

Connections

*The Newsletter of Belper, Derby and Charnwood
Unitarians*



***"Love is the Spirit of this Church" banner
in front of the Tennessee Valley UU Church
in Knoxville.***



A Welcoming Congregation.

Sept/Oct 2008



A Remarkable Man—Eric Liddell

During the recent Olympic games held in Beijing my thoughts on many occasions turned to the remarkable sportsman and Christian missionary Eric Liddell.

Many of us had never heard of him until the 1981 film ‘Chariots of Fire.’ For it was at the 1924 Olympics' held in Paris he won a gold medal for the Men’s 400 metres race.

I have always felt that a sequel to ‘Chariot’s of Fire’ ought to be made about this loving and compassionate man. There is a great story to be told about his courage and faith which I find inspirational.

After the 1924 Olympics Liddell went to work as a Christian Missionary in China; his work and service to the poor and children was outstanding.

Sadly by 1941 the British Government advised all British national to leave because of the war with Japan—Eric refused.

When the fighting reached Shaochang the Japanese took over the Church and Mission Station, and Eric was interned at Weih sien.

Later Winston Churchill approved a prisoner exchange and Eric Liddell, as a famous athlete, was one of the prisoners chosen. However, Eric gave his place to a pregnant woman!

He died on February 21st 1945, five months after his camp was liberated—he was later interred in the Mausoleum of Martyrs in Shijiazhuang, China, which is a great honour for a non-Chinese person.

Let us hope one day a film will be made which will truly relate the whole life of Eric Liddell.

David Burton.

“Our Philosophy proceeds from the belief that sport is an inalienable part of the educational process and a factor for promoting peace, friendship, cooperation and understanding among peoples.”

Juan Antonio Samaranch

President of the International Olympic Committee 1980-2001

Minister's Musings

I was somewhat surprised recently, as I watched the weather forecast on the BBC, to hear the forecaster describe the summer as having been something of a damp squib! Do I not remember only a week or so before hearing complaints that the gardens were dry, the water butts empty, and we were uncomfortably hot and sticky thus preventing us from getting a good nights sleep?

It is amazing, how short our memories and how we expect nature to work according to our diaries, and when it doesn't we can feel a sense of resentment and foreboding; a sense of somehow being cheated and no longer being in control of our lives.

Nature, however, doesn't seek power or control, nature is simply being itself. It seeks only balance and harmony and knows that just as the plant needs sunlight it also needs the rain.

Henry David Thoreau wrote, "The gentle rain which waters my beans, and keeps me in the house today is not dreary and melancholy, but good for me too."

I thought of those words as I watched the rain yesterday, releasing me from the chore of nightly watering my vegetables, as I shall when I enjoy the fresh green beans on my plate this evening, the taste of which is made from both sunshine and rain.

Maybe there is a lesson for us in the way nature seeks balance and enjoys simply being who it is.

Our lives too are made up of sunshine and rain, good times and not so good times. If we can learn the wisdom of nature, to accept the reality of our days with equanimity, knowing that, just as the sunniest of days is only a partial reality, so to, the darkest of nights, and the sun shall return with the morning.

Peace and Love
Chris

BELPER HARVEST THANKSGIVING

At Belper the “Harvest Thanksgiving”, led by the Rev. Chris. Goacher, will be held at 11 a.m. on Sunday, 5th October. Gifts of harvest produce will be welcome for display prior to the service, and will be auctioned in aid of Belper Red Cross after the service.

THANKS

Derek Smith was surprised and delighted by the £40 book token presented to him by the members of the Belper congregation on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

NOTICE BOARDS

Currently both the notice board for the gate and the one on Green Lane are under construction and it is hoped that both will be in position in the near future. We are grateful to the Trustees of Belper Chapel for their assistance in funding this project.

MARJORIE CROUCH

As many of you will know Marjorie has been unwell recently; we send her our regards and best wishes for her future recovery.

