

LINCOLNSHIRE UNITARIANS NEWSLETTER

April / May 2012

Living With Questions

When I was in charge of my very first church, many years ago, I decided to try a different kind of sermon and asked three or four friends (ahead of time) to interrupt me with a question. So I planted these questioners and it caused a shock when these people stood up and disagreed with me and asked a "difficult" question. One of my concerns was that it might catch on and lots of others would get the idea and spring up with some unprepared questions too!! Although it all went well, I did not repeat that idea as many thought it disrespectful and I resumed my more normal services.

Then about fourteen or so years ago at a small church in Leicester a number of young people walked in unexpectedly and sat at the front of the church with their crisps and bottles of coke. I was just about to start my sermon when one of them asked a question. "If God is so good and so great how come there is so much wrong with the world, all that starving and war and stuff!" I decided to abandon the sermon and come down and talk with these youngsters and try and address their questions. Again, not too many approved of these interruptions, which was a shame, as for a short time, there was real connection and dialogue.

I personally still prefer the fairly traditional form of Service but the Church should be that place where raising questions is more important than trotting out ready-made answers. Communities of faith should be places where we can live a little with our defences down and where people can join together in being seekers rather than just finders!! The one time Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins wrote a book some good years ago now, entitled "Living with Questions" and he no doubt felt that that was what the church had to learn to do and to be, that lively community where we could find the courage to live with life's sometimes tricky and painful questions.

Much of the best teaching of Jesus of Nazareth takes place in the stories he tells. The stories are often a response to a question posed looking for a clear answer. Instead, Jesus tells parables that often challenge the accepted traditions and pose another question. It is not always finding an answer that's important but finding the courage and the faith to live with life's difficult questions and deciding what we should do in response. What do you think?

James

We haven't changed that much!

Unitarians (Just 100 years ago)

"Each member enjoys complete freedom in his individual religious opinions, and no set of doctrinal propositions could be framed on which all Unitarians would agree. The bond of union between them consists more in their anti-dogmatic tendency than in uniformity of belief. The authority of the Bible is in some degree retained; but its contents are either admitted or repudiated according as they find favour before the supreme, and in this case, exacting tribunal of individual reason. Jesus Christ is considered subordinate to the Father and, although the epithet *Divine* is in a loose sense not infrequently applied to Him, He is in the estimation of many, an extraordinarily endowed and powerful but still a human religious leader. He is a teacher to be followed, not a God to be worshipped. His Passion and Death are an inspiration and an example to His disciples, not an effective and vicarious atonement for the sins of men. He is the great exemplar which we ought to copy in order to perfect our union with God gradually. This teaching concerning the mission of Jesus Christ is but theological complement of the Unitarian denial of the Fall of Man and with similar consistency leads to the suppression of the sacraments. Two of these (baptism and Eucharist) are indeed retained, but their grace-conferring power is denied and their reception declared unnecessary. Baptism is administered to children (rarely to adults) more for sentimental reasons and purposes for edification than from the persuasion of the spiritual results produced in the soul of the recipient. The Eucharist, far from being considered as sacrificial, is looked upon as a merely memorial service. The fond hope of universal salvation is entertained by the majority of the denomination."

Leslie

From "The Catholic Encyclopaedia" (Weber 1912).

LINCOLN DIARY DATES

Why not join us - every Friday morning 10.30 till 12 noon we have a Coffee and Chat time at the Chapel.

Sunday April 1st. 11.00am. **Discussion** on 'Tolerance' led by Jennifer (transferred from March 25th).

Sunday April 8th. Easter Sunday. 11.00am. **Informal Service** led by Ray.

Sunday April 15th. 11.00am. **Service** led by Bernard McHugh from Hull.

Sunday April 22nd. 11.00am. **Discussion** on 'Television' led by Jennet.

Sunday April 29th. 11.00am. '**A Gathering**' led by Willow and Rowan Songsmith.

Followed by **Management Meeting**.

Sunday May 6th. 11.00am. **Service** led by Patrick Timperley from Mansfield.

Followed by **AGM**.

Sunday May 13th. 11.00am. **Music and Reflection** on 'Lincolnshire' led by Margaret.

Sunday May 20th. 11.00am. **Informal Service and Discussion** on 'Speaking and Listening' led by Jennifer.

Sunday May 27th. 11.00am. '**Favourite Poems**' led by Sandra.

BOSTON DIARY DATES

Sunday April 1st. **Service** 5.00pm.

Sunday April 15th. **Service** 5.00pm.

Sunday May 6th. **Service** 5.00pm.

Sunday May 20th. **Service** 5.00pm.

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