

Leicester



Unitarians

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June, July &
August 2008
Newsletter.

Diary for June

“What we are we have reached because of other people’s planting. The thoughts, the values, the ideas and the feelings we possess are articulate because we have been the recipients of knowledge, kindness, love and understanding. And above all, the mystery we call life we owe to a presence yet unknown, yet still very near to us...”

V.E. Gudmonson.

Services in June:

Sunday 1st: 11am Patrick Timperley
Sunday 8th: 11am Patrick Timperley
Sunday 15th: 3pm Raymond Seal
Sunday 22th: 11am The Minister
Sunday 29th: 11am The Minister

Services in July:

Sunday 6th: 11am The Minister
Sunday 13th: 11am Rev J Findlay
Sunday 20th: 3pm Sir P Soulsby
Sunday 27th: 11am The Minister

Services in August:

Sunday 3rd: 11am The Minister
Sunday 10th: 11am The Minister
Sunday 17th: 3pm The Minister
Sunday 24th: 11am The Minister
Sunday 31st: 11am The Minister

Items intended for inclusion in the September/October issue of the newsletter should be handed in to the Minister by August 17th, please.

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Friday 14th East Midland Quarterly Meeting at Boston, 2.30pm

Sunday 22nd Welford Cemetary Walk, 2pm

Friday 27th – Sunday 29th EMU Summer Weekend at Great Hucklow

Diary for July

Saturday 5th Hinckley Family and Friends Day.

Saturday 26th Simon Headley Organ Recital, 7.30pm

Diary for August

Sunday 3rd Loughborough Unitarians meet at 3pm.

Saturday 24th Baptism of **Jack Shepherd Cockerill**.

Saturday 30th Enderby Youth Band, from 2pm.

N.B. Dates and times of the meetings of the Chapel Vestry and of the Making Things Happen Group will be announced from the pulpit.

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FROM THE MINISTER:

Dear Friends,

In May I gave a sermon to a small congregation at Chapel, which some were kind enough to say had been useful, and I take the opportunity to repeat some of the ideas in my letter in this issue.

Many years ago, long before Annie and I met and were married, I reached a point in my life when my responsibilities were really beginning to weigh heavily on me and get me down.

During that period I asked the advice of two separate people whom I respected, and what they said was immensely helpful to me.

The first introduced me to the idea of “good enough” parenting: that in bringing up children one should not strive for perfection or try to be an ideal mother or father, just try to be good enough and that will suffice.

I held on to that idea and it, coupled with the understanding that children are adaptable and robust in many ways, got me through some dark times when I was partially separated from my son.

The other person I sought advice from was the abbot of a monastery in Gloucestershire. At the monastery the monks had to ask permission from the abbot if they wanted to do the smallest thing that deviated from the day-to-day routine of their order – for example, if they wanted to go for a walk or meet a visitor.

I asked the abbot how he coped with responsibility of all the monks’ requests and needs. His answer really surprised me: he said, I cope with it by not caring.

I did not really understand how someone in his position could mean that, but his words, and the notion of “good enough” parenting, gently eased the load of responsibility I was experiencing, and helped me through those difficult days.

Throughout my ministry I have rejoiced that what I do usually seems unimportant in the world’s eyes. Indeed, some people hold the view that ministers are irrelevant. We are not doctors who strive to save lives; we are not truck drivers who have to deliver goods safely and on time; we are not responsible for money, food hygiene, scientific research.

Conducting a £5000 wedding, a funeral or a baptism *are* the times when the job’s responsibilities weigh heaviest, but otherwise who is to say that ministry is significant or not? You can imagine what a marvellous sense of being a free-agent that brings.

FROM THE MINISTER (Cont’d):

It is not the whole story of course, far from it, because ministers take themselves and what they do *utterly* seriously. The work would not be worth doing otherwise. But as I say, in the world’s eyes, it does not appear to be all that important.

The apparent lack of responsibility to which I refer, is not in fact as irresponsible as it sounds. Who would argue that dealing with grief and crisis, sickness and bereavement, can be done in an irresponsible way? They cannot – and of course these are all part of a minister’s experience and work. And yet there is an aspect of ministry and of the religious life which is nourished and fed by the lack of conventional responsibility, the “good enough” philosophy of life, and even the *care-free* outlook of the abbot at the monastery.

Being able to unharness myself from responsibilities it was not necessary for me to bear was a great liberation those many years ago, and I have always tried (not always successfully) to bear these ideas in mind when new duties present themselves, as they unfailingly do.

As they say to new parents after the arrival of a new baby: may all your troubles be little ones.

With good wishes to all loyal members and friends,

ARTHUR.

CARETAKER AT GREAT MEETING

For some time now the Chapel officers have been discussing the desirability of appointing a Caretaker.

With the increase in our potential lettings and more groups asking if they can use our rooms for their meetings, the need for a Caretaker to open up and prepare rooms for different purposes has become evident.

There are also many practical jobs which require attention around Chapel in addition to the routine cleaning tasks.

We are pleased to welcome Stephen Lynch as our new Caretaker as of the beginning of June and hope that he will be very happy with us.

THE LORD MAYOR OF LEICESTER

On Thursday 15th May I was privileged to attend the Making of the Mayor ceremonial at Leicester Town Hall, which was part of the Annual General Meeting of the City Council. In the company of our Chairman, Sir Peter Soulsby MP, I took my seat in the packed Council Chamber and listened as the previous Lord Mayor, Cllr Gary Hunt, stood down from office, and the new Lord Mayor, Cllr Manjula Sood, was duly appointed.