We also extend our best wishes to other members of the chapel who are unable to attend regularly because of illness or infirmity.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

At the Belper Chapel AGM it was agreed that we should hold regular meetings throughout the year. In compliance with this our next meeting will take place on 15th September at 7pm. Tea and Biscuits will be available.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY

Belper Chapel will be open on Saturday 13th September from 10am—4pm for visitors and refreshments. Donations will once again be for our chosen charity for this year, Belper Red Cross.

Volunteers to help for some time during the day would be appreciated.

EAST MIDLAND UNITARIANS AGM

The East Midland Unitarians AGM will take place at Friar Gate Chapel on Saturday 11th October at 2pm. Although essentially a business meeting it is a great opportunity to meet with other Unitarians from around the district and to keep abreast of what is happening regionally.

At this meeting our minister, Rev Chris Goacher, will become President of EMU for the next two years. All are welcome to attend and enjoy the afternoon together.

Compassion Sunday

28th September at Friar Gate Chapel, and 2nd November at Belper, we will be having a COMPASSION SUNDAY event at each chapel. Janet and Chris Granger from Derby Chapel will be making a presentation at each of these services, to explain what the charity, 'Compassion', does to support children of very poor families in developing countries such as Africa.

Individuals, or groups such as a congregation, can sponsor a child for £18 a month, write letters to the child, and become a very beneficial figure in the life of that child and its family.

The money almost all goes to provide clothes, food, medical and dental check-ups, and schooling, which these children would otherwise not get. There will be details of actual children who need sponsorship right now, at each event, so that anyone who wishes to sign up to sponsor a child themselves can do so on the day.

If anyone would like more information before the events, please contact Janet and Chris by phone on 01538 308860 or email: mail@janetgranger.co.uk

Derby Unitarians continue to sponsor St Mary's Dispensary in Tanzania providing much needed medicines to the some 4000 people of the locality. St Mary's dispensary has no resident Doctor but is run by two Nurses who deal with the day to day happenings within the Dispensary. Currently, Inter Care, through whom we sponsor St Mary's currently supplies 40% of the dispensary's medicines.

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) Swelling when a lymph node becomes inflamed.
(b) A genus of large horned owls.
- 2 (a) Basic monetary unit of Japan.
(b) Intense desire or longing.
- 3 (a) Colour blindness (named after English chemist (1766-1844)).
(b) School method where pupils progress 'at their own pace.'
- 4 (a) A golf course, especially one by the sea.
(b) Animal of the cat family with long legs, tufted ears.
- 5 (a) A small rounded crusty loaf.
(b) A male swan.
- 6 (a) A soft, usually green mineral; a rock.
(b) A lake in Hyde Park.
- 7 (a) Like material, originating from larva of a certain moth.
(b) A creature, seal in water but human on land (Scot folklore).
- 8 (a) According to the letter.
(b) Relating to the seashore, or shore of a lake.
- 9 (a) An outdoor game involving batsmen.
(b) A jumping insect related to the grasshopper.
- 10 (a) An ancient people of Central America.
(b) Belief that material world is an illusion (Hinduism).

Answers, please, to George Cope, 22 Laburnun Crescent, Allestree, Derby DE22 2GQ. A small prize is offered to the first correct set of answers received. No answers yet received for July/August.

Answers to the last Quiz: 1(a) Mensal, (b) Mensal; 2(a) Beetle, (b) Beetle; 3(a) Tender, (b) Tender; 4(a) Strap, (b) Strap; 5(a) Wag, (b) Wag; 6(a) Conviction, (b) Conviction; 7(a) Boiler room, (b) Boiler room; 8(a) Drop, (b) Drop; 9(a) Bus, (b) Bus; 10(a) Pit, (b) Pit.

Membership

At this time of year we ask people to consider membership of one of our congregations.

When you are ready, church membership will be a natural step for you, as a way to express your joy—and responsibility—for this faith community.

All individuals are welcome to join our Fellowships. While there are no ‘belief’ requirements for membership, no creeds or statements of faith, we do have principles or objects which are the foundation of our relationship with each other and the world and can be found on the back page of this magazine.

As full members, it is our practice to agree to pay a minimum contribution per year equivalent to the G.A. Quota. (Currently £24) and sign the Membership Book. This entitles one to participate fully in both the local chapel and in the wider circles of the General Assembly.

