

Connections

*The Newsletter of Belper, Derby and Charnwood
Unitarians*

Friar Gate Chapel Welcomes New Members



***January/ February
2008***



Minister's Musings

I have a book at home entitled, 'Never far From Home – stories from the Radio Pulpit.' Its author, Carl Scovel, was one time Minister of Kings' Chapel in Boston, and this book is a collection of his 5 minute sermons that he produced for local Radio from 1979 -1999.

Following the recent loss of that great voice, Luciano Pavarotti, I was intrigued to find one story called, Pavarotti's Great Gift. I approached the story expecting to read about the 'voice,' but was pleasantly surprised to find a broader picture of the man.

Scovel quotes from an interview that Pavarotti gave when he said,

"Sometimes when I speak, I say 'we' because I mean me and my voice. Absolutely we are two different things, and it must be that way. We are sometimes separate. I realize that this instrument is mine because God gave it to me, and I must treat it with great attention – like a piano or violin or any other instrument. I must care for it as a priest cares for souls... I am a happy man. I have a wonderful family and a wonderful career. For this I will ever be grateful to God. I know that I have something that very few people are blessed with, and for this I consider myself a man of privilege. Someone once said that God kissed my vocal chords. But I think that God kissed my soul to make me enjoy life so much."

What Scovel is highlighting is not only did Pavarotti have the technical ability and a fine voice, but the humility that enabled him to understand his gift as a blessing.

I am sure that we too are gifted with many talents that could and should be understood as a blessing.

At this New Year why not try something different; instead of looking forward and pledging to do better, resolving to eat less, exercise more and behave better, which we rarely do. Why not try looking back over the last year to see what blessings have come your way, what gifts have been given to you.

And in recognising our giftedness and our blessings, we can then resolve to make of them an offering to our world; just as did Luciano Pavarotti.

Love and Blessings for 2008

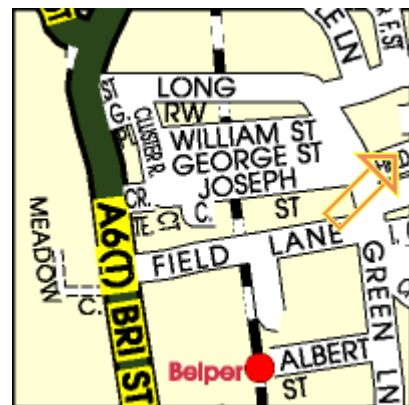
Chris

SERVICES OF WORSHIP
JANUARY 2008

Services are held at Belper Chapel on the first and third Sundays of the Month and at Derby on the second and fourth.

Belper Unitarian Chapel.

Sunday 6th	Rev Chris Goacher	11 am
	Family Service	
Sunday 20th	Patrick Timperley	3 pm



Charnwood Fellowship

Tuesday 8th	Fellowship Meeting	7.30 pm
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Friar Gate Unitarian Chapel, Derby.

Sunday 13th	Rev Chris Goacher	3pm
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Sunday 27th	Rev Chris Goacher	3pm
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**SERVICES OF WORSHIP
FEBRUARY 2008**

Belper Unitarian Chapel

Sunday 3rd	Rev Chris Goacher	11am
Sunday 17th	Patrick Timperley	3 pm

Charnwood Unitarian Fellowship

Tuesday 5th	Fellowship Meeting	7.30 pm
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Friar Gate Unitarian Chapel, Derby

Sunday 3rd	A Gathering An Alternative way of being Together	6pm
Sunday 10th	Rev Chris Goacher	3 pm
Sunday 24th	Rev Chris Goacher	3pm

To all who lead our services of Worship, we express appreciation and thanks.

our

Where to Find us.

Friar Gate Unitarian Chapel
Stafford Street
Derby DE1 1JG



Holy Ground—The Spirituality of Matter

My copy of this book by Ross Thompson is a 1990 edition; the back cover describes the author as Vicar of St Aiden's Church, Bristol. In the acknowledgments he speaks of his being dragged into the Christian faith during his time at Sussex University.

The first 218 pages of this 272-page book hardly mentions God or religion at all; they are devoted instead to science, philosophy and art. He explains that his position is very different from that of Don Cupitt (Sea of Faith).

Scientists, he writes, use tools, models, paradigms, etc, to aid their understanding, but he does not dismiss art, poetry and literature as sometimes bringing illumination to a problem. His book has black-and-white reproductions of Van Gogh's "Road with Cypresses", and cave paintings, and many diagrams to illustrate mathematical and scientific points, as well as illustrations of fractals, the Zhabotinsky Reaction (regular molecular changes in a 'chemical clock'), ink drops in water, and the classification of shapes. The ideas of Hume, Wittgenstein, Popper, and other philosophers are discussed, in particular, that philosopher of science, Kuhn.

