

CROSS STREET CHAPEL MANCHESTER

The meeting place of Unitarians in city centre Manchester

FOUNDED 1662 ~ BUILT 1694 ~ REBUILT 1959, 1997



NEWSLETTER FOR MAY AND JUNE 2009

SUNDAY WORSHIP 10.45am

MIDWEEK SERVICE on WEDNESDAYS 1.20pm to 1.50pm

Minister
Rev Jane Barraclough, MA

FROM THE MINISTER

As I sit and write this, we are about to celebrate Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter, all challenging festivals whatever our beliefs about physical resurrection and life after death.

But whether we take these doctrines literally or metaphorically, one thing is certain, no kind of rebirth can be experienced, in this life or the next, without a death to self. And any genuine participation in Easter involves both the challenge to power and the risk of suffering involved in the journey to Jerusalem, and engaging the powers.

We do not have much capacity to even accompany suffering, particularly when there is any risk to ourselves. The story of the Gethsemane vigil is a particular case in point. Jesus, knowing that the authorities are looking for him is overwhelmed with fear. He asks the disciples to watch and wait with him while he prays. But they cannot stay awake. Three times he has to wake them, the same symbolic three times that Peter denies knowing Jesus later that week. First Judas, then Peter, tend to take the rap for betraying Jesus but in this story the gospel writer makes it clear that we all have trouble sticking around in times of trouble.

What's the old saying? "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

Well, it ain't necessarily so. When the going gets tough, the tough stick around.

Here are some words by Janet Morley, a prayer for the dying and when preparing for death:

When I come to die,
Give me companions:
Cheerful, practical,
Able to walk the edge with me
And look me in the eye.
Until that time,
Grant me to use fully
Each day, each hour,
Open-hearted, knowing your love,
Savouring my life.

Go gently

Jane

Cover: The cover image was generously provided by the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network. Details of the Earth Spirit Seed Group that now meets regularly at Cross Street Chapel are to be found on page 6.

SERVICES

Services will be held as usual on Wednesday lunch times, 1.20pm to 1.50pm, and on Sundays at 10.45am. Tea and coffee are available after each service.

SUNDAY STEWARDS ROTA

May	3	Peter Sampson
	10	Wynne Simister
	17	Derek McAuley
	24	Peter Sampson
	31	Enid Johnson
June	7	Wynne Simister
	14	Derek McAuley
	21	Peter Sampson
	28	Enid Johnson

FLOWER LIST

May	3	Eric Armitage	Gift to Chapel
	10	Trevor Cheetham	Gift to Chapel
	17	Wynne Simister	Gift to Chapel
	24	Derek McAuley	Gift to Chapel
	31	Rich Daley	Gift to Chapel
June	7	Enid Johnson	Sister's Birthday
	14	Bob Willescroft	Mankind Initiative
	21	Eric Armitage	Gift to Chapel
	28	Peter Sampson	Gift to Chapel

SOME DIARY DATES AT CROSS STREET CHAPEL

3 May	Flower Communion
10 May	Committee meeting after the Service
10 -16 May	Christian Aid Week
21 May	8.00pm Earth Spirit Seed Group with Rev. Jane Barraclough
28 May	7.00 for 7.30pm U-Café - talk by Rev John Midgley "In The Footsteps of William Gaskell" (reprise of Gaskell Society talk which many of us missed last year due to the Congregational Outing to the Lake District)
29 May	1.00pm Recital
31 May	Pentecost – visit by Wirral Unitarians to the Service
9 June	Unitarian College Manchester – End of Session Proceedings at Luther King House
14 June	Anniversary Service followed by bring and share lunch
25 June	7.00pm U-Café with Earth Spirit Group followed at 8.00pm by celebration of Summer Solstice
26 June	1.00pm Recital
27 June	Congregational Outing – look out for details
27-28 June	General Assembly Weekend " Telling Our Stories".

THE EDITOR

The well-known verse "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20) reminds us that we all must engage with the society in which we live and seek to put our religious beliefs into action. Geoffrey Head's "All Our Yesterday's (II)" on Rev. S. Alfred Steinthal, describes vividly his active work for social reform in the 19th Century. A recent book, "The Quest for Public Health in Manchester" by Emma Jones and John Pickstone, highlights the contribution of Cross Street members to efforts to tackle the fever, including the establishment of a Manchester Board of Health in 1796. Well-known doctors and local merchants worked together to maintain health standards in "a rapidly growing and controversial town: their chief meeting place was the Unitarian Chapel on Cross Street, which combined cool religion with high intellectual and social aspiration"(page 8). On Palm Sunday members of the City Centre Churches Forum, meeting at Cross Street, explored the implications of simplicity, both as for us as individuals and for the structures of society. Cross Street Chapel has certainly changed; Unitarians have left behind the "cool" rationalism of 200 years ago but the challenge of social reform remains.

