

Contact Addresses

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 Burgage, 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 **Web:** www.smallestspace.com/unitarians

Chair:	Vacant		
Vice-Chair:	Mr. W. Hawkins	6 Sorrel Close, Robinswood, Gloucester, GL4 9UU	01452 536038
Treasurer:	Mr. G Lowthian	109d Tewkesbury Road, Longford, Glos, GL2 9BN	01452 730227
Secretary:	Vacant		



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 Dec 2002 / Jan 2003



The Cotswold Group Newsletter & Calendar is published monthly.
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.

What Now?

This question might be in your minds and on your lips as we approach the end of 2002, and my relinquishing of the Ministry to the Cotswold Group . . . 'Will we get a new Minister?' 'Who will we get?' 'What will s/he be like?' 'And what will s/he ask of us ... of me?'

These are indeed questions you would expect to ask yourself at such a time – but I would want to raise a few others, which I believe need to come first:-

Do I think that my congregation really needs a Minister?

Do I think the Cotswold Group really needs a Minister?

Why – with what purposes in mind?

What might my contribution be to that ministry?

By raising these questions I am not seeking to suggest that a Ministry is not needed here – but that any ministry, carried out by anyone, will be the stronger, the more confident, and the more effective for being open, shared, and purposeful.

Recently I brought into our services the questions sent out by the G.A. in Consultation about how best to train our Ministers; one of which asked :- *What knowledge, skills, and understanding would you say are required to be an effective Minister today?*

The answers I received were these:-

Degree-level education

Study – of the Bible, of other Scriptures, and of other religious works

Theology, Philosophy, Psychology

Understanding of group processes

Inter-personal skills

I.C.T. skills

Openness to the arts – the wider cultural context

Grasp of the affairs of the world

Communication

Listening

Negotiation/Arbitration

Stimulation – of thought and interest, activity and loyalty

Understanding of people of all ages and situations

Liking for people of all ages and situations

Compassion

Strength – to cope with people and change

Commitment

Dedication

Common sense

Objectivity – juggling the diversity of thought and expectations

Awareness to avoid being the kingpin, the bottleneck

Access to sources/resources



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. We welcome contributions which invite discussion without causing offence. The Group Committee will act as arbiter should uncertainty arise.

Please type or clearly write your submissions, or send them by e-mail to: peter@blackberry.me.uk

The Lake

Submitted by Fleur Moyse

Long time ago, I walked down the lane,
Strolling down the icy path, I saw a drop of rain.

At the corner of my eye, it turned into a snowflake,
With a good look, I watched it landing into a lake.

In my knowledge, I found out what would be the reason,
The snowflake fell into the lake, which occurred once in the season.

In my mind, my father died from drowning In December,
He'd skated on the icy lake before his death, which I could only remember.

Heading and then standing by the icy lake, I began to cry,
With tears running down my cheeks, I looked at the sky.

The darkness of the sky fell, a bright star began to appear,
What came behind me was a voice, which echoed in my car.

Turning away from the sky, I saw nothing there,
All I knew, were the star and the moon appearing in the air.

The same noise returned outside, I wondered what was going on,
There were two boys laughing, which I thought the noise was coming from.

The boys yet vanished, the noise remained everywhere,
The situation became strange, I wished that I wasn't there.

To my surprised, I could smell my father's breath,
Holding my hand, my father came back to Me from death.

I recognise and applaud all of these as appropriate requirements for your Minister, but I would like to make it clear that you can help greatly towards the knowing of how best to focus the choosing and using all these various elements of knowledge, skill and understanding.

With an eye to someone else's future here with you, I would ask you to consider what is your bit; what is it that you will add to these requirements in contribution to, and completion of, a shared Ministry?

I would ask you to look at each item on the list, add the following phrase:- "so that, with my collaboration, we can . . ." Then I would ask you to complete each sentence . . . in doing so you will find that you gain a clearer sense both of your vision for your congregation, and of your involvement in fulfilling that vision.

For now I shall wish you all a very happy Christmas time – whatever it may mean to you personally, may it be a time of great warmth and joy – and as a family we all send you our love and best wishes for the New Year of 2003.

Michael, Julie, and Abigail

Doings with a Difference – An Invitation

Halfway through the time covered by this issue of the Calendar and Newsletter, I shall have ceased to be your Minister – and become the Midland Union's District Minister instead . . . and my 'Doings' no longer so relevant to this publication.

Rather than record a series of doings, then, I would like to tell you – or retell you if you already know – what we as a family are doing on Saturday December 21st ... because you are all invited along.

If you are reading this, you are welcome to drop in at our home for as long or a short a time as you like, at any time between 2pm and 8pm on December 21st. We are holding a gentle 'Open House' party throughout that afternong to mark the transition from one incarnation to another, and we would be delighted to see as many of you as can manage to call in.