It is usual to be asked to participate in a Welcome Service when new members are recognised and are formerly accepted into membership; this is signalled by the offer of the right hand of fellowship by the chair of the congregation.

If you require further details or would like to signify your interest in membership please see the minister at your convenience. For those in membership contributions become due at the end of September.

“Some say we have no test of membership. I say at our best we have a quite explicit test, one we need to proclaim clearly and spell out with courtesy and warmth. Our covenant—to find and live out together, insofar as we can, the ways of love—is open to all who will enter it with us. Many who visit our churches long to be loving people. That's why they come. They are looking for a church that might help them be more loving people, and which—straight out—asks for their help and commitment.”

Alice Blair Wesley

The Evolving Self

This book, subtitled 'A Psychology for the Third Millennium' is by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who co-authored "The Meaning of Things" which I reviewed recently. "The Evolving Self" is a sequel to the author's earlier book "Flow" which covers a lot of psychological research into happiness.

'Flow' refers to that exhilarating, almost mystical, state where some activity or enterprise (music, art, sport, and, if we are lucky, our work, too) seems to completely take over, and, so absorbed do we become that we lose all sense of self, yet, paradoxically, it is on these occasions that we experience great moments of extreme happiness and of fulfillment. 'Flow', unfortunately, can also occur in activities which are against the best interests of society.

The concern of "The Evolving Self" is with the future of human-kind and the planet. It is a thoughtful contribution to these issues. It is strongly based on evolutionary theory, particularly as refined and updated by Richard Dawkins. Its theme is that by gaining an understanding of the evolutionary process and becoming an active and conscious part of it, not only do we give meaning to our lives, but also enhance those trends of evolution which lead to co-operation and harmony rather than those that spell disharmony and chaos.

To be able to achieve this, we need to abandon certain illusions. One illusion (if I am not reading too much into the book) is the widely accepted 'wisdom' that all attempts to promote harmony and co-operation must necessarily fail due to 'human nature being what it is; that our human nature is encoded in our genes. Recent thinking, particularly by Richard Dawkins, sees the genes as entities lacking consciousness whose structure is geared to survival, to perpetuating themselves. Our survival is only important to them in so far as we serve as vehicles for their propagation. Ridding ourselves of the illusion that we cannot be other than we are because it is written in our genes, overthrows the tyranny of the genes and raises the possibility that, to some extent at least, we have the freedom to pursue consciously decided upon aims or ideals.

Another illusion is that our particular group or culture is superior to that of others - better to stand back a bit and question this supposition.

A third illusion is that of selfhood. Sometimes we identify too much with our possessions. We see ourselves in terms of what we possess instead of what we are. So doing, we can inadvertently allow our possessions to become our master. I suppose this relates to 'flow' where happiness consists in 'doing' or 'being' rather than in 'having'. Friends and loved ones also contribute to our image of ourselves, and are of special importance to us as well.

The book also makes use of Richard Dawkins' theory of the 'meme'. A brick, a musical composition, an ideology or religion - each are examples of the meme .. The meme is the cultural equivalent of the gene, and it, too, uses us solely to promote its own survival.

One example, I would think, would be its influence on our continuously updating models of our artefacts. In many fields this can only be regarded as progress. But in this extremely competitive climate, when we are becoming increasingly aware that the planet's resources are running out, this updating (e.g., replacing perfectly adequate TVs with high-definition ones) seems to be irresponsible behaviour designed more to open up further avenues for profit-making. It is the supposedly competitive feature of evolution which I still feel most uneasy about.

For instance, Darwin, Csikszentmihalyi, and Dawkins, all stress the importance of competition in the evolutionary process, though Dawkins states that it doesn't occur at the molecular (replicator) level. Dawkins' whole theory rests on the premise that it is not the 'individual' nor the 'group' on which Nature works (natural selection), but the gene. Hence, to me, natural selection by itself seems to be sufficient explanation, without having to bring in the idea of competition.

