



## Eastern Union of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches

### Annual Newsletter January 2013

#### Contents:

Editorial

Future Events

Reports from Congregations and Fellowships:

Bury St Edmunds  
Cambridge  
Chelmsford  
Colchester  
Framlingham  
Gt Yarmouth  
Ipswich  
Norwich

Directory

#### Editorial

Welcome to the Eastern Union Annual Newsletter - which arrives at the beginning of 2013 rather than in the autumn of 2012.. It contains the reports given by congregations to the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 29 September at Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House. We hope you will enjoy reading them. The AGM was followed by a talk by Derek McAuley, the General Assembly's Chief Officer, who spoke on "Unitarians and Free Christians building partnerships and making an impact".

Earlier in the year, on 10 March, again at Ipswich, a Development Day was held. We were delighted to have with us Rev Andy Pakula, Minister of New Unity congregation, who led a stimulating discussion on "Becoming a 21st Century Unitarian Congregation". He gave us lot of hints on what to do (and what not to do) to attract and keep members.

Framlingham Meeting House was full for the Sunday afternoon Summer Meeting on 24 June when the General Assembly President, Elizabeth Dyson-Jones, led a service on the theme "Being Authentic", after which some members went for a walk around the town centre and then returned for a splendid tea organised by the Framlingham and Ipswich congregations.

It was a year of changes for two of our congregations. In July Martin Gienke retired from a six-year post of Lay Leader at Bury St Edmunds. In September Rev. Cliff Reed retired after 36 years of ministry at Ipswich. We thank both for their support of the Eastern Union over the years. In October Rev. Jim Corrigan was inducted as the minister at Ipswich.

The events for 2013 are listed at the end of the Newsletter. We hope to see many of you at one or more of them.

Shirley Fieldhouse  
Secretary  
Eastern Union of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches

#### Future Events – 2013

Saturday 9 March	1.30 pm Development Day at Ipswich Rev. Tony McNeile Subject: Assisted Dying
Sunday 30 June	Summer Meeting at The Octagon, Norwich 3.0 pm Service: Rev Bill Darlison, President elect, General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches
Saturday 28 September	2 pm, Annual General Meeting at Bury St Edmunds Guest speaker: to be announced

## **Bury St Edmunds Meeting House**

We have beautiful building which last year was seen by many during the events organised for the 300 anniversary. Martin Gienke retired at the beginning of July from the post of lay leader after six years in post when the congregation benefited from his regular services and his networking with local organisations such Suffolk Interfaith, Amnesty International, other bodies. The congregation has decided to carry on with the usual afternoon services once a month on a do-it-ourselves basis with help from visiting service leaders. Unfortunately the person who volunteered to be treasurer was unable to carry out duties with the result that the accounts for the previous year have not yet been prepared. The paperwork has now been passed to another officer.

Richard Hegerty

## **Cambridge Church**

Overall numbers remain steady, those leaving for career reasons balanced by those who come to take up studies or research at the University. Numbers at the morning service at 10.30 am are variable. We welcome the regulars, the 'irregulars' who come every 4 to 6 weeks, and visitors.

Participation in the services is encouraged with a different member lighting the chalice and giving the opening prayer. The congregation is encouraged to comment on the Minister's address – sometimes no one wants to say anything, on other occasions there are many contributions. The address, which is published on our website, forms the basis for the Wednesday evening discussion group which is mainly attended by students at the theological colleges. Except August, there is an evening service at 6.30 pm of meditation, prayers, readings, and music. Members have taken services when the minister is on holiday. Music is provided by organists and pianists.

Although there are few children, activities are provided for them on the first Sunday of the month. There are several young parents who find it difficult to bring their youngsters – especially at the time when they are no longer babes in arms but too young for organised activities.

We are keen on refreshments – coffee after the service, bring and share lunches on the first Sunday of the month, tea parties at members' homes, drinking in the local pub. Two younger members decided that we needed get-togethers of a more lively style and organised two parties (February and July), the hall furnished with decorative strings of miniature electric lights, when food, wine, song and dance were enjoyed. For the first time we took part in Open Heritage Day, advertising that our rather young, non-listed building as an 'architectural gem'. On a very warm sunny Saturday there were a gratifying number of visitors (about 70) who streamed passed through the church, then the hall or via the garden, to the Common Room where teas, coffees and biscuits were served and the visitors could linger and chat with members.

A coffee morning was held in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support in Sept. 2011. During advent we collected for the Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow Fund. Recently the Christian Aid Tax Bus visited Cambridge for an afternoon. It highlighted how tax dodging on a massive scale by some unscrupulous multinational companies is depriving poor countries of the revenues that could fund necessary public services. This was followed by a public meeting in the church. Christian Aid will be our advent charity.

After many years, with the ceiling dirty and the plasterwork cracked, the decorative condition of the hall had become shabby. Although rather an upheaval, we survived the repainting of ceiling and walls during August and are pleased with the finished result. The small memorial garden, where the paving has been extended a little, is a delight and much appreciated by church members and the many hirers of the hall.

