

Meeting Structure:

We generally start our pub sessions with a lunch and fellowship time starting at 13:00. We usually split our sessions into two periods, although this may vary, with a break in between. Our session ends no later than 15:30. The exception will be when we visit other places.

Location:

Most of our meetings take place at the Clarence Pub near Green Park Station:

The Clarence Pub

4 Dover Street

London W1S 4LB

Hope to see you there!

The Vagabond's Programme for 2014

The Little Vagabond

By
William Blake

*Dear mother, dear mother, the church is cold,
But the alehouse is healthy and pleasant and warm;
Besides I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in Heaven will never do well.*

*But if at the church they would give us some ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the live-long day,
Nor ever once wish from the church to stray.*

*Then the parson might preach, and drink, and sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at church,
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch.*

*And God, like a father rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as he,
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the barrel,
But kiss him, and give him both drink and apparel.*

THE VAGABONDS are a group of mainly Christian spiritual enquirers. We meet informally once a month in a pub close to St. James' to discuss a topic of interest. We take our name from William Blake's poem *The Little Vagabond*, a character who prefers the alehouse to the church (Blake was baptised at St James'). The topics of interest are spiritual in nature. We also visit each year other places of worship.

Vagabonds Programme for 2014

January 19th - The Relation of Love and Justice

The discussion will be focused on whether one should maintain a rigid separation or binary relation between love and justice, or whether the New Testament provides a model whereby justice is in fact derived from love.

Chair - Steve Innes **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

February 16th - Diggers, Levellers and Ranters

The Diggers, Levellers and Ranters were three examples of the radical ideas in both politics and religion that bloomed at the end of the civil war. Some of these ideas will seem extremely modern.

Chair - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

March 16th - Visit to the Sunday Assembly

According to their publicity, The Sunday Assembly is a godless congregation that celebrates life. Motto: live better, help often, wonder more. Mission: to help everyone find and fulfil their full potential. It's sometimes called the 'atheist church'.

Chair - David Carter **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Sq.

April 13th - Theology of Work

This session focuses on the employment relationship between the manager and the staff. The Bible is full of references to work. What if anything can you learn from lessons two millennia old? There are no clear cut lines and the invitation is to explore some biblical principles against contemporary issues and dilemmas.

Chair - Dr Wilson Wong **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

May 19th - My Cross to Wear

Meeting someone with a cross hanging around their neck gives one first impression in the modern West - that person is a Christian. You assume they are visually declaring their religion. But what does it mean *exactly*? And why wear a cross in the first place? Has it a place in the 21st century? These are some of the questions that we will explore, as well as discussing the consequences for Christians who do wear a cross.

Chair - Georgina Elsey **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

June 15th - Poetry & Spirituality

This meeting of Vagabonds will be an opportunity to consider and discuss examples of some of the best poetry found in hymns. What better way to lift the spirits than to add well-crafted language to beautiful music? We shall be looking at poems by Christina Rossetti, Jan Struther, William Blake and John Bunyan to discuss whether there is celestial music in the words.

Chair - Trevor Lines **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

July 20th - Theology of the Living Wage

The living wage is seen as a tool to help fight poverty. The Bible has lots of things to say about poverty and this session will explore this informs the theology behind the living wage campaign.

Chair - Michael Faulkner **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

August 17th - The Thin Places of Theatre

Theatre is both collective and personal in offering us the opportunity to consider humanity and our world from fresh perspectives; to enter into different realities from our own, to explore our own lives and the possibilities and potential deep within. In this session we'll be exploring the idea of Theatre as a 'thin place' where the shifting of boundaries invites us to step out of *chronos* (chronological time) into *Kairos* (God's time).

Chair - Lindsay Meader **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

September 21st - The Visionary Experience - Miracle or Madness

The visionary experience has been pathologised by contemporary psychiatric diagnosis; in the Middle Ages it would have been respected and revered. Through an examination of mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kemp and more recently Bernadette of Lourdes I will examine the cultural and religious frame that led them to be accepted as a valid source of truth and the shifts that changed them into manifestations of psychological disturbance. It will draw on my experience of doing performances based on these mystics and the visions that have been shared with me of phenomena like near death experiences, death-bed experiences, angels and the Virgin Mary and where these might be situated in contemporary culture. I am a Trustee of the Alister Hardy Trust which studies religious experience.

Chair - Rev Prof. June Boyce Tillman **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

October 20th - Crisis of Faith

The intense doubt and conflict of a crisis of faith often force us to confront difficult questions, such as how suffering and a supposedly loving omnipotent God co-exist; and how to interpret Christianity in a world of religious pluralism. And do we need to believe in traditional received 'truths', which assume divine intervention - physical incarnation, resurrection, miracles - to call ourselves Christian? If so, how comfortably do such views sit in a post-modern world of scientific rationalism? If not, how do we best express the kernel of our faith?

Chair - Frances Nestor **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

November 16th - Palestinian Liberation Theology: Work of Naim Stifan Ateek

Ateek, canon of St George's Cathedral Jerusalem, attempts to redefine Palestinian Christian identity from a passivity derived from European colonialism, towards a nonviolent theology of active and equal citizenship which patiently unpicks victim attitudes and exceptionalist beliefs generating complementary injustices. He hopes this could produce the beginning of a reconciling understanding between the 3 Abrahamic faiths of a theology based on overlapping pasts and scriptures.

Chair - Puck de Raadt **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson **Location:** Clarence Pub

December 21st - Vagabonds Christmas Party & 2015 Planning Session

Come to the celebration with ideas for next year

Chair - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub