



# THE YORK UNITARIAN

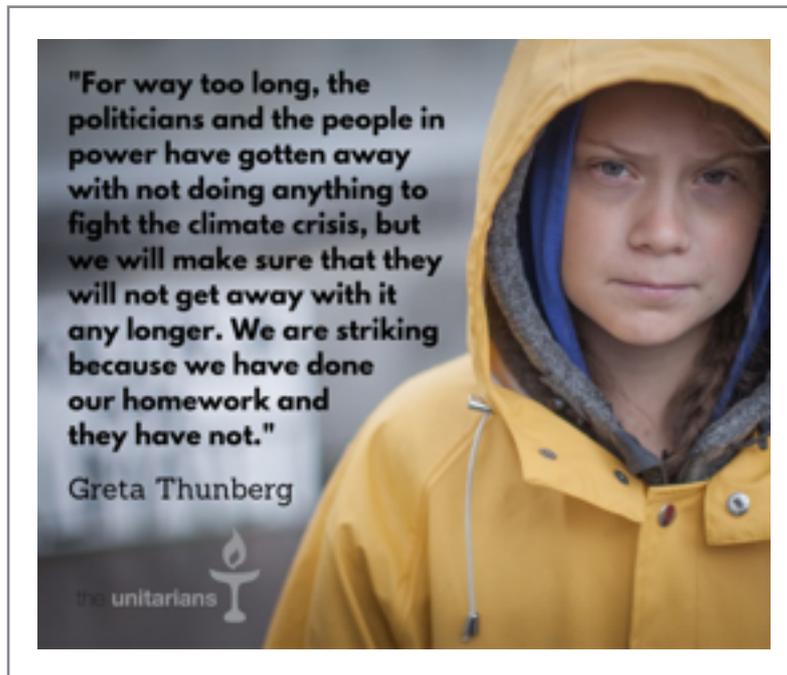
St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

August 2019

## FROM THE MINISTER

It was lovely to be able to officiate at two weddings in July in the chapel, one for a couple of men and another for a mature couple. Both very moving and joyous occasions. I am proud to belong to a denomination who have voted to welcome same-sex couples into marriage in our churches and chapels. When I was training as a Celebrant in New Zealand, back in the early 2000s, we were taught to take special care with same-sex unions in the light of the difficulty couples may have gone through before reaching the legal ceremony. I had a couple of books especially suggesting readings and words for same-sex weddings. When I reviewed them when creating David and Evangelos' wedding ceremony, I realised that there was no need to change the wordings except where legally required. A marriage is a marriage is a marriage. Love is the message and the promise for this couple who came from Methodist and Greek Orthodox backgrounds. I was so pleased to be able to give them the wedding they wanted, in their way.

Many of you will now have heard that I plan to retire at the end of this year (I might stray a couple of weeks into 2020!). As you might imagine this has been a difficult decision to take and ideally I would have felt able to continue as your minister for a few more years yet. However, I am mindful that time waits for no man or woman and we are all finite mortal creatures. With increasing health issues, primarily with memory, I feel I cannot serve you as Minister as well and as professionally as I would wish. New approaches and enthusiasms are needed to inject some energy into your community which is thriving and continues to attract new people. You are a very caring and engaged congregation and the main thing I will miss about being your Minister is you!



But before the end of the year we have plenty more services and I hope you will think a bit about what you want from Chapel going into the future. Your committee will be considering the way forward and would love to hear your views.

*Nicky Jenkins*

## **A MONTH OF SUNDAYS**

**at 11.00a.m.**

Sunday 4 August  
Revd. Nicky Jenkins  
Music by Nick Morrice  
Visit of Scarborough Unitarians with  
Bring and Share lunch

Sunday 11 August  
Elizabeth Faiers  
*On Beauty*  
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 18 August  
Revd. Nicky Jenkins  
Music by David Hammond  
*12 noon Special General Meeting of  
members to adopt 2018 Chapel accounts*

Sunday 25 August  
Andrew Hill  
*By trees we live*  
Music by David Hammond

• Thursday 29 August 10.30 for 11.00a.m  
*Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