Derek McAuley

MEMORIAL SERVICE

A memorial service for Barbara Katherine Cook, widow of Rev Raymond Cook, Minister of Cross Street Chapel from 1972 to 1987, will take place at Cross Street Chapel on 20 May 2009 at 3.00pm. All are invited to attend.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

A group of women from the city centre churches in Manchester (and Alan as our token man) got together at Cross St to celebrate Women's World Day of Prayer, which this year fell on March 6th. The liturgy had been prepared this year by Christian women from Papua New Guinea and took the theme "In Christ there are many members yet one body." It was beautifully led by Enid Johnson, of the Cross St congregation, who had also taken care of the preparation. A short sermon was preached by the Rev Jane Barraclough, on the subject of 'Radical Hospitality.' The music was lovely, as always and we bravely sang one hymn acappella. Next year it will be held at the Quaker Meeting House in Mount Street and will be led by Anne Marie Pollock from the Roman Catholic community. Contact the minister nearer the time for details of date and time.

SPONSOR THE NEW HYMNBOOK

Cross Street Chapel has taken receipt of 40 copies of the new denominational hymnbook "Sing Your Faith" – you will recognise it by the purple cover. Some members and friends may wish to "sponsor" a hymnbook or indeed several (£10 each) in order to remember someone or make a gift to the Chapel. A sponsorship form is available from any of the officers or the Minister.

LIVING BY HEART MEDITATION GROUP

Last autumn, we were visited at Cross St by the Rev Laurel Hallman, a minister from the United States. She was on her way to Hucklow, our retreat centre to lead a group of ministers in how to teach her meditation course which she calls 'Living by Heart.' It is a combination of fairly simple meditation techniques and a deep engagement with our own personal scripture. In Laurel's words, "Why Live By Heart?"

"A woman in my church was slowly declining with Alzheimer's disease. She was in a nursing home and had lost her ability to speak. One Christmas, several of us went to sing carols to her. I was struck by the fact that, even though she could not speak at all, as soon as we began the traditional Christmas songs she joined in. In some very basic part of her brain the carols remained. I wondered if nursery rhymes, lullabies and songs and scriptures from Sunday School were also there.

I remembered a professor who taught a course in scripture and poetry in graduate school who, in the years before I became his student, had lost his sight. He taught the entire semester quoting scripture and poetry from memory. Both of these people in their later years were sustained and connected with words that lived deep within them. We might say the words lived in a place beyond memory. It became very clear to me that whatever the ravages of age, the rhymes and rhythms we store deep in our beings stay with us."

The group currently meeting at Cross St every second Monday at 6pm is following this course, but it is easy to catch on if you are still interested. Every group evolves according to its own needs, and this is a group that has had the need for different styles of meditation and mindfulness practices. I am always touched when people stick with meditation because it is not easy, it can bring up difficult stuff and it shows us our habits of distraction so clearly. But despite my own struggles with it over the years, perhaps because of them, I still see it as the basic building block of the spiritual life.

I will probably run the same course again in the autumn on a Sunday afternoon, but in the meantime, it is certainly possible to embark on it alone or with a buddy. Let me know if you want a copy of the course book. They cost £5.

Jane Barraclough

UNITARIANISM – ONE VIEW!

Prompted by one or two of the General Assembly (GA) motions at Chester this year here is another go at describing "Unitarianism"! - "We are a church/religious community of the open mind (Some people we would wish to attract are put off by the word "church"). Our vision is of life-long learning from experience. We prize both knowledge and wisdom, trust and doubt, the spirit rather than the fact. Our style and content are idiosyncratic and distinct from what you will find in other churches and religious groups. If you want to know me come and live with me".

Peter Sampson

EARTH SPIRIT SEED GROUP

The May meeting will be on the 21st at 8.00pm and will be a workshop given by Rev. Jane Barraclough. The meeting on 25th June will be a joint one with U-Cafe when Lisa Caldwell will lead the solstice celebrations. Members of U-Cafe can join us for the celebrations at 8.00pm if they so wish.

Wynne Simister

ROUNDELAY

Roundelay is in need of sopranos. May will see us taking part in Songs of Praise at Ainsworth Unitarian Chapel. Members of Cross Street Chapel are welcome to come and join the congregation. We are hoping to perform with Saddleworth Consort at Cross Street in June. For further information see Alan or Wynne.

Wynne Simister

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS (II)

In the previous Newsletter, mention was made of three separate enquiries within a few days, seeking biographical details of as many Cross Street Ministers, whose service to our congregation related to periods stretching from the 17th to the 20th centuries. A potted summary of our response related to the Rev. Ralph Harrison (Minister 1771-1810) was in the last issue. In this issue we follow with a similar mention of a Victorian worthy, Rev. S.A. Steinthal (Minister 1862-93).

Rev. S. Alfred Steinthal was born in Rusholme Road, Manchester, the son of a naturalised British citizen who had left Germany and settled in Manchester in 1800. After a short apprenticeship in Bury as a mechanical engineer, he found his true vocation and trained for the ministry at Manchester New College, then located in Manchester. His first ministry was in Bridgewater, followed by one at the Unitarian Domestic Mission in Liverpool and then from 1864 at our former Platt Chapel in Rusholme. In 1871 he moved to Cross Street as the junior partner in a joint ministry with Rev. William Gaskell. When Mr Gaskell died in 1884 he assumed sole charge until 1889, when he was joined by Rev. W.H. Drummond. He retired in 1893 and died in 1910.

Steinthal was a religious liberal, notable for the many social justice causes he espoused. He was devoted to his old College and to Cross Street's Lower Mosley Street Schools. He was dedicated to the anti-slavery movement and was an early pioneer in the cause of women's suffrage in conjunction with John Stuart Mill, Rickard Cobden, Jacob Bright and others. It is believed that the earliest society for securing Votes for Women was founded in his house.

Steinthal was active in the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science from its first meeting in 1857. He was Secretary of Manchester Children's Hospital in Bridge Street (now in Pendlebury) for twenty years. A total abstainer, he was prominently associated with the temperance movement and served on several Parliamentary committees concerned with education, espousing the cause of Froebel and higher education for women.

One of the more unusual episodes in his career occurred in 1859, when he was still in Liverpool. He undertook a mission to Hungary, ostensibly to bear the greetings of English Unitarians to co-religionists there. A friend of Kossuth, a dissident then in exile in England, he was entrusted with a message to the former's compatriots and there is a melodramatic account of messages being memorised and then committed to the fire. He was apparently a fairly successful secret envoy, but Kossuth's plans were frustrated by Napoleon III.

Steinthal's other activities included a long Presidency of the Manchester Geographical Society and his concern for animal welfare, particularly in his opposition to vivisection. He was reputed to be an earnest and practical preacher. He was said to be an effective administrator and organiser rather than a leader, possessing an ability to manage people. He was married to the daughter of a Bury Unitarian minister – Unitarians in those days tended to intermarry within their own family of faith. He maintained and enhanced Cross Street's reputation for social concern in the late Victorian period. It is a heritage we should do well to emulate in the 21st century.

Geoffrey Head

THE GASKELL SOCIETY

The Society's Autumn/winter series of lectures at Cross Street Chapel concluded on 10 March with an entertaining talk by Alan Kidd on the career of Robert Owen, who had a quick transition from working as a draper's assistant in St. Ann's Square to becoming a major Manchester mill owner and then to control the iconic mill complex in New Lanark. He was a pioneer of co-operative principles and enlightened employment practices. In Manchester he was a member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society (still meeting on occasion at Cross Street) and associated with the Unitarian McConnell family, major mill owners with connections with both Cross Street and Hale Chapels. He lived for some time in the former De Quincey house in Greenheys. The Society's Annual General Meeting was held at Cross Street Chapel on 28 March. There was a full day including routine business, a lunch and two talks. In the morning Fran Baker, Assistant Modern Archivist at John Rylands Library, spoke on the Gaskell/Green correspondence recently acquired by the Library. Mr Green was Minister of our Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford for many years and the Gaskell and Green families were close friends. In the afternoon Alan Shelston, President of the Society, spoke on the hazards of editing new editions of works by Gaskell and other Victorian novelists.

Geoffrey Head

84 PLYMOUTH GROVE ("GASKELL HOUSE")

Meetings of the Trustees are now being held on a monthly basis at the nearby Community Centre, while external works are progressing on the house and the grounds. Much detailed examination of the process of site assessment, probing and other details ranging from conservation philosophy and authenticity to paint finishes is in hand. At all stages the Trustees have to work with English Heritage and other conservation bodies. The Friends of Plymouth Grove continue to provide valuable financial and other support.

Geoffrey Head

DIRECTORY
CROSS STREET CHAPEL
CROSS STREET
MANCHESTER M2 1NL
Tel: 0161 834 0019
www.cross-street-chapel.org.uk

Minister	Rev. Jane Barraclough Tel: 0161 834 0019 (Vestry) Tel: 0161 839 6824 (Home) E-mail revjyb@googlemail.com
Chapel Keeper and Organist	Alan Myerscough c/o Cross Street Chapel Cross Street Manchester M2 1NL Tel: 0161 833 0522
Chair	Derek McAuley 30 Rook Street Manchester M15 5PS Tel: 0161 232 0550 Email: DMca123@aol.com
Secretary	Peter Sampson 11 East Road Lancaster LA1 3EE Tel: 01524 66559
Treasurer	Joy Winder 10 Demesne Road Manchester M16 8HG Tel. 0161 226 6948
Librarian and Archivist	Geoffrey Head 26 Rivington Road Hale WA15 9PH Tel: 0161 928 1687
Flower and Envelope Secretary	Enid Johnson 10 Lord Kitchener Court Sale M33 1FG Tel: 0161 962 4518
Newsletter Editor	Derek McAuley (see above)