

*The Black Country Group of
Unitarian Churches
Chairman: Mrs P. Rose
Correspondent Mrs. BS Russell*

The Black Country Group of Unitarian churches was formed when three Midland Union churches joined together for mutual support. These churches are Dudley, Oldbury and All Souls' Wolverhampton.

The congregations meet in the Old Meeting House, Wolverhampton Street, hidden behind 'Kentucky Fried Chicken' and guarded by fearsome looking iron gates. But come through those gates on the First or Third Sunday of each month at 3.00pm, go through the porch and into the church and you will find a gem, light, airy, warm and welcoming.

Although the church dates back to 1690 and is a listed building, thoughtful refurbishment has made it a most inviting place of worship for a faith that delights in openness and free thinking, in a belief in one universal power which some of us call God, and a recognition of the worth of the teachings of Jesus and of other great men and women.

Our worship is led by lay speakers and we invite you to join in as much – or as little – as you wish.



*The Black Country Group
Of
Unitarian Churches*

*Meeting at the
Unitarian Old Meeting House
Wolverhampton Street
Dudley*

Contact 01902 650168

August 17th 2009 Wolverhampton @ Dudley
Old Red, New Red, Blue, Green, Little Pink and now Purple -
hymnbooks of course. Nearly the rainbow. There are some splendid
hymns in the purple 'Sing your Faith' and I hope in weeks to come we
do just that. But let's not forget the old hymnbooks- there are some
grand hymns, there, too. In fact, my favourite carol can be found
only in Hymns of Worship (Old Red) and in HW Revised (Blue) and my
second favourite only in the Blue.

I wanted to tell what a great contribution hymn writers and
composers, and the music providers who interpret the tunes, make to
our worship, so I talked about four hymns that had 'made it' from the
OR to the NR Hymn book.

The first 'Praise, my soul,...' was written by H.F. Lyte, and I wondered
what had made the change from that exuberant hymn to the rather
melancholy 'Abide with me....' . Sadly it was life long ill-health -he
died shortly after writing that hymn. The tune for 'Praise..' was
composed by J. Goss, who was Professor of Harmony at the Royal
Academy of Music for 50 years -no wonder it is a good tune!

The second, 'There's a wideness in God's mercy...' was written by
W.F. Faber, and although he also wrote 'Faith of the fathers' he
struggled with his own faith all his life. The line in this hymn that always
appeals to me is 'If our love were but more simple...' -a philosophy
worth embracing. There are several tunes, but the composer that
intrigued me was Arthur Brown, (*St. Malo*), who was almost entirely
self-taught and who played the local church organ when he was
only 12. His works include 800 hymn tunes!

The third, by Samuel Johnson, definitely Unitarian 'Never was to
chosen race that unstinted tide confined, thine is every time and
place...' Because of his unorthodox views he had difficulty finding a
pulpit and eventually founded his own Independent Church of Lynn.
The tune *University College*, was the work of H.J. Gauntlett, perhaps
better known for *Triumph* and *Irby*

And I could not leave out 'Joy, joyful....' No.1 in my hymn parade
for both words and music. Words by Henry van Dyke, who also wrote,
in an essay "Be glad of life, it gives you a chance to work and play,
to love and look at the stars". This hymn contains the only prayer we
really need 'Teach us how to love each other...' and the composer -
Beethoven, need I say more?. After all that singing, to music provided
by David Mearman from Stourbridge, we were ready for our tea and

cakes. Thank you, David, Pam (Rose) Irene (Hickman) and Evelyn
(Cowley) for help and support.

And to come:-

our two services in October.

The first, on 4th October, is a combined Dudley, Oldbury with
Dudley and Wolverhampton@ Dudley Harvest Thanksgiving
Service.

It will be conducted by **Sue Woolley**, who is our District
Facilitator, and after the Service there will be a sale of
produce. The money raised will be given to a charity, but
which one has yet to be decided. And, of course there will be
tea and cakes.

On the 3rd Sunday, 18th October, a W'ton@ Dudley Service, we
welcome **Dorothy Haughton**, from the Shrewsbury
congregation.

Dorothy's last visit reminded us that 'many a true word is
spoken in jest' and she emphasised the importance of
laughter and good humour in our services as well as our lives.
We are looking forward to her visit.

In November, the first service on **Sunday 1st** will be led by Phil
Niblock (Shrewsbury) and on 15th . Gavin Lloyd (Oxford) will be
our speaker.

The leaves, now green, will soon be golden,
Lemon bright or russet red;
With the first chill wind of autumn
Coloured tears will all be shed.

'We do not weep' the bare trees tell us,
'We do but sleep, awaiting spring,'
'We gather strength to show our glory
At that season's wakening'