

THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

August 2021

FROM THE MINISTER

Around this time of year, I often find myself humming the beautiful hymn 'Moods of Summer,' sung to the classic Welsh tune *Calon Lan* and written by the former minister of St Saviourgate Chapel, Sydney Henry Knight. Usually it's with a feeling of delight that we are finally seeing "the summer sun... shining over golden land and sea," but July proved that it's definitely possible to have too much of a good thing, as the heat forced us to postpone our outing to Rowntree Park and instead opt for a quieter, though still delightful, picnic in the Chapel grounds. I think most of us were grateful on that occasion for "the trees of summer" providing their "leafy shade" so that we were "sheltered from the sun-hot sky." [*Hymns for Living (Green Book) 268*]

It's a joy to see people enjoying our lovely space, and to be able to meet in larger groups again, and as the restrictions continue to be relaxed, we will especially enjoy our new musical freedoms in services, and of course the start of the summer concert season. The Thursday meditation group and Sunday services are now in Chapel with the option to join online, while the Discussion Group meets on zoom at 6.30 on 10th and 17th August to

continue our conversation about the *Gospel of Thomas*, with its fascinating blend of pragmatism and mysticism.

Everyone is also invited to join a conversation (this time in person in the chapel, though if you can't attend on the day there will also be opportunities to contribute your ideas in other ways) about updating our website to better reflect our current realities and the new style of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches' website. We're free to adopt

as much or as little of the national guidelines as we choose, but since the national website is the way in for a number of first-time visitors, it makes sense for us to be recognisably a part of the whole. And as technology is always changing, it's also good to consider now and again how we can best use it to let more people know about the Chapel. After all, as is written in a saying attributed to Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas* (echoing the *Gospel of Mark*):



"What you hear with one ear, listen to with both, then proclaim from your rooftops. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket or in a hidden place. Rather they put it on the stand so that everyone who comes and goes can see its light." *Stephanie Bisby*
[photo by *Dee Boyle*]

A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

at 11.00a.m.

Sunday 1 August

Revd Stephanie Bisby
Diversity
Music by David Hammond
Zoom host: Janet Eldred

Sunday 8 August

Louise Reeve
The spirit of the Findhorn Foundation
Music by Helen Drewery
Zoom host: Jenny Jacobs

Sunday 15 August

Jenny Jacobs
Good business
Music by David Hammond
Zoom host: Janet Eldred

Sunday 22 August

Revd Stephanie Bisby
How to listen
Music by Laura Jones
Zoom host: Stephanie Bisby
Chapel Committee 12.15p.m.

Sunday 29 August

David Zucker
Inclusion
Music by Nick Morrice
Zoom host: Jenny Jacobs

SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday services have now all returned to the Chapel. However, they will continue to be accessible on Zoom. The Chapel Secretary sends the zoom link and service order sheet out each week.

TECH PROJECT

Visitors to the Chapel, either remotely or in person, will have seen a considerable amount of new technology around the place. Firstly I want to express thanks on behalf of members and friends to our anonymous donor who has met almost the entire cost of this project. Secondly I want to reassure everyone that its use will be made available to all. To that end once everything is fully installed training will be provided. Dates will be communicated in due course.

David Zucker

ABOUT PEOPLE

• Nick Morrice and Adrienne Wilson had a civil partnership ceremony on 1 July at York Register Office. Myrna Michell was one of their two witnesses, did a short reading, and joined them for tea afterwards at the Grange Hotel. Nick and Adrienne previously had a Unitarian blessing for their "Commitment to Life Companionship" 16 years ago performed by Rev David Usher. They



wrote their own vows then, and said them again in front of the Registrar. So - not a wedding, no change of name, but still a very enjoyable, meaningful and appropriate occasion. Thank you to everyone who has sent congratulations!

• For our recent 'zoomed' services we have appreciated and enjoyed the presence of *Bradford Unitarians*. As they return to worship in their own church building we thank them for their fellowship.

• Chapel member, *Sue Catts*, is hopefully looking forward to being back in the UK from Australia until 31 October. We very much look forward to seeing her again.

OTHER EVENTS IN AUGUST

Poetry Group

No meeting in August
Contact person: Dee Boyle

Meditation Group

11.00a.m. Thursdays
Contact person: Dee Boyle

Discussion Group

Tuesdays 10 and 17 August
Contact person: Stephanie Bisby

York Interfaith Group

Tuesday 3 August
'Love and Charity in our scriptures'
are there shared principles?
Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88186920284?pwd=WEVoV0ZtYzE3dURkTmFRVlYyZjZ2dz09>

ZOOM HOSTS

There is an urgent need for more zoom hosts.
Please speak to Jenny Jacobs.

FRIDAY LUNCHTIME CONCERTS

12.30p.m. £5 (cash only)

6 August *John Street Trio*

13 August *Hamish Brown (tenor)*
& *Alasdair Jamieson (piano)*

20 August *Adrian Lord (piano)*

27 August *Catharine Strachan (cello)*
with *David Hammond (piano)*

CHAPEL WEBSITE

Jenny Jacobs writes:

Dear all, we are going to have to build a new website for York Unitarians, and we would like as many of you as possible to help us design it. To that end, we are going to have a meeting where our Minister, Stephanie Bisby, will run through a quick presentation on the new toolkit available from the GA, and then we will break into groups and have workshops to come up with the things that are important to us and how we want to communicate them on the new website.

The first step is to pick a date for the initial session. To that end, I have created a Doodle poll suggesting various session times (they are all on Saturdays). Please indicate on the poll which sessions are best for you, and then I'll select the date which suits the largest number of people. The link to the poll is here: https://doodle.com/poll/mfenduws4988rv8q?utm_source=poll&utm_medium=link

HANG OUT THE BUNTING!

Myrna Michell writes: At the time of writing, it's two years tomorrow since I arrived back in the UK from NZ, and a celebration may now be feasible, though by the nature of it, I can't zoom it as well ... Yesterday after the long-delayed return of lunchtime concerts, a chapel friend put the words 'house-warming' into my ear, which buzzed around for 24 hours and the idea is now pencilled into my diary.

As it will still be 'silly season', I'm offering two dates: one is midweek and the other a Saturday. BOTH MAY HAPPEN. The dates would be Tuesday 'long lunchtime' 24th August, and likewise Saturday 28th August or Saturday 4th September. It's a bring-and-share, and I hope to see friends both Unitarian and 'never-heard-of-Unitarianism' spread around house and garden. Get in touch if interested!

Myrna Michell ringofvoices@gmail.com or 01904 761905

FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met after service on Sunday 4 July. All members were present.
- A previous discussion about the level of basic financial contributions from members and friends sufficient to cover basic servicing costs including Unitarian General Assembly contributions was continued.
- The chapel costs about £2,150 a month to run - £48.86 per each of 44 members, £52 with the General Assembly quota payment.
- There is £41,486 in the CafCash account, £126,659 in the York Unitarian CIO account and £600,719 in the Chapel Charity investment account.
- The insurance of new technical equipment is covered by the present insurance premium.
- Peter Exley is to fit a cable from the balcony camera to the chancel area so that leading worship from the pulpit will be possible.
- Assistance will be provided for worship leaders about the new equipment enabling worship from the chapel to be 'zoomed'.
- 2 social action projects are planned: a Big Sing event on Friday 8 October with contributions from the U3A choir, and help for urgent food needs in Nepal.
- York City of Sanctuary is arranging a Sunday 'welcome to York' event for refugees in York. The chapel will provide a lunch.
- We need to set up a new website. A Saturday afternoon brainstorming session will introduce the General Assembly's new website 'toolkit'.
- The minister has begun recruiting a small team to look after the *York Unitarian* magazine from January 2022 after Andrew Hill has retired.
- The next quinquennial chapel survey is due later this year. The secretary will contact the architect about this.
- Efforts to recruit a new chapel cleaner - in succession to Melissa - have fallen through. 3 more persons are to be interviewed.
- The recycling box at the Chapel front gate is back in use.
- More environmentally friendly bamboo loo rolls are to be introduced in the chapel toilets. Barbara Barnes will write a magazine article about this.
- Before the end of July Dee Boyle would like suggestions for marking Interfaith Week.
- The minister reported that with the relaxing of pandemic regulations she can now and has made some home visits.
- The next meeting of the committee will be on Sunday 22 August.

**WHY ARE WE HERE?
SUMMER SCHOOL 2021:**



**Why Are We Here?
Discerning our Unitarian Mission
in an Upturned World
(21-27 August 2021)**

With worship led by Jane Blackall and daily theme talks by Rev Jo James, Shana Begum, Rory Castle Jones, Rev Stephen Lingwood, and Rev Kate Brady-McKenna.

Find out more here: <https://www.unitarian.org.uk/event/summer-school-2021/>

[#RadicalSpirituality](#) [#WhyAreWeHere](#)
[#UnitarianSummerSchool](#)

BENEDICTION

(inspired by the hymn Blessed Spirit of my Life)

Blessed Spirit of our lives,
help us to live with strength and dignity
through the storms and stresses of our days.
Grant us clarity of vision,
and the inward peace that fills us
when we act according to
the still small voice of conscience.
Help us to live our wordless creeds,
to express love and compassion
in actions that will live as our legacy.

*Stephanie Bisby
for the service an Inward Treasure on 4th July.*

**OUR CHAPEL WILL STOP
FLUSHING TREES AWAY**

At least 7 million trees are felled each year for toilet tissue in the UK, double that if you include paper tissues such as paper hankies.

A mature tree stores up to a tonne of carbon and more is stored in the forest soil. Felling these trees can release up to 1.1 billion tonnes of CO2 stored in the trees and from the forest soils. This is nearly 3 times UK's entire annual domestic emissions total.

The average person in UK uses 127 rolls per year. Usage in UK is x2 that of Europe and the 3rd highest in the world. Moreover, perhaps because people are focussed on reducing plastic currently, some of the big brands have slowed and even reversed their use of recycled paper in the toilet rolls they make: the use of recycled paper decreased in UK in 2019. Nearly all toilet tissue sold in UK is bleached, using chlorine to make it white and strengthened using formaldehyde. These harmful chemicals plus another called BPA which is used for recycling paper, end up in our waterways.