I discern a difference between competition as an active conscious endeavour in everyday life, and competition in an evolutionary setting arising out of sheer necessity due to scarcity of energy or resources where the stronger or fitter individual will survive. Surely, natural selection by itself will explain that! Herbert Spencer's aphorism 'survival of the fittest' was his way of succinctly describing Darwin's natural selection theory. Darwin's great book is entitled "Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection", not "Origin of Species by Means of Competition".

I wouldn't like to think that competition, as in "It's a very competitive market out there" was grounded in some evolutionary stricture from which there was no escape. Whereas the evolutionary process has brought about development from simple amoeba to complex humankind - a seemingly remarkable success story, our commercial competition in contrast has resulted in a world where excessive wealth and affluence exists side by side with extreme poverty. This horrendous state of affairs seems to be viewed with the same equanimity as was slavery many years before. It shouldn't be!

- G. Cope My edition of this book was published in 1993.
ISBN 0-06-016677-0

SUMMER SCHOOL 2008

I have only just returned from Great Hucklow and Summer School 2008; having not been for a number of years I was joyously reminded of the quality, content and fellowship of such events.

The theme this year was 'Reclaiming the language of Faith.'

Each day commenced with Taoist meditation before Breakfast and then a theme talk given, this year, by a variety of speakers, myself included. I am not sure we came to any conclusion but we raised many questions that informed the conversations during each day.

The latter part of the morning was taken-up by our Workshops on various topics including Poetry, Dance and Art. The rest of each day included a variety of activities or of doing your own thing, until the evening epilogue, usually, held in the village Chapel.

The beauty of the words and music brought the day to a wonderfully peaceful end.

Trying to encapsulate in a few words what one gets out of such a week is impossible, but my advise is to watch out for the programme for 2009, I know I shall!

Chris



I have never before written poetry, but encouraged by my poetry workshop at Summer school, I did manage some efforts. Below are two.

Holy is the spirit, the spirit that is all of me;
Of joy and of sadness—of confidence and unease,
Of openness and secrecy—of now and of eternity.
Come now all of me—let us journey hand in hand,
Let us make our brief sojourn—a destiny divine.

The morning light brings the sight of destruction;
Marigolds consumed by the slimméd devil
That moves within the cloak of dark and damp.
How I morn the loss of beauty, tendered with such loving care,
How I curse the black marauderer.

But I too am one who consumes; consumes the green leaf of lettuce
And bulb of beetroot, also tended with loving care.
And I too shall be consumed, lie in the dark damp of grave,
food for bacteria and those who crawl on belly and squirm,
or face the transforming flame.

I am one with both consumer and the consumed;
So today I shall morn my yellow companion
And try not to begrudge my mollusc friend his meal.



Derby Unitarians Progressive Christian Group

Living the Questions will run as a Monthly meeting on the 2nd Sunday of the month.

A shared meal will be part of the programme and participants are asked to bring some food to share. The sessions are scheduled to last 2 1/2 hours and will be finished in time for those who wish to join in the evening service at 6.30pm.

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LEICESTER TRICENTENARY

We have hired a mini-coach to take Belper and Derby members and friends to the 300th Anniversary of the building of Great Meeting in Leicester, at **3 p.m. on Saturday, 4th October**. So as to give people time to explore the city of Leicester for a few hours, prior to the service and tea, the mini-coach will leave Belper at 10.30 a.m. and Derby at 10.50 a.m.. We shall begin the return journey at approximately 5.30 p.m.. For more information and to book seats at £5 each, contact either Rev. Chris. Goacher or David Burton.

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On a Lighter note!

Noah opened up the Ark & let all the animals out telling them to; "Go Forth and Multiply!" He began to close the great doors of the Ark when he noticed that there were two snakes still sitting in the dark corner. Concerned he said to them, "Did you not hear me?" "You can go now. Go forth and multiply!" "We can't," said the snakes sadly, "We're Adders!"

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A little girl became restless as the preacher's sermon dragged on, and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mummy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?"

Contact Details

Minister.

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Belper Chapel Directory

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www.belperunitarians.org.uk

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.derbyunitarians.org.uk

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)