



the Harbinger Newsletter

* United Episcopalians ~ Littlewood proChapel ~ Bartlett Family Circle *

www.fremontanglicans.com

#2 Lammas 2016

Our Frequency

Perhaps the irregular publication of the “Harbinger” newsletter is already noticed. Our excuse might be reserving flexibility with schedule. Yet, as it happens, our ‘prochapel’ enjoys three to four major services per year, so it seems reasonable to shoot for the same frequency of publication—maybe quarterly or triennially?

As said before, the original scheme with ‘major services’ was to have Holy Communion 3 to 4 x’s times a year, such constituting the main dates for our public worship—all other services being private (i.e., held at our home). As it turns out, our priest from southern California, representing the United Episcopal Church, averages a visit once a year (this is mostly our family’s fault), so our newsletter broadcasts major happenings at about the same rate, leaving the Harbinger something of an annual publication. Yes, this is very infrequent for a newsletter, but we’d like to do a lot more.

One possibility is to replace Holy Communion with Love Feasts, making an extra effort to keep at least one Holy Communion for, say, Easter week. That’d mean three Love Feasts and one Holy Communion service per year, keeping a semblance of a Quarterly eucharist—a goal we want to continue. That would also set a tempo for the newsletter’s publication which would roughly be quarterly, as originally conceived, in order to advertise big events.

More needs to be said about the historic practice of Love Feasts. For now, let’s mention two simple details. First, the Love Feast is not a consecrated meal or a sacrament, but like Communion it is a small meal, and the primitive practice evidently joined the two rites together. The second point is the Love Feast comes from the low church tradition, some scholars tracing it back to the Puritans (giving it an English origin), but it became better known through the Moravian or German pietist component methodism. Given the importance we place on methodist example (while it tenaciously stayed within in the Church of England), the agape meals are a precedent we feel “ok” to draw upon.

Our first Love Feast was last year in November, so we’d like to start a quarterly pattern after the end of August 2016. Of course, we are hoping to have Holy Communion the next time Fr. Paul arrives and whenever opportunity arises.

More on (pro)Chapels

In the last issue, Harbinger #1, we discussed the difference between public and private worship, and that chapels oftentimes straddled the two categories. In fact, many chapels grew out of the milieu of private devotion, but the distinction was sometimes blurry, especially when dealing with significant numbers of devotees or congregations. The Laudian rule defining a ‘conventicle’, or illegal assembly, was anything above a household, plus five or so visitors. Such conventicle calculations could be zealously enforced but mostly were laxly dealt with, though private worship apart from the parish church possessed a stigma for fear of disloyalty to the Crown if not the established Church.

Nonetheless, chapels were institutions common among Dissenters and Churchmen. For the latter, small chapels might be built to afford easy access to services in locales otherwise geographically large or highly populated-- or, as said earlier, for the convenience and piety of gentry or noble households. For moderate Dissenters, the licensing of their congregations, together with ‘Occasional Conformity’, gave non-conformity a stake in Establishment, making Anglicanism perhaps more influential albeit theologically porous.

We believe, for at least part of the 18th century, it wouldn’t be off-the-mark to say there were ‘degrees’ of Anglicanism held by British people, somewhat explaining the Rev’d Fredrick Glover’s 1881 observation that an ‘Anglican Race’ existed, at least during the second Empire. Nonetheless, it’s within the Dissent/Church matrix that we will further explore the spread of chapels, the related awakening of religious societies, and the ‘erastian’ significance of lay patronage. As we do, we hope to settle the question, ‘what is a prochapel?’ and perhaps other queries like, ‘why is low church practice important?’, etc..

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.

In Harbinger #1 we modestly described ourselves as a 'family circle' but finally fell upon UEC canons to justify the title of a 'chapel'. That said, we suspect this canonical allotment was intended for small monastic groups rather than little congregations of secular families. However, the latter would be more 'orthodox', at least, in the English-Protestant context of history. Nevertheless, the common prejudice remains that chapels are indeed self-contained, maybe non-descript buildings, or otherwise very small churches. And, we cannot very well buck conventional perception.