• Friday 30 August 12.30p.m. *Last Friday  
music: Catherine Strachan (cello) & David  
Hammond (piano)* (Chapel)

## **SUNDAY 4th AUGUST**

The Scarborough Unitarian congregation will be joining us for morning worship on Sunday 4th August followed by a bring and share lunch and the chance to get to know our Scarborough friends.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY COLLECTION**

The General Assembly Chief officer, Elizabeth Slade, has sent this message following our collection for the work of the General Assembly:

Thank you so much for the York Unitarians' generous donations to the General Assembly. Your investment in the movement is much appreciated

With warm wishes,  
*Liz*

[Elizabeth Slade]

## **OTHER EVENTS IN AUGUST**

- Thursday 1 August 10.30 for 11.00a.m  
*Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Saturday 3 August 7.30p.m. *Late Music: Kate Ledger (piano) – Aspects of Eno part 2* (Chapel)
- Tuesday 6 August 7.30p.m. York Interfaith Association: Interfaith Week planning meeting (Hudson Room, Council Offices)
- Thursday 8 August 10.30 for 11.00a.m  
*Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Thursday 15 August 10.30 for 11.00a.m  
*Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Friday 16 August 12.30p.m. *Occasional Friday music: James & Alex Woodrow (violin & piano)* (Chapel)
- Thursday 22 August 10.30 for 11.00a.m  
*Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

## **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING**

A Special General Meeting of members of the congregation will be held immediately following the service on Sunday 18th August to agree the 2018 Chapel Accounts which have now been examined and agreed by the Accountant.

This should take about 5 minutes.

*Margaret Hill,*  
Secretary, York Unitarians

## **FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE**

- The Chapel Committee met on Sunday 21 July. Apologies were received from Dee Boyle, Barbara Barnes, Elizabeth Faiers, Simon Hardy and Laura Cox.
- The committee agreed that it wished to pursue the appointment of a successor to Nicky Jenkins as minister. The secretary outlined the processes involved and the committee agreed that the congregation should apply to be added, as a half-time post, to the Unitarian General Assembly's vacant pulpits list. Any eventual appointment is in the gift of members of the congregation as a whole. In the new year a series of workshops will be organised for those who would like to help leading worship during the interregnum and beyond.
- Nick Morrice reported on financial matters. The 2018 chapel accounts have now been approved. A special general meeting to adopt them will be held immediately after the service (and before coffee) on Sunday 18 August.
- A claim for tax repayment on back gift-aided contributions is in the process of being made.
- A small advisory group has been set up to support Nick Morrice as the chapel treasurer.
- Andrew Hill reported on the progress regarding York Unitarians CIO. This now exists and has a bank account. We now need to start the process of vesting (i.e. transferring) the Chapel (building and congregation) and the Chapel Charity (the Chapel's permanent endowment) - both separate charities - into York Unitarians CIO. We agreed that we would seek the assistance of our solicitor, Roderick Ramage, who assisted us in earlier stages of this process. The secretary is in process of making an inventory of all chapel belongings.
- York Council was granted the use of the Chapel as a polling station on Thursday 7 May 2020 for the election of a new police and fire commissioner for North Yorkshire. The fee payable will be £500.
- A copy of The Chapel maintenance plan will be circulated to all committee members.
- Richard Brown had applied for and was granted chapel membership.
- Jenny Jacobs shared a suggestion for a Chapel monthly shared social action lunch with invited groups project.
- The next meeting is Sunday 18 August at 12.30p.m.

## **YORK UNITARIANS CIO**

A reminder that a new bank account has been opened for York Unitarians CIO. Members and friends with standing orders have been asked to change their standing orders to the new bank account. If you haven't done so already, please do it now. Other members and friends may wish to support the Chapel in this way. Standing order forms are available on the Chapel table. New gift aid forms are also available and need to be completed.

Friends who have been attending for six months may wish to consider becoming members, and new membership forms are also available on the chapel table. Membership application forms should be passed to Claire Lee, the membership secretary, or to the Chapel secretary.

