

Have Congregation; Will Travel

After ten long years of negotiations with Manchester City Council, they have finally taken ownership of the old church building at Mersey Street.

We have arranged our final service in the building for:

**3pm
Sunday 12 July, 2009**

This edition of Openshaw Connection is your invitation to be with us on that occasion.

For the purposes of catering, please email us to let us know that you are coming:

info@openshawconnection.org.uk

We do, of course, appreciate that at this short notice many of you will not be able to be with us, but would value your prayers and greetings at this very emotional time!

If you don't have access to email, you are welcome to write to Openshaw Connection c/o 1421 Ashton Old Road, Manchester, M11 1HJ. But timescales are very tight, so email is preferred!



We are still negotiating the compensation package, but we are hopeful that it will allow us to develop an exciting project in the future.

In the meantime, however, we have now found alternative homes in the area for all our projects.

As far as worship is concerned, we are going to worship locally some of the time—at Tim's house or with our friends at Pj's URC. But the rest of the time we intend to inflict ourselves on anyone who will have us.

We want to experience a wide variety of styles of worship. In particular, we want to learn from anyone who is exploring creatively how to make worship reflect the context in which they are worshipping.

We are also more than willing to participate in your worship, whether by telling our story, doing a Godly Play, or leading prayers.



Tabernacle



In our last Openshaw Connection, we mentioned the strangely-named Dancing Scarecrow. This exciting new internet resource is now up and running and we have already posted more than 200 prayers and resources.

But, what of the name? Brian Wren has a beautiful hymn, which we have sung often:

Here hangs a man discarded,
A scarecrow hoisted high,
A nonsense pointing nowhere
To all who hurry by

Can such a clown of sorrows
Still bring a useful word
Where faith and love seem phantoms
And every hope absurd?

Not only do we want to answer the question with a resounding 'Yes,' we want to ensure that our worship reflects the reality of a world in which faith and love seem phantoms, and hope absurd.

Which is not to say that our worship is joyless or dull! Our scarecrow dances, blown by the wind as it hangs precariously from a cross. Perhaps the dance is the agonising death throws of crucifixion. Perhaps the dance is the drunken stagger on the way home on a Saturday night. Or the disturbing dance of a woman with schizophrenia driving demons out of buses in the middle of the night. But maybe the dance is the exuberant whirling of a little girl revelling in the sensations of her own body. Or the celebrations of 15,000 home fans at the City of Manchester stadium.

There are more details on the website, which will continue to grow once the move out of Mersey Street is complete. We have also started a Dancing Scarecrow blog where we can reflect theologically on both the worship materials that we produce and on the context out of which we produce them.

The website is:

<http://www.dancingscarecrow.org.uk>

The blog is:

<http://dancingscarecrow.blogspot.com>

Our move out of Mersey Street gives us something of a problem. The church is almost universally known as Mersey Street. Of course, it is not unheard of for a church to bear the name of a completely different location to the one in which it is now sited.

Mersey Street, though, is so site specific that we feel it would cause no end of confusion for us to continue to use that name.

Fortunately, we do have a "Sunday-best" name. Technically and legally, we are "The United Baptist Tabernacle, Higher Openshaw." Over the past months and years, the "Tabernacle" part of our name has become increasingly important. For those who don't know, the Tabernacle was the tent which the Israelites used during the Exodus.

So as we face our own wandering in the wilderness—even though we hope we shall be homeless for rather less than forty years—it feels appropriate that the one thing we take with us is that part of our name.

When we mentioned this to David, our church secretary, he immediately joked that we could use a circus tent.

Which takes us back to Brian Wren's hymn and his question about the relevance of the "clown of sorrows."

So we have designed a new logo for the church which visually links with the Dancing Scarecrow logo:



Contact Details

The Openshaw Connection is a two-way process. Please get in touch with us to share your stories and reactions to our stories.

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