



the Harbinger Newsletter

* United Episcopalians ~ Littlewood Chapel ~ Bartlett Family Circle *

www.fremontanglicans.com

#3 Advent 2016

Last remarks on (pro)chapels:

The last two *Harbinger* issues (#1-2) discussed the historical development of chapels, mainly in the English context. Together, these newsletters generally conclude our study on the cause and rise of chapel buildings. However, the history of 'chapels' seem to involve further questions about 'public' versus 'private' worship, and those subject heads are by no means exhausted. This issue of the *Harbinger* will indeed continue with an exploration of private devotions, namely the Wesleyan 'Love Feast', followed by a summary of the UEC's recent convention in the West.

However, if there be a final remark about the origin or placing of chapels, we might note the strange meeting locations chosen by elect congregations— e.g., kitchens, libraries, workplaces. These were often buildings *already detached* from the primary home. Detached buildings were more typical of the middle and upper class residence. As such venues settled themselves; they might be rebuilt into a building readily identified as a 'chapel'. Ironically, the church building which hosted the UE's recent District Convention, *St. Jude's*, began as a garage! Evidently, the practice continues.

Our Love Feasts:

As mentioned last issue, we expect to reduce communion service from a quarterly to an annual frequency—at least, until we can find a couple families to spread the cost of a UE Vicar. So, Love Feasts basically will be a *kind of* substitute for Holy Communion pending new circumstances. Meanwhile, we promised to explain the historical usage of the Love Feast among old-evangelical Anglicans, and for this end we'll quote Dr. Frank Baker's short book, *Methodism and the Love Feast* (1957).

According to Baker, the Love Feast-- or Agape meal— has a primitive institution among Christians, dating as early as the 1st century, if not Jewish origins. It was originally joined to Holy Communion as a common, often "potluck", meal therefore giving it close associations to the Eucharist. By the 3rd century AD, the Love Feast was separated from Holy Communion, slowly disappearing partly due to the recession of congregational worship in private homes. Yet, it stands as an ancient custom-- much like foot washing or the 'kiss of peace'.

During the Reformation, the agape feast made reappearance among pietist sects. There are some accounts of Puritan use. But, where common meals

gained real headway was with Evangelicals during the 18th century. Following the example of Moravians at *Herrnhut*, Methodists popularized Feasts, using meals as a 'unity ceremonies'. They became especially prominent at Wesleyan quarterly conferences.

Dr. Baker provides an outline of service as 18th century Wesleyans would have practiced it:

Hymn
Prayer
Grace (sung)
Bread distributed by Stewards
Collection for the Poor
Circulation of Loving Cup
Address by preacher
Testimonies and verses of hymns
Spontaneous prayers and verses of hymns
Closing exhortation
Hymn
Benediction

Not surprisingly, Love Feasts fell to disuse once methodist left the Church of England and began ordaining their own priests-- despite Mr. Wesley's express wish to remain as a leaven therein. Prior to that, Wesleyans purposely avoided confusion of the Love Feast with Holy Communion, partly by sweetening and nutting their cakes to differentiate them from paschal loafs. Likewise, their vessels, called 'loving cups', most often ported plain water-- sometimes tea (and in rarer cases coffee or soup)-- rather than wine. Posture at administration also differed with cakes received while sitting and tea passing from member-to-member in two-handled mugs.

Next issue, we'll go a bit further with common meals, discussing the hymns and testimonies which shaped the Love Feasts of the 18th century. Meanwhile-- as a ritual of unity-- the Love Feast had an ecumenical dimension which Wesley used to connect other Protestants to the Anglican Church. We should recall the 'Anglican context' of these meals. Many prayers, songs, and even the language of conversion were taken by men and women well-familiar with Anglican liturgy despite affinities with Dissent. It's this 'Anglican context' that we want to cultivate and rekindle at Littlewood Chapel.

UE District Convention (Oct. 29th):

The UEC had its District Convention for the West this last October 29th. The Missionary District of

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

the West (MDW) basically covers the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast states. Surprisingly, such a vast geographic area is absent many UE churches with the exception of three mid-sized congregations in Arizona—*St. Jude's*, *St. Peter's*, and *St. Bede's*. The West's Convention is composed of both lay and clerical delegates. Of the former, *the Harbinger* editor, Mr. Charles Bartlett, was the lay delegate for the Fremont and San Jose areas. In total at this year's Convention, there was perhaps twenty or so attendees.