## **YOUR CHANCE TO SHARE YOUR VISION**

*Elizabeth Slade,*

*Unitarian General Assembly Chief Officer*

When work happens most easily and effectively, it is usually because it is aligned to the passions of those carrying it out. In my travels and meetings so far, I have heard the passions of some in the denomination, and I am keen to hear more as I work with the Executive Committee on reviewing the General Assembly's strategy.

I am hosting a series of calls over the summer, and I hope many of you will be able to join. You will be able to do this via video or dial-in with a regular phone, depending on your preference. We will have a small group of people on each call, so we will hear each other's perspectives. We won't be making decisions about future direction in these calls – just listening.

To join in, please email [Audrey Longhurst](mailto:Audrey.Longhurst) by Friday 2nd August, letting her know your first and second choices of which of the following calls you would like to join. We will then let participants know which call to join, and the dial-in details. Calls will last an hour.

Tuesday 13th August, 6.30pm;  
Thursday 15th August, 10am;  
Monday 19th August, 1pm;  
Thursday 22nd August, 1pm;  
Wednesday 28th August, 7pm;  
Thursday 29th August, 11am;  
Tuesday 3rd September 7pm;  
Wednesday 4th September 5pm

## **2019 SPONSORED WALK FOR CHARITY**

### **ADVANCE NOTICE**

The sponsored walk for our chosen charity, *My Sight York* (formerly *York Blind and Partially Sighted Society*), will be on Saturday 21<sup>ST</sup> September starting from Husthwaite village about 2 miles to the west of the A19 north of Easingwold, a reasonably straightforward journey from York. The route is 5½ miles over gently undulating countryside using good paths. Further details will be published in the September issue of the newsletter.

If you are interested in joining the walk, please let us know and we will provide a sponsorship form. *If you do not wish to join the walk itself then please start collecting your pennies (or even better your pounds!) now to sponsor those participating in the walk.*

Alan and Liz Pennington 01937 845575  
[alan.pennington@btinternet.com](mailto:alan.pennington@btinternet.com)

## **REAL LIVING by Muriel Hilton a review by Barbara Barnes of a Chapel Library book**

Muriel Hilton is a Unitarian writer, poet and columnist who contributed to "The Inquirer" for over 60 years until her death in 1999. She was also a Lay Pastor at Maidstone for 20 years and was married to Denbigh Hilton, Hastings Minister from 1934-1984.

This slim volume consists of a mix of short articles and poems. The titles vary as in "Tess" relating to Hardy's heroine to "Voices" contrasting Hitler's might to Beethoven's immortal spirit: several articles have no title at all. Many give food for thought as in a quote of Henry James "I rejoice that the waters have held you up - they do always I think when they are deep enough" as he wrote to a friend who had come through a difficult time. The poem "Dunkirk anniversary" recalls the vital role of the 'stalwart seamen of the little ships' while "November" reminds us that there is always beauty around us, if we but look.

You can read this booklet in no time and delight in the illustrations done by Denbigh. I have separated the 2 copies in our library: one is with other poems (white dot, upper room), the other on the 'Unitarian' lobby shelves (yellow dot).

## **KEY MESSAGES FROM THE UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

*The latest key messages from the Executive Committee of the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches, from their meeting held on Monday 15th July 2019. Find out more about the EC on its [website](#).*

1. As part of the process to review and refresh the General Assembly's strategic plan, the Executive Committee and Chief Officer shared their personal motivations and visions for the denomination. Factors in our external context (e.g. changes in social trends; partners we might work with) were also reviewed, along with the movement's strengths and weaknesses, and the impact we currently have. This will inform the planning process ahead of the next EC meeting at the Nightingale Centre in September.

2. We would like to invite you to contribute your vision to this stage of the planning process. Details can be found on page 3 how to do this.

3. Applications are welcome for new members of the Stipend Review Committee. This group makes a recommendation on the proposed minimum stipend paid by congregations to ministers and lay pastors, along with guidance on manse allowance, expenses and parental leave. We seek diversity on this committee, and all applications are welcome, and should be made by email to the [Chief Officer](#).