Kuhn saw in the process of scientific discovery, the operation of the paradigm (which I would see as a kind of habit of mind) .A particular example of this was being how Western Astronomy (with telescopes), obsessed with the idea of the planets being eternally fixed spheres, failed to notice what Chinese astronomers (without telescopes) had noticed, namely, sunspots. Kuhn also felt that Copernicus did not discover anything, he just looked at the same object in a completely new way—a shift in the paradigm. Further examples are given.

Other aspects of science are considered: entropy (the universe running down) - evolution, a process going in the opposite direction. Also the Anthropic Principle, and the 'strong' force which holds together the nucleus of the atom. Had this 'strong' force varied ever so minutely from 0.007 it would have prevented the chemical elements essential for life from coming into existence. Although I accept the theory of evolution, I do have difficulty in believing that so finely-balanced a thing as the 'strong' force could have

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appeared by chance).

The author also talks of 'levels of explanation'. Human behaviour can be explained at one level in terms of thoughts, desires, hopes; these in turn can be explained at another level, the physiological, and yet another level in terms of electrochemical changes inside cells. Each level has its appropriate explanation; for instance, purpose may be suitable for explaining human actions, but can't be used to explain the actions of cells, atoms, etc, of which human bodies are composed.

From an explanation of the material the author has assembled in his book, he feels, if I have understood him correctly, that in the really big question of how the universe came to be in the first place, an explanation which envisions there being a God. Eschewing dualism, and a pantheistic view of God which identifies God with the substance of the world; he offers instead a view of God which identifies with the activity of the world—as the change maker rather than that which is changed. There follows a complicated discussion of the Trinity which he relates in some manner to the material world.

Perhaps somewhere along the way I lost the thread of the book's complicated argument—the conclusion didn't seem to follow easily from the material presented though I accept that it is highly probable that there is a God. I hope I have presented fairly the ideas contained in this difficult book which, at least, was a thought-provoking read!

ISBN 0-281-04466-X

-G.Cope

Ed. Once again George has presented us with some thought provoking material to set us thinking. I would like to thank George for the time and effort he puts into his Book Reviews and Ken's Quiz helping to make 'Connections; a stimulating read.

What's On Diary

**East Midland Unitarians Qtrly meeting at
Nottingham Unitarian Chapel
2.30 pm 1st March
All welcome to attend.**

The Belper engagement group met in both November and December, continuing the topic of our spiritual journeys and influences.

Meetings continue to be on the second Monday of each month at 8pm in the Phillips family home. Thus the next two meetings are on Monday 14 January and Monday 11 February 2008.

Over the next few meetings we expect to move to a more specific program with topics to be decided by the group.

Illustrative possibilities include:

- How to Connect
- Alternative Medicine
- God, Science and Religion
- Unitarians and Politics
- Unitarian: Just What Actually IS That?
- Freedom, Reason and Tolerance

The group is open to all.

contact Andy on 01773 823160 or

andyphillips@dsl.pipex.com for directions and other information.

“Parents as Resident Theologians”

**A 6 Session Course on how Parents and Children
can talk about God**

At Belper Unitarian Chapel

This course will run if there are sufficient numbers.

Sign –up NOW



Write to:

Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Gary Tyler was convicted in 1975 of the murder of Timothy Weber, a white 13-year-old schoolboy who was shot outside Destrehan High School, St Charles Parish, Louisiana, in October 1974. The shot had allegedly come from a bus carrying black students which was under attack by white people throwing stones and bottles. The attack on the bus took place during a period of intense opposition by the white community to racial integration and the bussing of black students to the formerly all-white high school, situated in a predominantly white neighbourhood. Gary Tyler was charged with the shooting based primarily on the testimony of one student and the alleged murder weapon which police found in the seat where he had been sitting; having failed to find the weapon during an earlier search.

Although he was only 16 at the time, Gary Tyler was tried as an adult in a trial which was seriously flawed. Despite heightened racial tension in the area, there was no change of trial venue and he was tried by an all-white jury from which members of the black community had been excluded. His defence attorney, who specialised in civil, rather than criminal, cases failed to prepare for trial and did not interview witnesses or conduct tests on the physical evidence offered by the state. He spent a total of about one hour with Gary Tyler in the whole year prior to the trial. The judge instructed the jury wrongly that Tyler had to prove himself innocent of an essential element of the case. Gary Tyler was convicted of first-degree murder and was originally sentenced to death; his sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment when the state's death penalty statute was ruled unconstitutional.

Since his trial, further investigation has cast doubt on the reliability of the physical evidence in the case and the key prosecution witnesses have recanted their testimony. In two decisions, federal review courts have ruled that Gary Tyler's trial was fundamentally unfair and that he was denied the presumption of innocence, but refused to give him a new trial because his trial lawyer had not objected to this error at the time. Three previous pardon boards have recognized the unfairness of Gary Tyler's conviction and recommended a commutation of sentence, but no governor has yet taken action.