Please simply arrive – we will have drinks and nibbles on the go, and it will be a pleasure to welcome you all on the eve of our Group Carol Service... there may be some singing practice required, folks!!!

Michael, Julie, and Abi

Services for December 2002

December 1st	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Cheltenham includes the Welcoming of baby Annabel Ritchie
December 8th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Gloucester Services to be conducted by Sarah Tinker
December 13th	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"
December 15th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Cheltenham
December 20th	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"
December 22nd	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham - Group Carol Service Gloucester
December 27th	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"
December 29th	11.00am	Evesham - Speaker to be announced No Service at Cheltenham or Gloucester

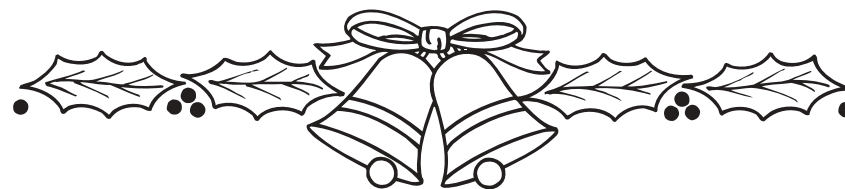
Services for January 2003

January 3rd	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"
January 5th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham - Speaker to be announced Cheltenham - Congregation members
January 10th	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"
January 12th	11.00am, 3.00pm	Evesham Gloucester Services to be conducted by Peter Wright President of the Midland Union
January 17th	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"
January 19th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Cheltenham Services to be conducted by David Wright
January 24th	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"
January 26th	11.00am 3.00pm	Evesham Gloucester Speakers to be announced
January 31st	6.30pm	Evesham "Friday Light"

Winter Days

Winter days are short and dark
All the trees are bare and stark.
It's cold and the strong winds blow
We feel miserable and our spirits are low,
Then suddenly, behold, the frost came overnight
We woke to a sparkling fairyland, a truly wondrous sight,
With all the frosty beauty, the world changes
Amazing how nature so quickly rearranges.
All the dark and dank, is now gleaming brilliant white
Shops with Christmas fare, and decorations shining bright,
Children bring out their sledges, as the snow begins to fall
Young girls bring out their dresses for the Christmas Ball
Parents and Grandparents prepare for the festive board,
Presents hidden away for months, secretly to hoard.
The excitement and anticipation is almost fever pitch
Preparations are all in hand, pray all goes without a hitch.
Christmas trees now appear, with all their shining lights
And carols are sung around the streets almost every night,
To celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord,
Bringing Hope to all, who listen to His word

by Bettina Pim



Finally in this Calendar, all of us in the Cotswold Group wish Michael well in the new venture that he is taking on. It is a calling that we are sure he will rise to, and we are confident he will succeed.

In wishing Michael, Julie, and their family a Happy Christmas and New Year, we send our love and good wishes to them all.

Compassion

"Compassion is what makes our lives meaningful. It is the source of all-lasting happiness and joy. And it is the foundation of a good heart, the heart of one whom acts out of a desire to help others. Through kindness, through affection, through honesty, through truth and justice toward all others we ensure our own benefit. This is not a matter for complicated theorising. It is a matter of common sense. There is no denying that consideration of others is worthwhile. There is no denying that our happiness is inextricably bound up with the happiness of others. There is no denying that if society suffers we ourselves suffer. Nor is there any denying that the more our hearts and minds are afflicted with ill will, the more miserable we become. Thus we can reject everything else: religion, ideology, all received wisdom, But we cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion" By His Holiness the Dalai Lama

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. His tireless efforts on behalf of human rights and world peace have brought him international recognition. He is a recipient of the Wallenburg Award (conferred by the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Foundation), the Albert Schweitzer Award, and the Nobel Peace Prize.

A short prayer to inspire one in the quest to benefit others:

May I become at all times, both now and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
 A ship for those with oceans to cross
A bridge for those with rivers to cross
 A sanctuary for those in danger
 A lamp for those without light
A Place of refuge for those who lack shelter
 A servant to all in need

Submitted by Carol Wilkerson

Oat Street Notices

Christmas Party

At Oat Street Chapel
to be arranged by Chris and Sally

Monday December 9th 2002 - 7.00pm for 7.30pm
Good food and Entertainment
Father Christmas will be present - Raffle

Admission by ticket only, available from Doreen Wright - £5 each
If anyone has a raffle prize they would care to donate please see Chris and Sally

Christmas Concert

Still looking forward to December we shall be having our
Christmas Concert with Musyck Anon. This will be on
Friday December 6th 7.00pm.

Concert will be followed by coffee and mince pies

Christmas Carol Service

The Group Carol Service will be held
at Oat Street Chapel on December 22nd 11.00am.
To be followed by Bring & Share lunch.
Please come and join us for this annual event.

