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Minister

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Group Management Committee Officers

Chairman:	Mrs. J. Eldershaw	38 Hemingway, Fairfield, Evesham, WR11 2HH	01386 48643
Vice Chair:	Mr. P. Wright	5 Blackberry Way, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 2AH	01386 443123
Treasurer:	Mrs. J. Buckland	Banchory, Pearcroft Road, Stonehouse, Glos. GL10 2JY	01453 825733
Secretary:	Mr. G. Lowthian	109d Tewkesbury Road, Longford, Glos. GL2 9BN	01452 730227

Congregational Committee Officers

Cheltenham Bayshill Unitarian Church - Services held 1st and 3rd Sundays at 3pm. Founded 1832

Treasurer:	Mrs. J. Buckland	Banchory, Pearcroft Road, Stonehouse, Glos. GL10 2JY	01453 825733
Acting Secretary:	Mrs. J. Buckland	Banchory, Pearcroft Road, Stonehouse, Glos. GL10 2JY	01453 825733
Hall Lettings:	Mrs. J. Buckland	Banchory, Pearcroft Road, Stonehouse, Glos. GL10 2JY	01453 825733

Evesham Oat Street Chapel, Oat Street - Services held every Sunday at 11am. Founded 1696
Web-site: <http://welcome.to/OatSt.Chapel>

Chair:	Mrs. S. Slocombe	54 Laburnum Drive, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 1XW	01386 48261
Vice Chair	Mr T. Smith	Nursery Cottage, Guthries Burbage, Back Ends, Chipping Campden, Glos. GL55 6AU	01386 841212
Secretary:	Mr J Green	1 Holloway Drive Pershore Worcs. WR10 1JK	01386 553948
Treasurer:	Mrs. D. Wright	5 Blackberry Way, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 2AH	01386 443123
Lettings Secretary:	Mrs. D. Wright	5 Blackberry Way, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 2AH	01386 443123
Organist:	Mr. David Barnett	7 Hylton Road, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 2QB	01386 47510

Gloucester Friends Meeting House, Greyfriars - Services held 2nd & 4th Sundays at 3pm. Founded 1662
Email: unitarians@smallestspace.com

Chair:	Mrs. S. Hackett	Please telephone for postal address	0700 580 2184
Vice-Chair:	Mr. W. Hawkins	6 Sorrel Close, Robinswood, Gloucester, GL4 9JU	01452 536038
Treasurer:	Mr. G Lowthian	109d Tewkesbury Road, Longford, Glos, GL2 9BN	01452 730227
Minutes Secretary:	Mrs. H. Parsons	Field Cottage, Marle Hill, Chalford, Stroud, Glos, GL6 8IQ	01453 884034
Secretary:	Dr. P.M.W. Hackett	Please telephone for postal address	0700 580 2184

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Subscriptions: £7.50 per year payable to the Treasurer of your nearest Cotswold Group Congregation. Friends must please pay this subscription to continue receiving the newsletter. Members are encouraged to cover the cost of receiving the newsletter in their annual membership subscription or donations to their church.



Cotswold Group of Unitarian & Free Christian Congregations

Unitarians explore the meaning of life and encourage freedom of thought, giving respect to all religions and philosophies

Newsletter & Calendar July 2002



*And
we know
that all things
work together
for good to them
that love God*

- Romans 8:28

Let's get engaged

There is a lot of talk in Unitarian circles currently about a different way of organising congregational life; a structure "that supports and encourages its congregants to care for each other", and which offers "the power that can recreate and revitalize our liberal religious movements anew" (in the words of Thandeka, who gave this year's Essex Hall Lecture at the Annual Meetings in Sheffield).

This structure is built on the foundation of small groups of members meeting regularly in what are called Engagement Groups. "Week after week, month after month, year after year, these groups meet together as a religious practice of right relationship" These words, also from Thandeka, express what is the defining purpose of Engagement Groups:- "to bring people into right relationship with each other and with the larger world" (the social, moral, psychological, and spiritual world).