Consequently, since the time of our last newsletter, we've self-consciously switched out 'chapel' for 'prochapel' in many places where we describe our ministry: hence, on website(s) as well as our literature. It would be an excellent guess that we borrowed 'prochapel' from the national cathedral movement of the late-19th century. The late-Victorian cathedral movement encouraged the use of 'procathedral' to describe the bishop's parish as a cathedral 'in-formation' despite operating on a day-to-day level like your typical parish church. In the same way, our family circle would call itself a 'chapel-in-formation' though we function on a day-to-day basis as a mere lay-fellowship.

While the history of the cathedral movement deserves greater mention (California's diocese is an excellent study of such development), we can look to the older religious societies that utilized extremely modest, usually domestic settings before converting these venues (or relocating) into actual chapel buildings. We think it reasonable to call this process-- applying the analogy of the procathedral-- making a 'prochapel'.

Dr. Leslie Church devotes an entire chapter in his seminal work, *The Early Methodist People* (Epworth Press 1948) describing this process. Below are some snippets, says Dr. Church:

"the normal progress of Methodism, as has largely been seen was from the cottage-room or farm-kitchen to some larger temporary shelter. It was natural that the next stage should be a building of actual chapels..." p. 52

"After the visit of John Nelson to Lower Darwen, in 1755, little groups of 'converted men and women' gathered together regularly until a society was formed and later a chapel was built" p. 32

And, Dr. Church provides some detailed accounts, including:

"In 1748 Micha Elmoor died, and the preaching was 'moved' from Coat Garth (his private lodge) to the cottage of Thomas Ludlam, a laborer. For some years the walls of his humble little house sheltered the faithful few. Afterwards they met in Christopher Parker's until, at last, their numbers having increased, they went into a barn lent to them by George Lamming. This exodus occurred in 1783 and they used the barn for the next two years, until they were able to build a tiny chapel." p. 36

"In Warrington an old malt-kiln was rented as the first home for the Methodist society. In Ireland the first meeting place was sometimes a corn-kiln, and at Donaghadee such shelter served until the luxury of a barn was possible. In Bingley a blacksmith's shop was the only accommodation until a room was secured over a 'big block of buildings'... In Harden a room over a stable was secured, and in Cullingworth, Mally Northrop told her husband she had set her heart on an old barn, near their house, for a chapel... To the astonishment of her neighbors, she succeeded, and John Ellison [the landlord] gave her the barn the materials on the condition that they should fettle it up and he should have the front pew in the gallery for his use forever" p. 37

Dr. Church even provides an example of a slaughterhouse becoming a chapel as well as preacher livings dug underneath a barn. We note the very humble origins of chapels with the small society, or family circle, meeting in everyday venues until a formal or 'churchly' space for worship is acquired.

Our vision would be similar, namely, helping plant a network of several home altars in part of Northern California, perhaps with a couple small chapels in between, otherwise known as a 'circuit'. This could be served by lay-ministers as well as visiting UE clergy, the latter connecting us to Anglican order. In time, individual chapels might **opt** for a fuller affiliation depending on their growth.

Miscellaneous

- ✓ We recently finished our ninth submission to the UEC national newsletter, *Glad Tidings*—a contribution of about two years running. Copies may be obtained at no cost through the prochapel, or by \$10 subscription. If subscription, make payable to: UECNA and send to: 600 W. Hillside Ave., Prescott, AZ 86301.
- ✓ We've printed 250 prochapel business cards. Please request a dozen or so, and pass out to neighbors or family. For cards write to: Littlewood Chapel, 4571 Richmond Ave., Fremont CA 94536
- ✓ We have a meetup group. <http://www.meetup.com/Fremont-United-Episcopalians/>

Upcoming Events: Love Feast Friday, August 26th, 6pm @ chapel room, Fremont.

#Every Sunday 4pm, **Evening Prayer** w/ Church catechism;

Every Wed. & Fri. 6pm, **Family Prayer**. Both services @ chapel. #

Twice a month, 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 12 noon, **Feed the Poor** @ St. James Park, San Jose, CA