The hall is let to a wide variety of organisations who appreciate its homely atmosphere. It provides a steady source of income. The church is let for concerts and a few public meetings.

Expenditure has been incurred on our property in Newnham Road, where the top flat has been painted and the ground floor shop, after some months vacant, was upgraded and is now occupied as a dress shop. We think we have carried out the final improvements to bring the property up to a standard which proves attractive to current and future tenants, and that there will be a reasonable return on our investment.

Shirley Fieldhouse

## **Chelmsford Fellowship**

We are a much smaller Fellowship now with members often leaving the area for family reasons but however small our numbers we will survive. As Ashley Hills said to me on one of his visits " Small in numbers maybe but you are still here and I will always come to you even if there is only two of you." That filled me with great heart. What our small numbers has allowed however is for each of us to have a role within our Fellowship rather than turning or not turning up. Vi Barnard in herself is a great asset to me and always gives me very positive advice. I hope I am able to attend the AGM in Nottingham next year as I very much enjoyed my stay in Swansea but unfortunately was not able to attend Keele. I look forward to the future of the Fellowship here in Chelmsford with great optimism.

Doug Kingsley

## **Colchester Unitarians**

Colchester Unitarians have continued to meet in each others' home on Sunday evenings nine times a year. Our numbers and finances are stable. The theme of our meetings in the first half of 2012 was Compassion starting with a study of the UN Charter for Compassion and ending with a talk from Sir Bob Russell MP about humanitarian issues in the Middle East.

Our representation at Essex University will need to be reviewed as the change of minister at Ipswich means that there is no longer an accredited Unitarian chaplain at the University, and our Local Representative wishes to hand over the role after serving a four year term.

Alan Hayman

## **Framlingham**

Worship has been maintained with services on the first and third Sunday. Attendance is small. The Meeting House had hosted the Eastern Union summer meeting. There is quite a dynamic secretary and trustees of the Framlingham Trust and the building is well used.

## **Old Meeting, Great Yarmouth**

Our small congregation continues to hold services every Sunday. We have since June changed from 3.00 pm to 11.00 am. We are small in numbers but we have taken part in some local events lately. This month (Sept.) we were open for 4 days for the Heritage Open Days. We donated our Harvest Festival produce to the Salvation Army and made a monetary donation both of which help fund their projects for the homeless and deprived citizens of the town. Our latest local project has been the 'Big C' Cancer Shop in the town. I was invited to the opening of the local Information and Support Centre which took place this month to which we have also made a monetary donation. We have also displayed leaflets and information about the 'Big C' Cancer project and the Salvation Army on our notice boards.

Sue Harman

## **Ipswich Meeting House**

It is with mixed feelings this report from the Ipswich Congregation is presented. A time of sadness on the departure tomorrow of our minister for the past 36 years, a time of anticipation with the pending arrival of our new minister and a general 'feel' of change in the air... for everything there is a season!

We continue to have an active committed congregation of 52 members and whilst we do not have people flocking to our services there is a regular attendance of about 25 – 30 at each service, about 70 visitors a month to our open days and we had about 350 through on the

Heritage weekend. Members were on hand to answer any questions, many of which were about Unitarianism.

In a year of celebrations there has been a congregational visit to Gads Hill Place & Rochester Cathedral in honour of Dickens, an evening of readings and poetry to celebrate the Olympic Flame coming through Ipswich, a wedding of a meeting house member John Stevens to Cerian Morgan – the sun seems to shine brighter when it's one of your own – a BBQ organised at a member's home which raised £270 for the Sunderland School and a L.G.B.T Network concert in the Meeting House organised by one of our ex members, who now with the Quakers!

The Olympic Flame passed along Friars Street and to gain some publicity a Unitarian banner was strung across the gate alongside the bunting and balloons. Face painting, refreshments and chairs were offered to the general public, some of whom 'came in off the street' to the 'Celebration of the Olympics in Poetry'. We received two letters of thanks from people and the accolade of being 'good Christians' from an elderly lady who was offered seating!

Fund raising continues; our commitment to the Sunderland School in the Khasi Hills runs until 2015: three pupils have passed their exams and four others are due to sit theirs next year. The congregational 'Bits & Bobs' stall which has been running since 2004 has finally reached £5000, the money at present is for the Sunderland School.

The Meeting House is still standing and winter months approaching. Our plan for a new heating system to be in place by mid October fell foul of English Heritage and the Local Authority, so it is likely that on a Sunday morning blankets will be handed out with the hymn books!

Our rented properties are all in reasonable repair. Structural and cosmetic work is being carried out on the Manse to move it from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Trustees and congregation have worked very hard in the search for a new minister. The process has, I think, brought us together and emphasised that being a Unitarian also means being a member of a democratic community as well as a caring one.

Tomorrow, Rev Cliff Reed retires and Rev Jim Corrigan commences his ministry at Ipswich on the 1<sup>st</sup> October. It won't be the same but then, acceptance of our differences is part and parcel of being a Unitarian.