4. The Executive Committee congratulates the Nightingale Centre Manager and Management Committee for their concerted efforts in improving the Centre's ecological footprint. The Centre is regularly assessed for its green credentials and proudly displays its Peak Park Environmental Quality Award. Full details of the Centre's environmental and sustainability achievements can be viewed on its [website](#). Currently being explored is the feasibility of installing solar panels and an electric car charger.

5. The Chief Officer gave an update and shared her reflections on her first four months.

6. There was discussion on the need to improve the way that the GA makes itself known online, in order for our message to reach more people.

7. The Ethical Investment Policy was discussed, and the need for further work on it was identified, before an ethical policy can be implemented.

## BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

The sermon by Nicky Jenkins  
on Sunday 12 May 2019

'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder': a phrase which is often used pejoratively these days. You express admiration for an object and the smug and superior person replies that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, in other words:

You might see it but I don't and you are mistaken, fooled or otherwise barmy to see beauty there.

The phrase has the effect of shutting down the conversation. At its most generalised, it means that beauty is relative, different for each of us.

**OBJECTIVE TRUTH or ABSOLUTE RELATIVISM**  
Science, the pervading paradigm, requires one objective truth. Because beauty and ugliness lie outside this they are condemned to absolute relativism. It is implied that there can be no way to come to an accord about what is beautiful. We might mean to say that we want to be sensitive to others, that we don't want to impose our view on others. We want to avoid conflict and in doing so we seem to say that nothing is more beautiful or uglier than anything else.

Although the idea is thought to come from the Greek about 300-400 years BCE, the encyclopaedias think it was first used in writing by a Victorian Irish writer called Margaret Wolfe Hungerford in her novel *Molly Bawn* (1878).

And in some respects perhaps it can be thought of as in keeping with Unitarian values. It seems egalitarian. It allows the ordinary fellow as much right to their aesthetics as the expert. It allows them to say

I know what I like

without being dictated to by some elite arty-farty types.

### BEAUTY IN VISUAL ART

In many senses the aphorism 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder' is true. A piece of visual art speaks to us all in many different ways, from the most obvious case of colour blindness to our cultural and emotional backgrounds. Our taste certainly comes into it and that can be determined by such things as whether we are extroverted or introverted, by our social class and education.

As to a definition of beauty, perhaps that shouldn't be the only criterion for a work of art.

- Is Duchamp's urinal beautiful?
- Or Tracy Emin's unmade bed?
- Or that infamous "pile of bricks"?

Maybe they are important, revelatory and make a point about art itself?

Some of the most famous works of art were reviled in their time because they diverged from what was known and expected of art.

*The Impressionists* were so called because they did not follow the rules of art at the time and made "mere impressions" of the scene.

### BEAUTY IN THE NATURAL WORLD

Perhaps we can feel on firmer ground when we speak of beauty in the natural world. Many of us agree about what we find beautiful in the natural world.

Indeed, Ruskin in his *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* believed that embellishment in architecture was only beautiful if it followed nature and something easily understood as natural. He loved acanthus leaves around the top of a pillar but not the harsh lines of a triangular pediment!

However, I can admire a bald Scottish mountain but do not find it beautiful as it is to my eye harsh and unfriendly. A North Sea seascape has a similar chilling effect on me. I am sure there are many who find beauty in such sights.

### BEAUTY ELSEWHERE

I have been talking mainly about the beauty we can see because of the quote that beauty is in the eye of the beholder; but I know that beauty can also be found in music (sound), in patterns and in the soul.

Suzy Kassem (American poet and philosopher of Egyptian origin) says that

beauty is in the *heart* of the beholder

and Amit Abraham eminent Indian psychologist, that

beauty is in the *mind* of the beholder.

Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume held that passion rather than reason governs human behaviour:

Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. [David Hume *Of the standard of taste* (1757)]

Salma Hayek is a Mexican American actress and producer of the TV series *Ugly Betty*. I like her idea:

that the most liberating thing about beauty is realizing that you are the beholder. This empowers us to find beauty in places where others have not dared to look, including inside ourselves. ([https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/eye\\_of\\_the\\_beholder](https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/eye_of_the_beholder))

#### POST MODERNISTS

If we are to truly appreciate beauty, according to postmodernists, we need to cast aside the assumed certainty in science and favour a trust in the fact that something is not necessarily beautiful in all races and cultures. In fact, the more we explore this wonderful world of ours, the more we realise that each country has its own aesthetic.

#### OURSELVES AS BEHOLDERS

Our aesthetic or, more commonly, our taste, defines so many things about our church services.

- We often lay down more rules about how our place looks and the music and style of worship than we do of our theology.
- We are a church that welcomes everyone regardless of sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity or status. Well, we say we do, but curiously, only people like us tend to come.
- We celebrate diversity, but only if our music is played on the grand piano and is no more modern than 100 years ago.
- We want more, different people to come from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities, but our services are wordy, our singing is not emotionally engaging and our décor is plain.

We like it like that. It reflects our Presbyterian, protestant history. It's a culture we feel comfortable in.

But in serving up a dish of the calm and rational we subliminally exclude people who are different from us. Our beauty is in the eye of ourselves as beholders.

"But," you might say, "that's why I come to chapel. I find it calm and soothing and it reminds me of my highest aspirations." If we were to include some different forms of music, you might find it loud, dissonant, not holy. You might begin to feel uncomfortable and you might stop coming. You might not like it if we left out the sermon and had more music, music that didn't do much for you.

#### OUR HIGHEST ASPIRATIONS

Our highest aspirations are to help create a world:

- where we are equal and equally valid as human beings and that means creating a spiritual sanctuary;
- where we can be together in our diversity;
- where we can learn from each other; and
- where we might not feel quite as comfortable as we have in our self-created image of the church.

Sometimes we need to get out of our old habits to re-experience the joy and meaning of our Unitarian hymns and message.

#### OUR HEARTS

How do we experience beauty? I think it is with our hearts. The holy speaks to a pre-rational part of ourselves. It is the delight in being alive that we see in little children. Let us extend ourselves and our churches beyond the *status quo*. We all know how much society's *status quo* is damaging, demeaning and discriminating against those who don't fit in.

Do we want to continue that discrimination?  
No we don't.

But we are, [continuing that discrimination] simply by expecting others to be like us, to see beauty in the same things we do.

Let's take a few risks and hear a few more stories from people who aren't like us. Maybe we too will find beauty in the things which they behold.

## **DID SARAH HEWLEY LIVE NEXT DOOR?**

Our Chapel has sometimes been called 'Lady Hewley's Chapel' and among its furnishings is a chair in which, in her later years, Sarah Hewley (d.1710) is said to have been carried from her town house in St. Saviourgate to the Chapel. It has usually been assumed that this was where the Lady Hewley's Almshouses now stand at the top of the street. However, York Civic Trust has evidence (source presently not disclosed) that her town house was, in fact, next door to the Chapel on the site of the present 31 St. Saviourgate (which was not built until 1736). The Civic Trust has recently - Friday 26 July 2019 - placed there a worthy blue plaque which commemorates her generosity and several Chapel members were there for its unveiling.

Sarah Hewley, in addition to endowing her almshouses, bequeathed a large amount of money in trust for religious causes and chapels in the north of England dissenting from the Church of England. Much of this money was directed to providing financial support for dissenting/nonconformist ministers. She also asked for special attention to be given to St. Saviourgate Chapel and its ministers but forgot to mention this in her will!

Over time Dissenting/Nonconformist congregations began identifying as either subscribers or non-subscribers to creeds and confessions of faith; the non-subscribers preferring to justify their faith according to their understanding of sacred scripture. Our chapel and its ministers followed this latter path and towards the end of the 18th century began taking a Unitarian track.

