



Great Meeting Chapel Leicester

Newsletter - Spring 2015



300 years of Freedom, Reason and Tolerance

Spring/ Summer Services

Unless otherwise stated, services are held at chapel at 11 o' clock, and conducted by the Minister.

SIGNIFICANT DATES

Sunday 1st March:

Vestry meeting after the morning service

Saturday 7th March:

East Midland District meeting at Leicester, from 2.30pm

Sunday 15th March:

Mother's Day. Simon Hall

Sunday 5th April:

Easter Day

Sunday 7th June

EMU Joint Service at Hinckley 6pm, tea served from 4.30pm.

From the Minister...

Dear Friends,

If you were parachuted in to Leicester, the road sign in the photograph would tell you a great deal about the place where you had landed: that it had a thriving cultural life, that it had history, and that it had an enlightened religious outlook.

I pass this road sign on the A6 nearly every time I drive into town, and have always been struck by the depth behind its simple messages.



On the first day I ever spent exploring Gallowtree Gate after arriving here, the actor Edward Fox walked past me. I knew in a moment that I had arrived somewhere with a busy theatrical scene.

The discovery of Richard III's remains has now become synonymous with our city, whose history extends far back into Roman times.

And the fact that at the heart of Leicester stands a place of liberal religion, resting in the midst of one of the busiest multi-national and multi-faith populations, is extraordinary. That we have been here for over three centuries, and continue to survive amid the often treacherous seas of modern life with all its convulsions, is a remarkable testimony to the durability of our religious principles.

I drive past this road sign on my way to chapel, and it reminds me every time I see it that our life here is richly informed by the imaginative arts, by the depth of our roots in our heritage, and by the enlightenment of religious freedom and tolerance.

Long may it continue.

With good wishes to all members and friends,

Arthur

WOMENS INSTITUTE COFFEE SHOP

At the close of 2014 the WI, which had been running our Saturday morning Coffee Shop in the Garden Room on the first and third Saturdays in the month, had to regretfully suspend their activities owing to lack of volunteers.

As we ourselves have found, to sustain a regular Coffee Shop with all its associated commitments, takes perhaps more time and energy than we or the WI can muster.

The Great Meeting Coffee Shop might be closed, but its legend lives on. Its numerous former customers recall its delicious and inexpensive coffee, its extraordinarily good cakes, its bookstall, and its sales of home-made jams and chutneys second to none.

People still turn up at the chapel doors in the hope that it might re-open. Perhaps one day it will.

Our grateful thanks to Annie and all her helpers who made such a success of it, and to the Leicester Ladies WI, who have kindly donated £40 to chapel as a leaving present.

CONDOLENCES

It is with great sadness that we record the death, in December, of Rosalind Loynes the mother of our member Nicky Drucquer and mother-in-law to Mike.

Rosalind was 93 years old and passed away peacefully, after a difficult illness, in a residential home in Norwich.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to Nicky and Mike and all members of their family.

HARVEST 2014

Last year we celebrated our annual Harvest Festival with a service on Sunday 5th October, followed by a Harvest Lunch. We are very happy to record that donations, with proceeds from the Sale of Produce (£58), plus a profit from the lunch itself, raised the handsome amount of £150. This was donated to this year's charity, the Send-a-child-to-Hucklow fund.

Grateful thanks are recorded to Morag Jones and Theresa (of The White Swan, Sileby), and everyone who contributed puddings, for their generous donations towards the food.

BURNS LUNCH

The 25th January is the anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet. This year the 25th fell on a Sunday, and the small but enthusiastic group of Scottish Members were the impetus for a repeat of our Burns Lunch.



Traditionally the lunch, which followed Sunday morning

service in which the Minister spoke of the significance of Burns' legacy to the Scottish identity, comprised the winning combination of haggis (with veggie option if preferred), tatties and neaps, followed by a dessert of cranach, with a dram and shortbread on the side for those who wished to partake of a drop. Head chef Morag Jones sources her haggis from Waitrose and arrives at GM early on Sunday morning to start the three hour steaming process.

The congregation would like to thank Morag and all who helped her prepare this extremely enjoyable occasion for the 18 members who attended. We were all agreed that the end result was quite delicious—piping hot and flavour-some—a real winter warmer.