Linda King

## Octagon Chapel, Norwich

We are pleased to report another successful but challenging year. Months of work and consultation culminated in the adoption of a new Constitution at the AGM in March. A second consultation was organised to decide whether to apply for a License to hold Civil Partnership Ceremonies at a cost of £1550. Following discussion and two congregational debates, it was decided to proceed. *(This decision may be overtaken by events in view of the latest Government proposals on Gay Marriage).*

Numbers at Sunday services continue to rise, with an average attendance of 35 adults and 8 children. We are fortunate that so many visiting ministers are willing to lead worship and also that our pool of "local talent" is growing. The quality of our worship is greatly enhanced by the high quality of the organists upon whom we are able to call.

An important part of our mission is the Sunday Club where our children are encouraged and stimulated to think and learn as well as to enjoy themselves. The skilled leader and a team of enthusiastic and committed volunteers are all from our own congregation and more than ten children attend regularly.

Several members took part in an in-house "Build your Own Theology" course and it is hoped to run a second course in 2013.

We now have 5 members appointed to conduct weddings and other ceremonies and this year there have been 5 weddings, 1 naming ceremony and 1 Civil Partnership blessings.

Our flagship Social Responsibility initiative - "The Forget-me-Nots" - provides Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) for those suffering from memory difficulties and support for those who care for them. The Group has recently received a grant from the Norfolk Community Fund and has recently begun work with a group of ageing offenders at Norwich Prison. We continue to support two local organisations, St Martin's Housing Trust and Doughty's Housing with Care Scheme. We have a special relationship with a Unitarian Church in Transylvania and have provided bursaries for two Romanian students to enable them to continue their studies at University. We also helped one of our younger members to raise funds for a life changing trip to Zambia to gain experience of the work of CAFOD and other Aid Charities.

The concert Series continues with the addition of Wednesday lunch-time concerts all of which raise money for a range of charities.

Our annual Candlelight Carol Service is a longstanding and popular fixture and we are proud to be able to offer an event that is truly distinctive.

This year we finally obtained permission for the demolition of the World War II air raid shelter occupying part of the Chapel grounds. Demolition took place in November and was reported by the local press. Plans to convert the area into a garden for the children are now under way. A major programme of repair and maintenance to the Chapel is nearing completion. The Chapel is being used increasingly for public events, for example this year

the Norwich School of Art degree ceremony. Martineau Hall is hired regularly by a variety of groups.

Our two delegates to the GA, attending for the first time, were invited to take part in the opening ceremony by making a short speech saying something inspiring and inspired about the great value of Unitarianism and their vision for its future. One member was invited to lead one of the sessions at the Unitarian RE Summer School. Representatives attend the Eastern Union and the EU Women's Group

The Octagon always opens to visitors during Heritage Open Days and this year we also put on a special Art Exhibition, mainly showcasing work by amateur artists from our congregation. We also welcomed those taking part in the Churches Trust Cycle Ride.

Carol Palfrey

## Directory

### Officers 2012-1013

Secretary: Shirley Fieldhouse, 15 Gainsborough Close,  
Cambridge CB4 1SY  
Tel. 01223 426514, s.fieldhouse@btinternet.com  
Treasurer: Bruce Chilton, 22 Marston Lane, Norwich NR4 6LZ  
Tel. 01603 506014, brucechilton@hotmail.com

District Association website: [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/eastern](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/eastern)

### Congregations and contacts

Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RH  
Contact: Brenda Rice, 01284 752297, [brenda@fiske.net](mailto:brenda@fiske.net)

Cambridge Unitarian Church, Emmanuel Street, Cambridge CB1 1W

Minister: Rev. Andrew J Brown

Contact: Shirley Fieldhouse, 01223 426514, [s.fieldhouse@btinternet.com](mailto:s.fieldhouse@btinternet.com)

Colchester Fellowship

Contact: Alan Hayman, 01206 503541, [alanhayman@aol.com](mailto:alanhayman@aol.com)

Framlingham Meeting House

Contact: John McEwan 01728 724742, [jmcewan@mac.com](mailto:jmcewan@mac.com)

and Angela Hatt 01728 723451, [angelahatt@btinternet.com](mailto:angelahatt@btinternet.com)

Gt Yarmouth Old Meeting, Greyfriars Way, Gt Yarmouth NR30 2SW

Contact: Don McAllister, 01493 302458, [d.mcallister08@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:d.mcallister08@tiscali.co.uk)

Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House, Friars' Street, Ipswich IP1 1TD

Minister: Rev. Jim Corrigan, [jim@corrigan.myzen.co.uk](mailto:jim@corrigan.myzen.co.uk)

Contact: Linda King, 01473 712366, [king.linda@virgin.net](mailto:king.linda@virgin.net)

Norwich Octagon Chapel, Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BN

Contact: Carol Palfrey 01692 650442, [c.palfrey@keme.co.uk](mailto:c.palfrey@keme.co.uk)