

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 2017

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 2017

January 15th - Julian of Norwich and the nurturing of God

Julian of Norwich is one of the most celebrated figures of the English Middle Ages. She is esteemed as one of the subtlest writers and profoundest thinkers of the period for her account of the revelations that she experienced in 1373. She conceived of a loving and compassionate God, merciful and forgiving, and believed in our ability to reach self-knowledge through sin. She wrote of God as our mother, and embraced strikingly independent theological opinions.

Chair - June Boyce Tillman

Location: Clarence Pub

February 19th - Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?

Most modern Christians assume that the first Christians worshipped Jesus. However, there are scholars who argue that the worship of Jesus started late in the 1st century. We will be using James Dunn's book to guide our discussion.

Chair - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

March 19th - Crimes and Misdemeanors

We will be joining the Films for Lent group to see Woody Allen's 1989 film Crimes and Misdemeanors. The movie is about an ophthalmologist becomes blind to moral choices when his mistress threatens to reveal their affair.

Chair - Ivan Khovacs and Steve Innes

Location: St James Piccadilly Church (Church Hall)

April 16th - No Vagabonds Session: Easter Day

May 21st - Bread and Community

For me, there's something about baking bread that brings people together - I have my stories from church, bakery and charity kitchens - what about you? Is there a spirituality of food, making it and sharing it, that connects our hospitality, generosity and community? At the pub, the only bread on offer may be liquid bread but it's a start.

Chair - Pete Smith Chair Leg - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

June 18th - Prison Mission

St James Piccadilly is taking part of the Churches Together in Westminster's prison mission programme. What are the prisoners' spiritual needs? How are they best met? How hostile is the environment? These are the questions we will be dealing with this session.

Chair - John Plummer Chair Leg - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

July 16th - Suffering through the eyes of Job

The Book of Job is famous for raising thorny questions about suffering and the relationship between God and humankind. Lindsay leads a session in which we consider some of the complex issues around suffering, drawing not just on Job but also on Jesus.

Chair - Lindsay Meader Chair Leg - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

August 20th - Blessed Are the Peacemakers?

In this session, we will be exploring just war theology. Is there such a thing as just war? Can war ever be morally justified? Maybe or maybe not? This will involve the right to go to war and the right conduct in war. Needless to say this is controversial.

Chair - Lucy Winkett Chair Leg - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

September 17th - Islamic law in the UK: realities and controversies

In this session, Simon Perfect, Teaching Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies, will offer an overview of the place of Islamic law in the UK. We will consider this in the context of marriage and divorce issues. We will also explore the roles of shari'a councils in the UK, as well as controversies surrounding these institutions. This will lead on to a discussion about legal pluralism, multiculturalism and the limits of accommodation of minority religious groups.

Chair - Simon Perfect Chair Leg: Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

October 15th - Dominion

Genesis 1:28 includes the following command to Adam and Eve: "and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Through the ages and down, some central theological and existential questions -- what is the point of the creation of animals? Who are they for? How should human beings relate to them -- have taken these verses as their starting point and specifically this notion of *radah*, here translated as "have dominion over." In this session we will look at the original Hebrew text, compare it to other parts of the Bible, unpick, challenge, reinterpret

Chair - Adolfo Sansolini Chair Leg - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

November 19th - 'Hear what the Spirit is saying': Christ & History & Faith Today

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). But is this in fact the way Christians have viewed him down the centuries? Or has that somehow 'moved with the times'? How well do we know our 'heritage of faith'? How as we look at this may we think God acts in it? May a due sense of Christian history help us now to 'hear what the Spirit is saying'?

Chair - Brian Curnew Chair Leg - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub

December 17th - Vagabonds Christmas Party & 2017 Planning Session

Come to the celebration with ideas for next year

Chair - Cornell Jackson

Location: Clarence Pub