Most discussion revolved around the Missionary District's future and the recent news of our Ordinary's, Bishop Peter Robinson's, move of residence from Arizona to Virginia. His relocation was a bit of an eye-opener regarding the future of MDW. Yet, for the larger UEC, Robinson's transfer will be for the best given the East's greater number of parishes as well as relative proximity to other Anglican jurisdictions. Nonetheless, Bp. Robinson expects to continue oversight of the West-- as an episcopal visitor rather than resident Ordinary.

As said before, related to Robinson's transfer was the situation of domestic missionary work. MDW is a continental-size District with few churchmen. The immediate problem with missionary work is apparently the lack of clergy. But, for the last couple years Bp. Robinson proposed a two-pronged solution that simultaneously answers the troubles of liberal seminaries alongside the shortage of workers.

The Bishop's strategy is admittedly borrowed from the example of 19th century Methodism. Robinson describes two types of ministries found in the UEC that is ready to do evangelical work, namely, lay-led initiatives (there are two or three of this sort already in the UEC) and clergy specifically called to planting churches. Obviously, evangelical clergy are always needed, but the use of lay-ministers makes Robinson's plan a bit extraordinary in comparison with other continuing churches, outlining a system potentially more flexible.

The reference to Methodism suggests possibilities for 'deinstitutionalized' missionary work. For example, the older Methodist system gave priority to evangelical gifts over academic credentials. If lay-ministers could turn sinners to repentance, they could build and plant societies before finishing (or even starting) seminary education. In other words, the mission-field displaced the university for raising pastors. Again, the emphasis is practical work over academia, e.g., saving the lost vs. the study of ancient languages.

The Methodists also had no aversion to raising vast numbers of lay-ministers. Wesley had created several gradations of lay officers for gifted men to rise. The lowest but perhaps most important grade was the 'lay-leader' who monitored society classes. Class-leaders were followed by 'exhorters' who might rotate from society to society. Lastly, at the highest degree, were the lay-preachers who might wear several hats—possibly managing circuits and even Quarterly

Meetings. In this respect, Methodist preachers resembled Presbyterian lay-elders; though they could not administer gospel sacraments such as Holy Baptism and Communion. The inability to do so, of course, maintained the distinction between lay- and ordained-men. At any rate, lay-officers allowed Methodism to quickly enlist ministers as the missionary situation demanded.

How far the UEC might go to adapt a 'methodistic' or 'evangelical' model remains to be seen. However, there are some qualifications said by the Bishop to keep in mind. Firstly, Robinson is drawing from late-Victorian period where Methodism had already become fairly 'churchly' with an institutional stratum of seminaries and big churches layered over an older, more fluid lay-organization.

Secondly, our Bishop has only licensed two lay-offices explicitly open to the UE (lay- & diocesan-readers). Missing are lay-leaders/classes and the governing features of preachers/circuits, suggesting a larger role for rectors if present. We believe the omission was in deference to the integrity of the parish system—something 18th century evangelicals debated & relevant to our East Coast.

Nevertheless, a moderate lay-agency has been proposed. Most likely *the degree* the lay-ministry receives pastoral charge depends upon local circumstance. In MDW, we have a massive missionary field—i.e., three Pacific and seven Rocky Mountain states-- with almost no clergy except one cluster of mid-sized parishes in Arizona. Our perspective is the MDW is ripe for lay workers.

In earlier issues of *the Harbinger* we've tried to express a vision for the South Bay, if not Northern California. This might consist of several families, perhaps scattered, forming a 'circuit'. The circuit should have no more than a two-hour car driving radius. An example might be the area between Monterey and Sacramento, CA. The circuit would be led by lay-leaders (travelling between homes as well as leading their own class/circle) with sacramental-support at quarterly or annual visits made by an ordained UE Vicar (currently Fr. Paul).

As the circuit develops, classes or prochapels may stay and deepen the Anglican framework they began with, or simply 'opt-out'. The latter ensures Protestant brethren (with qualms about, say, liturgy) a good conscience—whenever & for however long-- they participate in our society. Nonetheless, the UEC assuredly is the best haven for this kind of Primitive & Apostolic ministry-- certainly on the West Coast if not all of North America.

Miscellaneous:

- ✓ We finished our tenth submission to the UECNA newsletter, *Glad Tidings*. Copies are obtained at no cost through the prochapel or by \$10 subscription to the national office. Make check payable to: "UECNA". Mail to: 600 W. Hillside Ave., Prescott, AZ 86301.

Upcoming Events: Holy Baptism Sunday, December 4th, 2pm @ chapel room, Fremont.
#Every Sunday 4pm, **Evening Prayer** w/ Church catechism;
Every Wed. & Fri. 6pm, **Family Prayer**. Both services @ chapel #