KEN'S QUIZ

(In memory of Ken Pollard, originator of the Quiz)

The answers to clues (a) and (b) are two words of similar sound but which may be spelt differently, for instance, 'reign' and 'rain.'

1. (a) A Kind of Butterfly.
(b) A punctuation mark.
2. (a) Where a ship can be loaded and unloaded.
(b) A kind of weed.
3. (a) Relating to the Turkish Empire.
(b) Low stuffed seat without a back.
4. (a) An alcoholic drink.
(b) A place where freight vehicles unload their contents.
5. (a) A lazy, idle person.
(b) A deep humming sound.
6. (a) A South-east Asian capital.
(b) Strong, brownish paper.
7. (a) To look after, or retain.
(b) A fortified inner tower of a castle.
8. (a) standard monetary unit of Vietnam.
(b) A deep ringing sound.
9. (a) Relating to the mind.
(b) Relating to the chin.
10. (a) A prickly part of some plants.
(b) The Old English letter 'Th'.

Answers, please, to George Cope, 22 Laburnum Crescent, Allestree, Derby. DE22 2GQ. A small prize is offered to the first correct set of answers received. Currently no correct responses from the last quiz.

Answers to the last quiz; 1(a) Kant, (b) Cant; 2 (a) Gallop, (b) Galop; 3 (a) Heroin, (b) Heroine; 4 (a) Mole, (b) Mole; 5 (a) Hide (b) Hide; 6 (a) Congreve, (b) Congreve; 7 (a) Jack, (b) Jack; 8(a) Lock, (b) Lock; 9 (a) Rabble, (b) Rabble; 10 (a) Notions, (b) Notions.

It was with great joy that, at the Chapel Anniversary Service held at Friar Gate Chapel in November, 3 new members were officially welcomed. Pictured on the front of this magazine, following the service are Janet and Chris Granger and Kate Waring. Also pictured are Ruth Archer President of East Midland Unitarians, George Cope, Chairman of the Congregation and Minister Rev Chris Goacher.

The news of the sudden death of Rev Michael Joyce was sad news indeed. Michael was minister at Belper Chapel from 1993-95 and has been a visiting preacher on many occasions. His quiet, supportive presence was always appreciated. Although he remained as Part-time Minister at Mansfield, Michael had retired earlier this year. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Michael's family, friends and to the congregation at Mansfield. The funeral Service for Michael took place at Mansfield Chapel and was conducted by his great friend Rev Robin Boyes.

A number of us were able to enjoy this years Christmas meal at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow. It is always a lovely occasion; a superb meal with friends followed by 'Carols around the open fire' in the lounge.

On Sunday 16th December the congregation at Belper Chapel arrived for their Carol Service to find a hole had developed in the Chapel Floor. However, undeterred a Seasonal celebration was had and another item added to the to-do list for 2008!

Sunday 3rd Feb

6pm



A Different Way of Being Together for an Hour to Celebrate the Value of each Other and The World.

This Time Together will be lead by Rowan and Willow Songsmith from The Leicester Unitarian Fellowship.

The Theme will be “Beginnings”

All Welcome

Derby & East Midland’s Sea of Faith Group
Welcome Rev Dr Marcus Bray-
brooke who will lead a workshop
on “Interfaith Today; What’s Hap-
pening and Why” on Saturday 9th
February at Friar Gate Chapel. 11-15 for
11.30 start.

Details from Chris 01332 732171

A few weeks ago, as part of his work in updating the Friar Gate Web Page, Chris Granger posed the question, 'What does coming to Church mean to you?' here is just a selection of the responses received.

The reason why I came to Derby Chapel in the first place was because a friend invited me to a service because he knew I wanted to go back to church/chapel and thought that it may be right for me - and I am pleased to say that it is.

Yes, I had been to churches before but not for such a long time and to be honest, I never thought I would do again - but I am so glad and honoured to be part of the Chapel in Derby. It is such a special place to me.

Kate

I like the encouragement to think things out for yourself as well as the tolerance of other religious views and the non-reluctance to quote from other holy books. The friendship of like-minded persons - I think of us as being seekers after understanding and truth.

George

I discovered Unitarianism whilst searching my family tree and then probably two years later found Friar Gate Unitarian Chapel. I paid my first visit some 20 years ago and I can only describe it as 'coming home.'

Chapel life gives me a sense of fellowship with like minded people. Somewhere I can be me, broaden my view, have my assumptions challenged, but ultimately, make up my own mind. I am not offered eternal salvation in return for agreement with a set of doctrines but allowed to grow into a belief that is mine.

Chris

I started researching various religious paths online, and found that the Unitarian one was the one that resonated with me the most, as it is so welcoming to people who do not know all the answers – it encourages people to bring their questions with them, and explore ideas together.

I started attending the Chapel in early 2007.

The Chapel gives me things to think about, as the services each fortnight are interesting 'prompts' for looking at aspects of life that can be overlooked when you get caught up in everyday problems.

The people are very friendly and interesting, with points of view that are helpful. Subjects are always discussed in a respectful way.

I am encouraged to experience God in a way that is meaningful to me personally.

Simply being in the Chapel makes me feel calmer.

Janet

The Chapel suits me because of its liberalism. I cannot accept a lot of the Bible and its dogma. I balance religion with science. I lean towards Intelligent Design in religion.

Roy

I have never before studied such a wide variety of sources about religion as I do nowadays. In the Unitarian environment, I find I am often inspired to search the internet for writings about other faiths, debates on the NUF forum, or to read about the goings-on in and around the Unitarian movement throughout the UK and worldwide. I still feel like I know very little, and have a lot to sort out – but here I feel I will be allowed, and encouraged, to do so at my own pace. If I can find ways to help others who journey alongside me, I hope I will sometimes manage to do that, too.

Chris



An Unapologetically Liberal Alternative to The Alpha Course.

People know that at its core, Christianity has something good to offer the human race. At the same time, many have a sense that they are alone in being a "thinking" Christian and that "salvaging" Christianity is a hopeless task. What is needed is a safe environment where people have permission to ask the questions they've always wanted to ask but have been afraid to voice for fear of being thought a heretic.

Living the Questions is a 12-week DVD small group study exploring beyond the traditions and rote theologies in which so many people and local churches seem to be stuck. Living the Questions will help seekers and "church alumni/ae" alike in discovering the significance of Christianity in the 21st Century and what a meaningful faith can look like in today's world.

DVD contributions from :

- **Marcus Borg** - Hunderer Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University. Author of over ten books including *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, and *The Heart of Christianity*.
- **John Dominic Crossan** - Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at De Paul University, John Dominic Crossan is generally acknowledged to be the premier historical Jesus scholar in the world
- **John Shelby Spong** - The retired Bishop of Newark, New Jersey, Spong is a columnist and author of over fourteen books including, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, and *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*

As always these courses will run if there is sufficient interest!

For further information see the Minister.

01332 732171 chris.goacher@ntlworld.com

Contact Details

Minister.

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chris.goacher@ntlworld.com

Belper Chapel Directory

Belper Unitarian Chapel, Field Row, off Green Lane, Belper. DE56 1DH
www.unitarian.org.uk/emu/belper

Chairman: Councillor David Burton, 4 Wheatley Lane, Two Dales, Matlock. DE4 2FF Tel: 01629 734072

Secretary: Mrs Jackie Woodward, 8 Beaurepaire Cres, Belper. DE5 1HR Tel: 01773 827184

Treasurer: Mr Tony Waldron. 5 Manor Road, Belper. DE56 1NT
Tel: 01773 827060

Organist: Mrs Jean Hemming, 144 Far Laund, Belper. DE56 1FP
Tel: 01773 827869

Charnwood Unitarian Fellowship

Contact; Rev Chris Goacher 01332 732171
www.unitarian.org.uk/emu/Charnwood

Derby Chapel Directory

Friar Gate Unitarian Chapel, Stafford Street, Derby. DE1 1JG
www.unitarian.org.uk/emu/derby

Chairman: Mr George Cope, 22 Laburnum Crescent, Allestree, Derby. DE 22 2GQ. Tel: 01332 553774

Secretary. Mrs Elaine Howes. 73 Spinney Hill. Melbourne. DE73 1LX. Tel: 01332 864727.

Treasurer: Mr Richard McLachlan, 6 Weirfield Rd, Darley Abbey, Derby. DE 22 1DH. Tel: 01332 558629

There are neighbouring Unitarian Congregations in Chesterfield, Mansfield, Nottingham, and Leicester.

Congregations are in membership of The General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches.

As Unitarians we believe:

In the Freedom of Conscience in Matters of Religion;

Therefore we require no statement of faith or acceptance of particular doctrines to be acceptable in our churches/chapels and fellowships. We believe in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

In the Inherent Worth and Dignity of all People;

Therefore we welcome all regardless of creed, colour, sex, or sexuality; and in the acceptance of one another the encouragement to spiritual growth

In the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all people, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

Therefore we support the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

The living tradition from which we draw strength;

- The words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love.
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspire us in our ethical and spiritual life.
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbour as ourselves.
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us of the idolatries of mind and spirit.
- Spiritual teachings of the Earth-centred traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

(adapted from the Principle and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association)