As we heard in the Speeches of Proposal, Manju is the first female Asian Lord Mayor in the whole of the United Kingdom. She now stands in an historical line of Leicester's 800 years of mayoraldom. And with her very close connections with us at Great Meeting, continues the ancient tradition of "the Mayor's Nest"!

Then on the morning of Sunday 18th May, Sir Peter, Diane, Annie and I joined the throng at Leicester Cathedral to take part in the Mayoral Civic Service there, and what a colourful and splendid occasion it was too.

It is an immense achievement for Manju who, as the *Leicester Mercury* reported: "beamed with delight as she donned the Lord Mayor's robes and chain for the first time...The Latimer Ward councillor said she had not dreamed she would reach such high office when she arrived in the city from India in 1970. 'It's a great honour for me to represent the city,' she said. 'This will be an historic time for Leicester in many ways and I am really looking forward to doing all I can to promote what's going on here across the world.'

She announced her chosen charity would be the 2009 Special Olympic Games, which Leicester is hosting. Councillor Sood said: "The Special Olympics raise awareness of the capabilities of people with learning disabilities, and gives all those who take part the opportunity to achieve amazing things. It is my aim to get every citizen involved in these games in some way."

Councillor Sood became a councillor for Latimer in October 1996, following the death of her husband Paul, who had been the ward councillor."

Our warmest congratulations to Manju on her terrific achievement, to Cllr Manish Sood, and to Mitesh Sood and his bride Sheenal, and to all their family. We wish Manju a joyous and no doubt busy year in office, one of the highlights of which I trust will be her attendance at our Tercentenary Service here in Chapel on Saturday 4th October 2008.



AN ADDRESS WITH THE DALAI LAMA

On Saturday 24th May 2008 the Dalai Lama began a five-day series of Addresses and Teachings at Nottingham. Among those present was Christian Stewart, son of the Minister, and he sends us this report.

Having spent a fortunate and very enjoyable weekend in Nottingham attending His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings on Finding Meaning in Life, I feel very much encouraged to practise his message of compassion and understanding. His Holiness teaches we should extend this accepting outlook towards everyone we interact with, and in doing so, others will respond similarly. In this way it is possible that our world could become a more compassionate and harmonious place to live.

It is clear that these teachings on Universal Responsibility are relevant to each and every one of us. If we all could begin to see our fellow human beings as essentially no different from ourselves, sharing as we do the same concerns and needs, then we would all enjoy greater happiness and peace. I find myself in full agreement with the Dalai Lama: Nothing could be more meaningful or rewarding in life.

CHRIS STEWART.

WARMEST CONGRATULATIONS!

To proud grandparents Ruth and Phil Archer, their daughter Helen and son in law Martin, on the safe arrival of Rebecca Sophie in Auckland, New Zealand on 4th April 2008



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MARJORIE EVANS

We are very pleased to report that Marjorie has now returned from hospital and is now back at her flat in John Woolman House, Rawson Street, Leicester.

It was especially good to see Marjorie at a service during May where all present were able to welcome her back to Chapel.

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

This group continues to meet and finalise plans for our Chapel Tercentenary. A commemorative badge and selection of greetings cards will be available shortly. Please see the enclosed programme of events.

CHAPEL VESTRY

The vestry met after the AGM on 20th April. New members Morag Jones, Steve Miles, Elisabeth Wykes and Annie Stewart (all elected at the AGM) were welcomed. Thanks to retiring vestry members, especially Ruth Archer for her sterling work as Chapel Secretary over many years.

Matters under consideration were chiefly the employment of a Caretaker (see earlier notice), the cornice repair (contact with the contractor has been made) and the Chapel heating (a consultant will now advise us on the most appropriate system for installation).

WELCOME HOME!



A very warm welcome home to Pam and Charles McIntosh and to Ruth and Phil Archer – both couples have been to New Zealand visiting their families.

*Ruth, Pam, Charles and their granddaughter
Devon. Cambridge NZ. May'08*

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When Arthur asked me if I had anything I wanted to include in the newsletter I thought it might be good to share a book review. I'm sure we all read something, hear a radio programme, see a film or play at the theatre, and find it lingering in our mind for whatever reason. I especially love the Saturday book reviews and so I invite you all to share your highs (even lows) of the written and spoken word. So here goes with the first...

AND FINALLY!!!!

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini

This beautifully written book moved me by its content. It is the story of two women living in Afghanistan and spans a period of forty years to the present day. At times Hosseini paints harrowing and brutal scenes but always retains, through the characters of Mariam and Laila, humanity, spirit and above all love. There were chapters in this novel through which I literally held my breath, wishing with all my heart that what was unfolding would not, could not happen. It is very easy for those of us lucky enough to live in safety to visualise Afghanistan as a brutal, forsaken place, but this novel shows us something more. It forces the reader to acknowledge and recognise not only the suffering of people in our war torn world but something else, the human capacity for survival, forgiveness and love. Truly a wonderful book and one I would urge others to read. The best novel I have read in a long time and one that will stay with me for a long time to come.

ANNIE

Be thou a bright
Flame before me;
Be Thou a guiding
Star above me,
Be Thou a smooth
path below me,
And be a kindly
Shepherd behind me,
Today, tonight, and
For ever.

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