However, around the turn of the 18th into the 19th century, certain evangelical Christians decided to challenge this development, looked

for a specific cause to pursue in the courts and picked on Lady Hewley's Trust. The trust was taken to court. The case went all the way from the lower courts to the upper and eventually in 1840 to the House of Lords which ruled that a person cannot leave money to something which is illegal at the time of making a will and that when Sarah Hewley died being a Unitarian was, in fact, illegal under the 1698 *Blasphemy Act*.

and so remained until 1813. It is, therefore most unlikely, that Sarah Hewley left her money to trustees 'most of whom were Unitarians' as is sometimes suggested. However, it is true that by the late 18th century all the Hewley Trustees were not only Unitarians but also mostly inter-related. So the Unitarians lost out and lost their access to Sarah Hewley's benefaction.

These developments, of course, made Unitarians feel uneasy. Were they going to lose all their places of worship, including our Chapel, places where their parents and grandparents were all buried in the yard?

However, all was settled by *The Dissenters Chapels Act* (1844) which said that so long as Unitarians had been in possession for 25 years or more they were safe. This was so in York where real progress towards a specific Unitarian position had probably begun with the arrival of Newcome Cappe as minister in 1776. However it would not be until 1855, under *The Places of Worship Registration Act*, that the Chapel would first be described as 'Unitarian' *Andrew M. Hill* P.S. Conversations last Friday, 26 July 2019, with representatives of the York Civic Trust do indeed suggest that the Trust has very recently - since deciding to place the plaque - found convincing, but as yet unpublished, evidence that Sarah Hewley did probably live in a house on the site of the present number 31 St. Saviourgate.

*Andrew M. Hill*

**LADY SARAH HEWLEY**



**This portrait of Lady Sarah Hewley, together with the portraits of Sir John Hewley and of 4 previous Chapel ministers were given to the Chapel early in the 19th century by Mrs. Eleanor Hotham. The two Hewley portraits are now on permanent loan to the City of York and hang in the vestibule of the Lord Mayor's Mansion House.**

## AN INTER-FAITH AFFIRMATION FOR PEACE

We, gathered here today from a diversity of faith traditions, affirm the Ultimate Purpose for all humanity, as revealed in sacred texts and books of nature, is to dwell in peace and harmony with each other and with all Creation.

We acknowledge in penitence that religion has been often mis-used for war and violence.

We recognise and affirm that peace, understanding and tolerance between religions are essential for peace within and among the nations.

We pledge ourselves to dialogue and peace between the faiths.

Following the United Nations challenge, we are determined to help save humanity from the scourge of war and violence, & build a global culture of peace, respecting the dignity & human rights of all within a just economic order.

We will continue in our faith pilgrimage for peace to help heal our broken world.

*[based on an Inter-Faith statement of Hans Kung, the UN Charter and the World Council of Churches' Declaration to Overcome Violence]*



**Yorkshire Unitarian Union  
FOUNDATION**

**WORSHIP STUDIES COURSE**  
GA ACCREDITED COURSE

**£65**

YUU grants available to help with costs



**4 SESSIONS:-**  
**07 Sept, 05 Oct, 02 Nov, 30 Nov**

Email: [hullunitarians@gmail.com](mailto:hullunitarians@gmail.com) for more details

All sessions to be held 10am to 1:00pm  
at Hull Unitarian Chapel, Chamberlain House,  
Park Street, Hull HU2 8TA

## ABOUT PEOPLE

- *Richard Thompson* is home again and recovering after surgery. Our best wishes to him.
- On a recent Sunday it was good to see *John Howe* on a return visit from his home in Massachusetts. John was a regular attender during his time in York.

## USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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*Treasurer:* Nick Morrice  
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<[nickmorrice@gmail.com](mailto:nickmorrice@gmail.com)>

*Chapel Committee Members:*,  
Barbara Barnes, Dee Boyle, Laura Cox,  
Elizabeth Faiers, Simon Hardy, Andrew  
Hill, Jenny Jacobs, Joan Sinanan, and the  
Officers

*St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel Charity*  
(registered charity: 230167) Trustees:  
Elizabeth Faiers (Treasurer), Simon  
Hardy, Jen Atkinson, Andrew Hill (Chair),  
Sue Catts and Claire Wilton.

*Colton's Hospital Trustees*  
Elizabeth Faiers (Treasurer), Dee Boyle,  
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