Dates for your Diary

February 16th	AGM Cheltenham
February 23rd	AGM Gloucester
March 2nd	AGM Evesham
March 30th	Group AGM to be held at Evesham - Bring & Share lunch

Bayshill News & Events

Services

Sunday December 1st 3.00pm
Sunday December 15th 3.00pm
Sunday January 5th 3.00pm Congregation members. The theme "A New Year, New Beginnings" - Hymns, Music & Readings
Sunday January 19th David Wright

Inquirer Group

Thursday December 12th 2.30pm at Bayshill Meeting Hall
We shall be discussing Chapter 10 of "Prospects for the Unitarian Movement"

Thursday January 9th 2.30pm at Bayshill Meeting Hall.
We shall continue to explore "Prospects for the Unitarian Movement"

Bayshillian Social Evenings

Will continue on the 3rd Tuesday each month at 7.00pm.
Members to decide where they would like to meet.

Disabled Access

As I write, this work is not entirely completed, but our members are already benefiting from the improvements and I am sure all the other hall users are grateful the steep step has gone. We hope that other organisations will wish to use our hall in future and I am trying to encourage the Workers Education Association to hold classes there.

Remembrance Day

Several Cheltenham members were able to support Gloucester at the excellent service given by Michael. I have no idea what it is like to be in a country at war, even though there have been so many wars throughout my life. It is sad to realise that since 1945, 1968 was the only year when British Service personnel were not killed. Surely the majority do not want war. Why is it that the majority can do so little to stop them. I know many Unitarians work hard for the cause of Peace and I hope they can inspire the rest of us to do more.

Seasons Greetings

We are all aware that Christmas and New Year are not happy times looked forward to by everyone and this is certainly true for some of our members. To you all, far and near, we send Greetings to remind you of the joy of sharing and friendship.

Wishing our Minister and his family a happy Christmas and New Year has a special significance as Michael faces the challenge of "new beginnings". Thank you Michael for supporting us so well during your Ministry here; we have gained much from your time with us and we know that we shall do so in the future as well.

Jenny Buckland

Dear Friends in the Cotswold Group

It is really disappointing not to be able to meet with you this year, to miss seeing all my friends. I thought I should write for the magazine to make up for it, and tell you about another friend.

This friend is called Alice, well she calls herself Alice, in the way that many Chinese girls give themselves European names. (You meet them in the reception at hotels, working as tourist guides, in shops etc). We met when we were both sitting beside a lake in Hangzhou (on the eastern coast of China south of Shanghai), a pretty Chinese schoolgirl with two smaller boys. It was instant friendship and soon we were trying to speak to each other. It was fairly hard work, speaking with words, the hands, pictures, each of us sometimes having to guess what the other meant. But we succeeded and when some of her family came by I was given a slip of paper with Alice's name and address on it.

That half hour of conversation has resulted in four years of letter writing. My first letter reached her in China (not so easy when there are so many ways of expressing a Chinese word in European letters) but not the second. So Alice quickly seized on the idea that she would write her name and address very neatly in Chinese and I would copy it. (Thank goodness for copying machines!) Since then every letter has made it, even parcels, though it is impossible to register them since, not surprisingly, the ladies in the post office cannot write in the destination in the registration form.

From the very first I was addressed as Dear Grandmother. I had been adopted! I think Chinese children adopt brothers and sisters too. The two little boys who were with Alice beside the lake were introduced as her brothers but later I learnt that she, as so many children in China, was an only child. Alice has asked if my son (four years older than she) would consent to be her brother. He was a bit surprised but he agreed. Have you thought what it would be like if no-one had any brothers and sisters? There would be no aunts, uncles or cousins either, no family trees, well the trees will not branch out but converge. No wonder there is a need for pretend brothers.

Alice was fourteen when we first started writing to each other, not a sophisticated European 14 but younger for her years and the topics we wrote about in the beginning were not very sophisticated either, how nice it was that we had met, for example. About what life is like in Europe and what school is like in China. During the four years of our letters I've had lots of lessons in writing Chinese but Alice has never asked me to correct her English and of course I never have. And in every letter Alice has said how much she loves having us as her friends. Apart from letters she has sent pictures, drawings, presents, cards for birthday and Christmas, even valentines. Many of the letters spoke of how much Alice missed us, and sent us her love with a wish to see us again soon. It is a big responsibility to be the object of so much longing.

We do not mention history, politics, wars or such things when we write. Neither have we ever talked about religion. Alice has never mentioned religion as a subject at school. However while reading her most recent letter I realised that she had expressed herself like real Unitarian. To quote "You see nothing is motionless in the world, everything, everybody is changing all the time and everywhere. I thought that nothing can last for ever before I met you, but now I realise that perhaps there is one thing that can do so - only love (no matter who you are, no matter how far it is, love connects human beings together, like a whole - so the earth is one close-knit sphere".

Love from Liz in Sweden