The word 'engagement' was very carefully chosen as the name for these groups in Britain, and it is well worth dwelling upon for a moment here. I'm not concerned so much with the idea of the Groups in this piece, but with Engagement itself, as being something crucial to the life of a congregation.

Engagement with something or with someone is an act of will, and an act of intent; it is a voluntary and purposeful response which says 'Yes, I will deal with this actively.

I know all too well from my classroom experience that no matter how well a teacher may present a thought or an idea to a room full of youngsters, if they do not choose to engage with it - to hear it, take it on, and think about it - then nothing has been achieved. No matter how much money goes into making an advertisement, if the viewer does not engage with and respond to it, no purchase will be made. No matter how heart-rending a charitable appeal may be, unless we engage with it and feel it - we will be less likely to respond to it.

Engagement means not simply being open to having a relationship with something outside of oneself, but having the positive intention to have an outer relationship . . . whether with a piece of information or of poetry, whether with a spiritual insight or with another human being. Engagement means connecting with, and being affected by, influences from outside ourselves - experiences, activities, feelings, and people . . . and a congregation whose members do not have the trust and willingness to be touched by one another, and by one another's journeys, is surely lacking a vital spark indeed.

"We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another. We do not discover the secrets of our lives merely by study and calculation in our own isolated meditations."(Thomas Merton) "Only in the mirror of relationship do you see the face of what is" (Krishnamurti)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope you will not take it the wrong way if I now propose engagement to you - yes, to all of you at the same time!

Michael

Remember

You call me God, Jehovah, Allah and Shiva.

You have built churches, temples, mosques and statues to Me. You have waged wars in My name and made sacrifices to Me.

You say that I am in nature, or in the sky. You say that I am everywhere. When you suffer, you call out to Me for help. When you are happy, you forget Me.

You have worshipped Me in human form and yet you do not know Me.

Prophets and Teachers have tried to point the way to Me, but no-one has found me.

I am your Father. And I am the one with whom you can have all relationships.

I am not born and, like you, I can never die.

I am light. My form is a tiny invisible point. You too are a subtle point of light. My world is the world of silence and peace. You used to dwell with Me there, in that golden silence.

Then you were born into a body and began to create your story. You forgot your home and Me.

I have come again to remind you of who you are.
I have come again to reveal to you the secrets of Time.
I have come again to fill you with all of the Love and Power and Peace that you have missed for so long.

Remember.

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

Newsletter Submissions

Please let Doreen Wright have any items for inclusion, poems, prayers, amusing anecdotes etc. by the **third** weekend of each month. This is your newsletter, and we would like everyone to have a voice.

Please type or clearly write your submissions, or preferably send them by e-mail to: ***pdwright@mac.com***

the dearing concert duo

On Tour in the Cotswolds!

Oat Street Chapel
Saturday July 6th, at 7.30pm

Bayshill Meeting Hall
Saturday July 13th, at 7.30pm



This is a reminder about these exciting opportunities for us to hear a young and vibrant concert duo from America on their first tour of Europe.

Abha, who is the Choir Leader at Birmingham Unitarian Church in Michigan, will delight us with her flute and vocal talents, with her husband Steven's accomplished guitar-playing to complete the sound. Steven tells me that the Programme is liable to include:-

History of Tango by Astor Piazzolla
Folk Songs From US and England by Benjamin Britten
Grand Sonata by Mauro Giuliani
Folk Songs of Spain by Manuel DeFalla
Suite Buenos Aires by Maimo Diego Pujol

The two of them are excited by the chance to play for new audiences, and are not charging us an appearance fee . . . but they would very much like to earn enough to cover their air-fares over here!

We have managed to get the Cheltenham concert included as a Festival Fringe event, so there is an entry charge (£4 in advance, or £5 on the door - which covers a simple Programme and interval drinks). At Oat Street we shall take a retiring collection, and it would be good to have in mind for that the kind of amount charged at Bayshill. At both concerts there will be the chance to buy copies of the two CD's the Duo have recorded.

Do come along, and bring a friend if you can, to enjoy the visits of these gifted young artists.

