

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 tube station:

The Clarence

4 Dover Street

London W1S 4LB

Hope to see you there!

The Vagabond's Programme for 2016

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 2016

January 17th -No Meeting

February 21st - Rumours of an Absent God

Art, film, and poetry have used silence to portray suffering. But where is God in the face of the human cry? The Bible turns this problem into a prayer: "How long, O Lord, how long? Will you hide your face from me forever?" This Vagabonds session will invite art, sight and sound in an exploration of suffering, silence and God.

Chair - Ivan Khovacs **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

March 20th - Grave Talk

This session will focus on preparing for death. We will talk about how you would like to be remembered, experiences of death, how our culture has shaped our thinking of death, what happens when you die and what is the reality of loss. This session is based on a Church of England project called "Grave Talk". We will have a session on funerals in August.

Chair - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

April 17th - Laudato Si

"Laudato Si": care for our common home" - what has the Pope's latest encyclical (released last June) got to say to us and how is it different and similar to what has gone before? What is significant about the title and does the Pope really quote the pop group Abba? Susy will give an overview of the document and there will also be an opportunity to engage with parts of the text.

Chair - Susy Brouard **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

May 15th - Mother, Virgin, Mystic, Whore: Who is Mary?

Mary, the mother of Jesus, has played many roles throughout the history of Christianity. How do we make sense of all of these roles? Which, if any, of these roles speak to us today?

Chair - Lucy Winkett **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

June 19th - Is Wisdom Obsolete?

Discussion on wisdom as the feminine side of God

Chair - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

July 17th - Over my Dead Body: Breathing New Life into Funerals

Most people hate - and even dread - funerals. Death is something many people shy away from and dislike discussing. What is the point of a funeral? Who is it really for? What makes a "good funeral"? It's never too early to think about your own funeral, and planning ahead can make life much easier for your loved ones when the times comes. In this session we'll be considering these questions and reflecting on ways to revisit, refresh and rethink what a funeral service could and can be.

Chair - Lindsay Meader **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

August 21st - Lead Us Not Into Temptation

What tempts you? Is temptation always bad? Where has it led you?

Hugh Valentine, Chief Among Sinners, will introduce the conversation.

Chair - Hugh Valentine **Chair Leg:** Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

September 18th - Beyond Light Bulbs

With eco-church and climate change both gathering pace, how can we keep up spiritually?

Teilhard de Chardin once said that 'when I was seven years old I loved God and the world and wasn't willing to give up either'. Sallie McFague asks 'where is the first-rate, critical, reflective theology that does not insult intelligence, and is an aid to the counter-cultural practice we need?' (in the context of climate change) We will see what we come up with, using stimulus material from several thinkers in the field

Chair - Deborah Colvin **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

October 16th - Naming the Divine in a Secular Age

This session will by using hymns and other songs, look at how the concept of the divine is used and named especially by secular people in today's world.

Chair - June Boyce Tillman **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

November 20th - Is Wisdom Obsolete?

The word "wisdom" appears 345 times in the Bible, and is even the name of a (second-rank) biblical book. The word means more than just cleverness or know-how: very often Wisdom is a divine quasi-person, similar to God. So what is the nature of this tricky connection, and what has Wisdom to tell us today?

Chair - Chris Clarke **Chair Leg** - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

December 18th - Vagabonds Christmas Party & 2017 Planning Session

Come to the celebration with ideas for next year

Chair - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub