants Brenda out of the way so that he can do a cast change with passion. The Fairy granted his wish. PING. PING.

Fairy hypnotises Brenda to shoot herself when the gong strikes 12. BUT as all the cast are here in the interval having tea and cakes we believe that no-one was killed. There is no body. OR perhaps the tea has slow poison in it and they will all die slowly.

Chapel Allerton

Red Herring Prizes in the form of fish shaped sweets are awarded for various deserving (or not) submissions.

Behind the scenes: Arguments explode. Brenda threatens to publish the story of her affair with Fred. Janet snaps, grabs the rope and strangles Brenda. Tom tries to stop Janet but Fred tries to stop Tom. They struggle and fall to the floor, bashing their heads. Dead.

Charlotte loses it with Penny, grabs the dagger and stabs Penny – Dead. David, who is Penny's father (by Brenda) tries to stop Charlotte. But in the struggle David stabs Charlotte. Dead! Shocked David then tries to stop Janet who has now strangled Brenda (Dead) who is Penny's mother. But Florence grabs the gun as she hates Brenda and tells him to stop. He doesn't and so she shoots. Unfortunately the bullet goes through David (Dead) and kills Janet as well. (Dead). Florence only one left standing goes to tell Debra.

Tom is the murderer. He is secretly a transvestite and has longed to play Cinderella for years. He has killed both Charlotte and Penny with a single shot because they were standing together arguing. Now he has a choice of dresses!

And finally a succinct Red Herring prize was "David is murdered by Bad Penny who has just turned up!"

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QUIZ ANSWERS

Name that bird. Find a word for each of these clues, then change one of the letters to give the name of a bird.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. awl: owl | 2. book: rook |
| 3. shallow: swallow | 4. glebe: grebe |
| 5. arouse: grouse | 6. garnet: gannet |
| 7. curfew: curlew | 8. pleasant: pheasant |
| 9. crop: crow | 10. strike: shrike |
| 11. culture: vulture | 12. petrol: petrel |

Fred Langley

CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH ANSWERS (with thanks to Peter Harper)

Santa Claus, snowman, presents, Joseph, Mary, Jesus, wise men, shepherds, inn, angel, donkey, manger, gold, frankincense, myrrh, pudding, tree, ivy, Jews, star, eve, new girl, rung, aunt, sun.