

Induction at Hinckley

Saturday, 28th April 2007 saw the Induction Service take place of our new Minister, Rev. Linda Phillips, here at the Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel, Hinckley.

It was a glorious day, with plenty of sunshine, and this always gives you a feel-good factor, especially when you walk through the Chapel grounds.

This was to be the first Induction Service I had attended, so I was unsure exactly what to expect apart from a large congregation! It was also an extremely proud moment as my six year old son, Jack, was taking part. He had been invited by Linda to light the chalice at the start of the service. (Although Linda only became our Minister at the beginning of February, she has already forged a good strong bond with Jack). He was quite nervous on the day about carrying out this task, but said he would “do it for Linda”.

Our Chapel looked more beautiful than ever, again the sunshine helped, along with the flower displays of yellow carnations, white spider chrysanthemums, gypsophila, and lilies.

By the time Jack and I arrived, the Chapel was virtually full with over 250 people. It was lovely to see so many of our members again, along with other Unitarians who had travelled from all over England and Wales, and Linda’s friends and family, all showing their support for the congregation and Linda on our special day. In addition, the service was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Hinckley and members of the local clergy, including Canon David Jennings of St Catherine’s Church, Burbage, and Canon Brian Davies of St Mary’s Church, Hinckley.

The service was led by Rev. Donald Phillips, who happens to be Linda’s husband. At the beginning of the service, I can recall Donald asking for the congregation to “raise the roof” while singing the hymns that afternoon, and I’m delighted to say that everyone obliged.

I felt an overwhelming sense of pride when everyone burst into song for the first hymn, “As tranquil streams that meet and merge” – in fact, I was taken aback by the volume created. It would have been worthy of “Songs of Praise”.

As is our tradition, we sang the Lord’s Prayer, and this was followed with two readings, both read by members of our Chapel. The first, “Go and He Goeth Not”, by Charles Handy, read by Joe Lawley. The second, I Corinthians 13 – Authorised Version – read by Margaret Horton.

“Spirit of Faith! Be thou my guide” was the second hymn, and this was followed by another reading, again by a Chapel member, June Matthews. June was suffering from a tickly cough, but gave a wonderful light-hearted reading of “A letter from a member of the congregation”, which made everyone smile.

Next came the formal presentation given by David Dawson (GA President 2006-2007), along with the Installation by the Chair of the Great Meeting, Rob Deacon.

The formal induction was followed by a Meditation led by Linda, with music Andante Cantabile from Mozart's Piano Sonata in B flat major, performed by our organist and pianist, Chris Banks. This piece was played on the Chapel piano. (Chris always plays a piece of music during the meditation period of our usual Sunday service, and each time I hear him play I have the strongest desire to applaud his performance.)

I'm very pleased to say that the "Charge to the Minister" was given by our very own (former Minister) Rev. Peter Hewis. It's always a pleasure to see him return to our Chapel. Peter talked about his time as Linda's tutor, and gave her some amusing tips on the most successful way to carry out her ministry.

The third hymn, "Be thou my vision, O God of my heart" followed. (One of my favourites!)

The "Charge to the Congregation" was given by Rev. Dr Arthur Stewart. He spoke about his own induction service, and this too was in a light-hearted manner which everyone seemed to enjoy.

The final hymn "Forward through the ages" was sung, after which the chalice was extinguished.

Linda gave the Benediction, completing the service.

However, the party had just begun! A mouth-watering buffet had been laid on, in both the lower and upper school rooms. Speeches were given by the Deputy Mayor, Chairman etc. There was even a celebration cake, made by Linda's mother.

All in all, it was a truly memorable occasion, and everyone involved in the organization of the event should feel immensely proud.

Jane Granger