

Sutton Feast Day Service. Sutton Methodist Church Schoolroom.  
Monday 25 July 2011 at 19:00  
*Provided by the Hull Unitarian Church for the Leonard Chamberlain Trust  
Led by Adrian Worsfold*

In our short service this evening  
We call upon the divine, however it is understood,  
To assist our spirits and climb towards the fountain of all light,  
And so be cleansed.  
Give us clarity away from those atmospheric fogs,  
And sure-footedness rather than churning through the thick soil of the land;  
Instead: shine, and produce steady calm,  
To offer us a resting place at this very moment  
On our ever continuing journeys of life.

[Inspired by Boethius, 480-524]

The Hindu scripture *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* says:

From the unreal lead me to the real.  
From darkness lead me to light.  
From death lead me to immortality.

Our first hymn is number 166, in *Hymns for Living*, 'All Heroic Lives Remind Us', which we sing to the tune of Abbots Leigh (HL 286).

All heroic lives remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sand of time;  
Footprints that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
Forlorn sister or lost brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait.  
Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act that each tomorrow  
Finds us further than today.

[From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow]

As a matter of interest, that music was made purely by machine. No one played it and there was no piano. A computer generated sound file displayed the notes on a score in a computer program. I messed about with the notes on my computer, and gave it several outputs including the musical score to view, a simple tune sound, a special web based file that all composing software should be able to read, and an enhanced instrument approximation as you have just heard - in this case a piano with a variable level of echo as if in a room.

Opening our hearts and allowing no secrets  
We bring to the forefront of our minds  
Those things which we have done and should not have done  
And those things we should have done and did not do  
And express, quietly and privately, our own regrets.  
Thus we are sorry,  
And we pray that we can both forgive and be forgiven  
To lay aside every weight that slows us down  
And with a true repentance live hereafter in a purer and more holy life  
Perhaps to touch something of that we might call eternity.

And now we open our lips to give praise  
To give glory to the many Names  
And to realise, when that weight is lifted  
The good that is in the journey we make.

In striving ahead, to do our best,  
Make a quick and tender conscience  
And follow the promptings of the indwelling spirit  
But not an impatient spirit  
Or of temptation  
But to seek grace and receive it  
And to do of the highest will  
In a calm, quiet and patient manner  
To glorify our encounters with daily life.  
Forgive those who seek forgiveness  
And offer forgiveness when needed  
Whether these matters are small or great.  
Let us say thanks and yes to life.  
Bless the young and bless the old.  
Have compassion for all things.

Have faith and offer trust.  
Walk through the dark as if it were the light  
And come to your destination as if were a gift:  
The destination that is in fact the travel itself.  
We do all this with the sacred in the secular,  
And without division.  
Amen.

We have a choir to help us sing our second hymn, William Blake's poem of another journey as in Jerusalem. Please try to follow the choir; the hymn is perhaps slightly slow. It is *Hymns for Living* number 210, 'Jerusalem', to its own tune by Hubert Parry.

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountain green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?  
And did the countenance divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!  
I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

We are thinking here about our own journeys here, and our prayers hoped and wished for something higher, but perhaps for a minute or two we can consider, in silence, the state of the world: the journeys involved for people starving in Somalia and East Africa, and the journeys made in peace and hope that ended with the deranged inflictions of a gunman and bomber.

Silence

T. S. Eliot: *Little Gidding V*

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half heard, in the stillness  
Between the two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always -  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of things shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.

A change of mood now. Before I give my talk, we will hear a piece of music perhaps unusual for a religious service. It came out in 1968, 43 years ago, and, you know, we were all 43 years younger then and perhaps have developed different tastes since. The relevance of this piece of music will come in my talk.

### *The Move Fire Brigade*

Leonard Chamberlain, our very late benefactor, had phenomenal personal wealth as a woollen draper at a time when such merchants like him had exclusive rights, before the days of capitalism proper. He thus was able to own a lot of property in Sutton and Stoneferry, as in houses, farms, and other land. As a Calvinist Puritan, he would have looked for signs that he was one of God's elect, and wealth would be one of the signs as would be his tendency towards godly living, that is wealth and an absence of consumption. If you have a high income and you don't consume, you invest. Max Weber called this *The Spirit of Capitalism*. Well, we all die, and the money stays behind, and his went into the Chamberlain Trust providing educational and welfare relief for those of us at the other end of the income and wealth scale. And each year the albeit now very different institutional descendent, the Hull Unitarian Church, provides a service for the Trust for Sutton Feast Day.

Being myself over fifty years old and last year with something of a crisis of accommodation over in New Holland, and also with a longstanding connection with the one time English Presbyterian now Unitarian church in Hull, I have joined the beneficiaries of the charity in terms of occupying a unit of its social housing. Because I am also active in that church, I was asked to take the service this year.

What is strange is that I have ended up just one street away from where I was raised as a child. I used to live at 25 Watson Street, and did so from 1964 to 1985, being just over 20 years. I was born in Hornsea and grew up in a council house there, at 57 Ebor Avenue, and my mother's father found my father a job at Spillers. So he commuted by train each day, until one day they announced the closure of the line. I remember being on that train once, being taken to Spillers with my dad I think, and I remember looking up at one of the circular lights in the diesel multiple unit with the bulb in the middle showing through.

My mother and father bought the house in Watson Street for £2,500. It had a very long, narrow garden and a thick walled concrete air raid shelter at the end that doubled up as a den. All sorts happened in there that I ought to keep private between friends. My first school was Cavendish and, on the first day, decided I didn't like it and immediately walked home, puzzling the lollipop lady. Once I was off to school, my mother took a job as a primary teacher at Maybury Road infants school, and she retired from that same school.