Snowhill Manor

Please note, the proposed visit to Snowhill Manor will be on Saturday 27th July, not 25th as previously advised in June Calendar.

Gordon Lowthian

Services for July

July 7th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Cheltenham
July 14th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Gloucester
July 21st	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Cheltenham
July 28th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Facets Service followed by lunch and conversation Cheltenham

In addition to the regular Sunday Services at Oat Street Chapel there is a service every Friday evening at 6.45pm - Friday Light - a reflective gathering to welcome the weekend.

On Sunday July 21st at Oat Street Chapel the service will feature the Naming of Grace Elizabeth White, grand-daughter of Anne Wheeler.

Minister's Doings June/July

Here is a flavour of some of the extra things in my Diary, beyond the regular matters of services and InQuirers Group in all three congregations:-

- 13/6** - Meeting of the Engagement Groups Working Party, at Essex Hall
- 20/6** - Meeting of the Cotswold Group Committee, at Bayshill
- 22/6** - Full day event at Bayshill: 'Celebrating Sanctuary' - a public forum on Asylum Seeking
- 24/6** - Assembly at Swan Lane First School
- 29/6** - Cotswold Group Review and Renew Day, at Oat Street
- 30/6** - Services at Kidderminster and Dudley, the Group having offered me to the Midland Union on Fifth Sundays
- 1/7** - Wedding Rehearsal at Kidderminster
- 6/7** - Wedding at Kidderminster
- 6/7** - Concert at Oat Street, given by the Dearing Duo (from America)
- 8 to 10/7** - Engagement Groups Exploratory Conference at Luther King House, Manchester
- 11/7** - Thought for the Week due in to the Evesham Journal
- 13/7** - Concert at Bayshill, by the Dearing Duo, as part of the Cheltenham Festival Fringe
- 18/7** - Midland Union Executive Committee Meeting, Birmingham

Future Event

On Monday July 8th at Oat Street Evesham
the monthly social event is entitled

“Pub Grub and Games”

Do join us to find out what it is all about.
7.00pm for 7.30pm
Admission £1 Raffle

Cotswold Group Treasurer

Last year I issued a plea for someone to become Cotswold Group Treasurer in my place. Sadly for me, no-one came forward. I have been treasurer since 1998 and though 5 years is a short time compared with previous holders of the post I feel that I need a break from some of the committees I am a member of. (Currently 8 - of which I am treasurer for 4 and chairman of 2). I should like the opportunity to do something different! The Churches now have until the AGM in 2003 to find a substitute or make alternative arrangements.

Bayshill News

Faced with the situation that nearly every member of the congregation was taking an away break over the Jubilee weekend, the unusual decision was made to cancel the service. We did not want David Wright to prepare a service and Peter Smith to practice hymns to find themselves the only people there. My sincere apologies to Helen for not notifying her.

My away days were spent walking my dog Tim and 3 Springer Spaniels on Cannock Chase where there are plenty of pools and puddles for aquatic dogs to enjoy.

On July 4th the InQuirer Group completes the final stage of “Holloways Road”.

Thanks to Michael for organising these interesting sessions for us.

Summer commitments and illhealth caused us to cancel our May social evening but in June we enjoyed Alisons hospitality at her home. Judging by Alisons suntan a good way to acquire one is to play croquet. Our flexible approach to our activities means we have yet to formulate plans for July.

Greetings to all from Bayshill, past and present, far and near.

Cotswold Group Special Projects Fund

Bayshill have collected £10.58 towards the £50 we are aiming for.

Some Thoughts

There is a wonderful mystical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life, Happiness, Freedom and Peace of mind, are always attained by giving them to someone else.

*Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
A long as ever you can.*

John Wesley

Submitted by Sylvia Slocombe

Final amusing piece from Church Notices

The CIA had an opening for an assassin. After all of the background checks, interviews, and testing were done there were three finalists... Two men and a woman. For the final test, the CIA agents took one of the men to a large metal door and handed him a gun.