Report on Great Meeting given at the December meeting of the East Midlands District

We continue to enjoy a full programme of Sunday gatherings each week at 11am, with the Minister in the pulpit and supporting us with his usual well planned and thought-provoking services. Particularly of note was the enjoyable Harvest Service where there was additional input, in the form of the readings, by congregational members also. During this quarter we were also pleased to welcome again Revd Chris Goacher on November 2nd in our Minister's absence that day.

We are extremely fortunate in having the support of our organist and pianist Mark Balding who happily and enthusiastically assists on a regular basis.

The Music Group has restarted recently, meeting on Wednesday evenings in the garden room at 7.30 pm - all welcome.

Buildings / Lettings etc

Various groups continue with their weekly or monthly hire of our premises (Garden Room) and it's good to

see local organisations with similar ideals to our own, be able to take advantage of such central and well-appointed facilities. On the health and safety front, finger-guards recently installed on all the doors in the public areas.

One victim of its own success in a way has unfortunately been the fortnightly Coffee Mornings, since some months back being provided by the local Women's Institute – it would appear that there just aren't enough dedicated cake-makers around to support this event on a regular ongoing basis at present, which is a shame.

The local NHS Agency – *Inclusion* – continue with their lease of the main buildings attached to the chapel and this brings us the much needed regular income with which to support ourselves, albeit with the usual and, dare I say, numerous and ongoing challenges (especially around the provision and siting of a lift!) of being a socially responsible landlord 😊

Some major and urgent work to our plane trees is needing to be carried out and the intention is to get

this completed within the coming few weeks and certainly ahead of any possible winter storms. We have the necessary quotes, but this will be an expensive outlay for our chapel, even though it's vital to the well-being of the building for the future.

Events / Plans

We are well-featured in a newly produced city-wide leaflet 'Discover Leicester City Churches'. This took a panel of 10 a year to complete and is a fitting accompaniment to the newly installed array of historic and cultural signage provided across Leicester by the City Council – we also now have a lovely new noticeboard attached to our railings

Simon Hall

Cao Dai

During our recent visit to Vietnam our guide took us to a Cao Dai temple, site of worship for the religion founded in 1926 by a Vietnamese civil servant, which still has a million followers in Vietnam. Aiming to form a peaceful and harmonious synchrony between

Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, Confucianism and Taoism it numbers Mohammed, Victor Hugo, Julius Caesar and Joan of Arc amongst its saints.

The highly coloured and neon lit interior was immaculately maintained and we were kindly allowed to take photos, of which this is one, showing Buddha, Jesus, Confucius and (I think) a Taoist monk, although I might stand corrected on that.

Mike Drucquer



Tree Work

Great Meeting's magnificent London Plane trees need some work. The branches are brushing against the roof slates and will cause damage if left to grow any further. (See front cover).

Following two site meetings with the tree surgeon, estimates have been obtained and the necessary approval from the city council is in progress.

The trees are an impressive asset to Great Meeting, even if their proximity to the buildings can cause some anxiety. This is often the case with Plane trees as they have been widely planted in urban environments since their introduction to this country in the late 17th century. They thrive in towns and cities because they are tolerant of pollution, compacted soils and extremes of wet and dry. It is said that they quite enjoy a hot summer. The bark is mottled, lichens add interest to the trunks and autumn colour is excellent. Their canopies provide dappled shade, will protect ground from overheating in summer and can be an essential component of the 'green lung' of the urban environment.

Left to grow to a full height and breadth in a park environment the shimmering broad leafed canopy is very fine and will sway gracefully in a summer breeze. However this cannot be possible in our situation and some judicious lopping is advised. Vigorous amputation of large branches may be tempting to reduce the frequency of expensive tree surgery but this is understandably frowned on by arborologists who warn against shocking the tree and irreversible 'lollipop' damage to its shape. Therefore, the compromise solution is to prune back to give at least 2 metre clearance of buildings, remove dead wood (which if left to fall can cause pedestrian concussion) and thin the crown by a 15% 'haircut'.

Leicester city centre, particularly around Highcross, is sparse in large tree provision and this makes Great Meeting's plane trees all the more significant. This summer, when the trees are in full leaf following the tree surgeon's gentle attentions, I will stop for a few seconds at the corner of the John Lewis store to look down the street (with my gaze averted from the tax office) to admire these historic and splendid old specimens.

Mike Drucquer

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