



the Harbinger Newsletter

* United Episcopalians ~ Littlewood Chapel ~ Bartlett Family Circle *

www.fremontanglicans.com

#1 Michaelmas 2015

Getting Started

The original "Harbinger" was the newsletter of England's Calvinist Connexion founded by the famous reverend and revivalist preacher, George Whitefield. Whitefield's Connexion played a substantial role alongside Wesley's United Societies in ministering to England's spiritually slumbering generation, these being the middle and lower classes of the 1700's.

So, given our general interest in English religious societies-- like Whitefield and Wesley's methodist clubs-- we decided to reboot the same magazine, albeit on a smaller scale with more anecdotal than scholarly rigor. We hope it can serve our local family ministry, continuing a modest legacy that stretches back to historic Methodism before it left the Anglican fold.

Another major design of our newsletter, aside from preserving methodistic tradition, is to keep conversation with friends and family who've visited our chapel room. Perhaps they have an interest in Anglicanism or old Protestantism in general? Maybe they love the simplicity yet fullness of our catechism? Or a life interspersed with fixed prayer? So, we hope our home ministry can feed these various needs, and may the newsletter be an exponent to this end.

On Chapels, Briefly

Perhaps, when we think of chapels we imagine either a self-contained, non-descript building or a very small church, maybe with a stained-glass windows, pitched roof, and/or steeple, etc.? Though UECNA canons define a 'chapel' or 'oratory' simply as two or three persons who regularly meet in prayer, the popular perception as what constitutes a chapel is rather complicated by the legal history of chapels in England.

In England chapels were buildings of worship usually registered under dissenting congregations and given a certain freedom despite the scrutiny of the State. Church & Chapel therefore represented two distinct-- though historically & theologically kindred--

categories of worship as well as body of civil rights-- often in competition and suspicious of each other.

In the 18th century only the Anglican establishment properly had 'churches'. In contrast, the other Protestants used 'chapels'. These 'other Protestants' were ministers who could not subscribe, or fully comply, with either parts of the 39-Articles or Prayer Book-- or both. Rightly, they were called 'non-conformists', and today we know the main English non-conformist groups by their resultant denominations, namely, the Baptists, Presbyterians, & Congregationalists. Together with Anglicans, these denominations made the bulk of orthodox Protestantism in England.

In some ways, orthodox non-conformity slowly became an extension of establishment, especially where it joined churchmen against the threat of Roman Catholicism or, in some cases, Anabaptists. Interestingly, some prominent Anglicans came from dissenting families or were graduates from the non-conforming private Academies. Bishops Thomas Secker and Joseph Butler were alma maters from dissenting academies, and the Wesley brothers came from Puritan lineages on either side of their parents. Relations between establishment and dissent could be fluid.

Thus, Chapels were legally chartered congregations that were mostly in agreement with Established Church doctrinal points but could not fully comply with the Prayer Book. As a consequence, they enjoyed a certain freedom and public presence, but they could not adopt the outward décor or signs of a Church. Indeed, many chapels resembled homes or otherwise inconspicuous buildings. After Toleration, chapels began to gain more distinct architecture, though omitting steeples. Octagonal structures gained ground in the 18th century, resembling medieval chapter houses. Indeed, octagonal preaching houses were favored by Wesley.

Moreover, chapel interiors looked much their Anglican counterparts with the exception of the

Letters to the Harbinger: Questions regarding the faith or practice the chapel or the UEC, I will try to answer by this newsletter or phone. Feel free to send questions or comments to - Mr. Charles Bartlett, 4571 Richmond Ave., Fremont CA 94536. 408-564-2435. Email: chapelwarden@gmail.com.

Table's location. Dissenters usually placed it before the pulpit or in the area of the nave. In comparison, churchmen set the Table to the side, or behind the pulpit, to better accommodate railed chancels which Dissenters lacked.

Nevertheless, chapels could refer to the room of a private residence. This arrangement was more common with 17th century with non-conformity whose religious assemblies suffered spouts of illegality. In contrast, churchmen generally enjoyed a free pass when it came to their private worship, taking advantage of church fellowship in vestries or parsonages.

Private chapels in homes were more common among the upper class. Whether non-conforming or established, these chapels might be small, detached buildings on the grounds of a wealthy estate, or they could be a room set-apart (yes, sometimes consecrated) in the manors of typically large households.

Select chapel rooms were often instituted by the pious master of the house who might have numerous guests and/or servants to provide an ease of worship. Such plantation or manor chapels gave ways for the upper class to patronize reform movements within the Church. Noblemen might endow clergymen as chaplains to their families or corporations, thereby promoting minoritarian groups within Establishment. Countess Huntington's network of private methodist chapels and lecturers is a famous example.

Under more desperate conditions, as during the interregnum, Anglican chapels were less remarkable, appearing in cottages and the like. Whether Anglican or non-conforming, conventicles gathered in taverns, woods, barns, or even workshops. This situation more or less prevailed in Scotland after William III favored Presbyterians against Episcopalians, the latter being sympathetic to James II. Americans shared Scotland's plight to the extent very little support came from England, leaving America dependent on private endeavors.

Today's generation is fairly disinterested in the legal history of chapels vs. churches. Less persuasive is the naming of a parlor, or set-apart room, into a 'chapel'. Indeed, by the end of the 19th century Protestant non-conformity in England had already dropped the term in favor of the more distinguished noun, 'church',

reflecting their newfound political equality with churchmen.

Regardless of historical nuances, our tiny congregation is content to describe itself as a "family circle". In the Methodist tradition this translates to a kind of class, though we use the term 'chapel' interchangeably with "oratory", permissible under our church canons. Nevertheless, chapels bridge a gap between private and public ministry, and this is a topic we want to explore.

Invitation to UEC Membership

Given the twofold character of trying to be a religious society and "church", we decided to at least settle upon one-half of our identity. As we study the history of Toleration, England allowed Protestant Dissenters in the 18th century to keep a semi-independent relation to the Church of England. This partial independence was called **Occasional Conformity**, kept by individuals who had Holy Communion in the Church of England three times per year.

Keeping the example of Occasional Conformity, we'd like to invite as many friends as possible to our Holy Communion services, whenever our traveling elder, Fr. Paul Castellano, arrives in the Bay Area. Our original scheme was to have quarterly visits but, shy of this frequency, it depends on opportunity.

The only hitch with such a membership arrangement (i.e., communion thrice a year, or less, depending on circumstance) is communicants ought to be confirmed, or desirous of such. For that reason we ask friends to be patient of catechizing.

I am willing to do one-on-one catechetical instruction with interested folks. The catechism teaches no peculiar belief, but what Christians ought to generally believe unto salvation. I can provide copies of the church catechism with explanations upon request for home study.

That said, we are trying to make a religious society in parallel to a local church. One advantage of a society we have yet to fully experience is it's non-denominational yet can be informed by evangelical Anglicanism. This seems to make a lot of sense in a non-established environ.

Next issue

I'll further explore the difference between private societies and public churches, and the meaning of 'prochapel'.

<p>Upcoming Events: Antecommunion Sun., Sept. 20th, 10 am @ Chapel Room, Fremont; Administration of Baptism Sat., Sept. 26th, 2pm @ chapel, Fremont; Holy Communion Sun., Sept. 27th, 10am @ chapel, Fremont. RSVP 408-564-2435 # <i>Every Sunday 4pm, Evening Prayer w/ Catechism; Every Wed. & Fri. 6pm, Family Prayer. Both services @chapel. #</i></p>
