

Taizé Workshop Comes to Oldham Unitarian Chapel

Taizé is a style of worship that originates from the village of Taizé, in Burgundy, France. And on Saturday February 5th, 2011 friends and members of Oldham Unitarian Chapel, were introduced to this ecumenical form of worship by The Rev. Jeff Gould and Mrs Catherine Fozard.

Speaking to an audience of thirty, Jeff explained that the Taizé style of worship was not Roman Catholic but had in fact, originated from the Ecumenical Taizé community founded at the end of the Second World War, by Brother Roger, a Protestant, who later became the prior of the community. Brother Roger had been in Taizé during the war years where he had provided refuge and assisted in the escape of Jews facing Nazi persecution. He was frequently questioned by the Gestapo.



Jeff went on to explain that the distinctive style of Taizé worship, the repetitive chants and music, and the use of candle light create an atmosphere conducive to a deeper sense of devotion. Or in the words of his power point presentation, "Taizé provides an opportunity to seek communion with God through common prayer, singing and personal reflection." It was emphasised that this inclusive worship has been embraced by the Church Universal and that Unitarians too, enjoy and appreciate the value of this devotional approach. The Unitarian Christian Association is active in promoting Taizé. Indeed, Jeff said that, "Taizé worship was one of the gifts that the UCA was offering to Unitarian and Free Christian congregations and was being very well received".

Following the welcoming of guests and refreshments, the morning session began with a film presentation depicting the life of the Taizé community, how thousands of young people, every year, from all over the world visit Taizé, and for a few short days become part of the community, joining in the worship, the discussions, the social life and the chores of cleaning and cooking with joy and enthusiasm. During the height of the summer we learned that there could be as many as 6000 visitors within the community.

Jeff wasted no time involving everybody in singing the Taizé chants which are not only ecumenical but *international* as we were encouraged to sing in a variety of different languages. Even those of us who could speak only English found we were able to join in singing in French, German and even Catalan! It seemed that Latin was the easiest language to get around the tongue but the crescendo was most apparent when *El Senyor* was sung in English; "In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice!" A very enjoyable lunch was provided by Mrs Marian Nuttall and her team of workers, which was most appreciated. The afternoon session, as advertised concluded in a full candlelit Taizé service. The closing song however, was not a Taizé chant but a well known hymn: 'The Day Thou Gavest' taken from *Hymns for Living*.