“We must know that you will follow your instructions, no matter what the circumstances. Inside this room, you will find your wife sitting in a chair. Kill Her!!!”

The man said, “You can't be serious. I could never shoot my wife.”

The agent said, “Then you are not the right man for this job.”

The second man was given the same instructions. He took the gun and went into the room. All was quiet for about five minutes. Then the man came out with tears in his eyes. “I tried, but I can't kill my wife.”

The agent said, “You don't have what it takes. Take your wife and go home.”

Finally, it was the woman's turn. She was given the same instructions to kill her husband. She took the gun and went into the room. Shots were heard, one shot after another. They heard screaming, crashing, banging on the walls.

After a few minutes, all was quiet. The door opened slowly and there stood the woman. She wiped the sweat from her brow, and said, “This gun is loaded with blanks. I had to beat him to death with the chair.”

Moral: Women are bad. Don't mess with them!

Walpole Visit

A quote from the monthly newsletter of the Walpole Unitarian Church, New Hampshire, USA.

The British Invasion!

A fabulous five from Evesham and Chipping Campden, England visited Walpole from May 22 – 29. They are members of the Oat Street Chapel in Evesham, which Robert served for three years. Three of them visited two and a half years ago when Robert was installed as minister here.

Mr Peter Wright, President of the Midland Union (their district) gave an informative and humorous reflection on British Unitarianism during the service on May 26. Mrs Janet Eldershaw, Chairperson of the Cotswold Group of Churches, which includes Evesham, presented a gift to our church, a painting of the Abbey ruins in Evesham with the two parish churches in the background. We are grateful for the special gift of their presence as well as this exquisite memento of their home.

For those members who attend Cheltenham and Gloucester churches, or are new to our group, I will explain a little more.

The 5 were made up by Christopher Grove, his sister Sally Attwood and I am the one from Chipping Campden – Marion Ballantyne. Robert's first ministry was in our group. He, Cindy and Anna dearly loved living in the Cotswolds and we all loved having them.

When Robert was installed into his new ministry in Walpole in 1999 an invitation to attend the weekend of festivity was accepted by Peter, Janet and myself and at that time Ruth Beatson came too.

We had such a warm welcome then that we decided to make a return visit 'sometime'. That 'sometime' came about as you see this May – urged on by Peter.

Once there he took to driving us around in a hired van (we would call it a 'people carrier'). Janet kept us on the straight and narrow with her theology discussions with Robert. Sally was always to be found busying in our wee kitchen and Chris kept us amused with his quick witted repartee. As for me – well I'm not sure what I did! However it was all great fun and there was never a dull moment, as you will see by reading a copy of our 'itinerary' on the next page.

The Itinerary for British Unitarian Week 22-29 May, 2002

Wednesday 22 May

4:45 pm Arrival at Logan airport, Boston, drive to Walpole
about 7:30 pm Arrive at Inn at Valley Farms

Thursday 23 May

12:30 pm Rest and relaxation in the morning.
Lunch at Parsonage / the Bowler's
After lunch, walk around Walpole,
See the church and Parish House
4:00 pm Tea at Parsonage
6:00 pm Welcome Dinner at Burdick's

Friday 24 May

12:30 pm Rest and relaxation in the morning.
Lunch at Parsonage / the Bowler's
4:00 pm Tea / Cocktails at Tucker and Estelle Burr's
6:00 pm Church Potluck dinner and reception in the Parsonage

Saturday 25 May

10:00 am Outing to Brattleboro, Putney and Westminster West,
Vermont Art and Craft Studios Tour, furniture, glass blowing,
oil painting, pottery, etc.
1:00 pm Picnic Lunch (weather permitting) in Westminster
rest and relaxation in the afternoon
(2:30 pm Beau has wedding rehearsal in the church)

Brahma Kumaris

I have a close friend who studies through the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. She shares her beliefs with me and although there is some of it I do not personally believe myself, I do find much of it helpful, uplifting and food for thought. I thought, over the next months, I would share some of the Brahma Kumaris writings with you.

Carol Wilkerson