I went to the new Neasden school when 7 years old, preferring to go there sooner rather than staying at Cavendish; it would take children from 9 years old later on. There I met a friend, also 7 years old, and if you see me going out on a Tuesday night I am going off to the pub with him and others we know. So this is a direct friendship that has lasted 45 years.

The railway had closed, but one early memory was going to Sutton Fair. I remember it at the north end of the eastern platform of the closed Sutton station and once being completely absorbed in its atmosphere when riding on a boat like swing, probably in 1968, because the music that added to the excitement was *Fire Brigade* by The Move. I wonder when Sutton Fair ceased?

Another memory was when our next door neighbours invited me to join others in going to get the filled up milk churns from a farm off Leads Road, near what is now Midmere Avenue. We sat in the back of the van among the churns and after visiting the dairy we brought back the empties. The farm was soon

absorbed into the colossus of Bransholme.

Whilst at Neasden we used to twag dinners, that was come down into Sutton and eat at Mackmans the cake shop and buy things elsewhere like chips. I think I told my mother this only after I'd left my next school, which was Malet Lambert, up to 1977. At Malet Lambert I showed my growing tendency towards controversy by criticising the nearby council estate houses as "cheap and nasty", as Sutton had become surrounded by both the Ings Road Estate where Neasden was and Bransholme on the other side. This was before the housing to the north and the Robson Way bypass, although Spring Cottage Estate was built by that time. By the way, that controversial school article is on my personal website even today.

Actually, I first went to Bransholme school, got bullied for 7 weeks and was shifted across to the much better school in James Reckitt Avenue. I did just well enough to get into the sixth form and then just well enough again to go to university. The fact is that had I stayed at Bransholme I might have ended up with only a few poor CSE passes. I'd have been unacademic when leaving school and by now a lot better off financially.

I might have spent three years in Bangor, North Wales, but the Economics there was too mathematical for my abilities and I came back, thus to go to Hull for a broader social sciences course in 1978, lasting until 1981, and then after that had three months to no effect in Colchester trying an American Politics MA at Essex University, before coming back to Hull again and my eventual Sociology of Religion Ph.D, starting officially in 1982. This research carried on past our dog's death and my mother's separation from my father, who went to London, and she felt a stigma regarding divorce and wanted to move away from Sutton. She, the dog and I moved to a bungalow off Beverley Road, not much bigger than the one I am in now, the first place of a moving around until the two of us ended up in Derbyshire when I also wasted a year in Manchester. From 1994 we moved to New Holland, which was a cheap way of living near Hull, thanks to the Humber Bridge tolls. Still, I travelled over the bridge to get an MA in Contemporary Theology and a PGCE for teaching, which I have since abandoned. I married a Russian woman, my mother got dementia, there was a sort of family coup d'etat against me leading to my mother living in Derbyshire again, where she died, and my wife never returned from her second time away, residing in Reading. So now, after a crisis of housing, I am back here - from 2010.

So much of life is like forks in the road, and so much is random. What is odd is that all the time that I lived around here as a child I of course knew of the Chamberlain Homes 'where the old people lived' (at the time, maisonettes),

but I knew nothing about the name or background. I remember the orchard that stretched from the back of Watson Street to Chamberlain Street, and the dog and I tramped up and down the Trods many hundreds of times.

In 1980 some school friends at Malet Lambert were coming to this very place, the Sutton Methodist Church, and in particular its youth club and fellowship group, so my friend (who I've mentioned) and I came along as agnostics. He picked up a lass here, and she stopped attending; they later married and now have three offspring entering into adult life themselves. I continued to attend and turned the others here into a research project from 1982 that became part of my Ph.D; I read some theology that was very different from their expressed beliefs and I sort of caught religion. Indeed, reading intellectual theology and discussing some of it here got me thrown out of this church. As a liberal Christian I was therefore confirmed at university in 1984 where they took theology more seriously. Something else I did was present *The Great Classics* at Hospital Radio - now, it so happens, I present the hymns and other music at the Unitarian church! - and through Hospital Radio met some Bahai folks. I learnt things I didn't like about the Bahai Faith and went to a meeting in 1984 to confront them with questions. They just happened to have their regional meeting in the Unitarian church building, and as a result I tried the Unitarians out, eventually mainly going there, and my mum did too after her separation and divorce, both of us up to 1989 and then from 1994 up to 2004, after which I was an Anglican attending in Barton for five years.

And of course it is through the Unitarians that I learnt about the origins of that church congregation and indeed about Leonard Chamberlain. 1672 was the start of the first congregation, merging with another in 1680, and having a building in Bowlalley Lane in 1693 and a hundred years or so later a fancy octagonal building before moving away to the suburbs of Park Street, absorbing some Unitarian Baptists. So it is quite strange how a general history and a particular history intertwine because I have, in a sense, set off and come back again. Unless, of course, this is a staging post before something else. That I don't yet know, and we never do.

Our final hymn is the 'Closing Verse' at *Hymns for Living* 316, sung to the tune of Penlan by David Jenkins of 1848-1915. And this time the pianist is a human being. We listen to one verse through and then sing.

O star of truth, down shining  
Through clouds of doubt and fear,  
I ask but 'neath thy guidance,  
My Pathway may appear:  
However long the journey,

However hard it be,  
Though I be lone and wary,  
Lead on, I'll follow thee.

[Minot Judson Savage]

Whichever way you may go  
And whichever route you do not take:  
May your God go with you  
And may your God be wherever you pause.  
Amen.