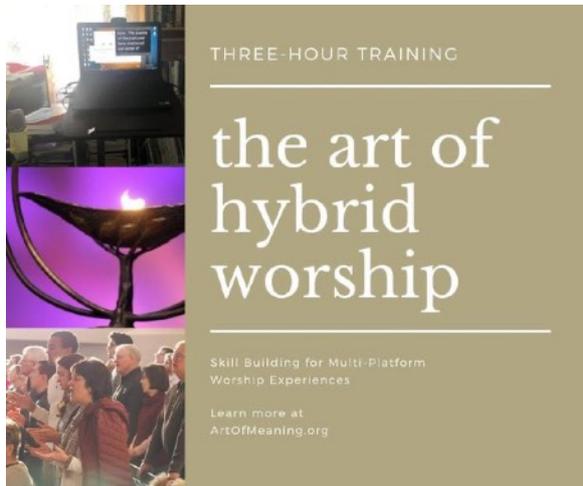
Bamboo absorbs 5 times more CO2 than trees and produces 35% more oxygen than trees do. It grows up to 3 feet in 24 hours and reaches maturity in 4-6 years: trees take 30-60 years. Growing bamboo requires no pesticides or fertilisers, only rain water. But the raw product does come from China where there is a surplus of bamboo, which is mostly used for building materials and as a food source. Although wood and recycled paper is available closer to home, bamboo which is organic, vegan friendly and transported by sea freight is better for the environment.

Carbon emissions from producing unbleached toilet rolls, with zero chemical and zero plastic, are 30% less than recycled and 65% less than regular toilet rolls. It is naturally softer than traditional and recycled toilet paper, thick and absorbent. And, contrary to expectations, it is not expensive.

The chapel committee has agreed to purchase unbleached bamboo toilet paper from Naked Sprout, a small business in Dorset, whose charity partner "Just a Drop" brings clean water and sanitation to 32 countries. The purchase of every box of toilet rolls gives a child in Kenya safe water at school for 1 year. For more information - and order if you wish - go to www.nakedsprout.uk *Barbara Barnes*

THE ART OF HYBRID WORSHIP

This opportunity seems ready made for York Unitarians who are already committed practising 'hybrid worship' [i.e. blended worship in chapel and on zoom together]



EXCITING NEWS

Bob Janis-Dillon writes: Exciting news for U.K. congregations: thanks to a wonderful grant from the Hibbert Trust, we can offer this training to U.K. and Ireland congregations.

The first offering will be on SATURDAY, 31st of JULY. Probably 11 - 3, with a break. If you can't make that one, it will be offered again on Saturday, 18th of September.

Rev. Kimberley Debus has offered to make this a bespoke training - she knows British Unitarianism is very different from the Unitarian Universalist Association, and is keen to tailor this to the goals of the congregations involved. It's not just about how to set up the cameras, but is an opportunity to reflect together on how we want to gather as communities, and how we want to get our method out to our neighbourhoods and to the wider world.

- Saturday, 31st July from 11.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. (with a mid-session break) <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../free-training-for...>
- Saturday, 18th September from 11.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. (with a mid-session break) <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../free-training-for...>

Spaces may be limited (up to 50), so sign up now! You can register multiple people from your congregation, society, or district - teams can be really helpful, as you can discuss the workshop and your congregation together afterward and come up with some ideas. Any questions, please feel free to ask me at bjanisdillon@unitarian.org.uk or Louise Rogers at louise.rogers256@gmail.com. Thank you!

HYBRID, MULTI-PLATFORM OR BLENDED



Whether you call it hybrid, or multi-platform, or blended, the way we will worship together is changing – technology is a part of our experience, and as we plan for life post-pandemic, we have a unique opportunity to craft our services in new and inclusive ways. The three-hour *Art of Hybrid Worship Training* is intended to help you with the details of your liturgy – from space and aesthetics, to transitions and camera work, to welcome and accessibility.

Rev. Kimberley Debus is a consultant and community minister based in New York State, inspiring an artful and art-filled faith. She uses her background in theatre, television, and music performance in her consultations with congregations and religious professionals throughout Unitarian Universalism. She has previously served at the Church of the Larger Fellowship as well as congregations in New York and Florida.

**The world is waiting
for new saints,
ecstatic men and women
who are so deeply rooted
in the love of God
that they are free to imagine
a new international order.
*Henri Nouwen***

IN LIVING MEMORY **York Unitarians: a recent history**

an account by Andrew Hill

In 2022 the religious society known today as York Unitarians CIO will celebrate its 350th anniversary; the society's first recorded existence being a licence granted in 1672 under King Charles 2nd's Declaration of Indulgence to Ralph Ward and others for preaching "at the home of Lady Watson in St. Saviourgate and Andrew Taylor in Micklegate" [G. Lyon Turner Original records of early nonconformity vol2 (1911) pp.646-7, 658]. However, this anniversary might never be happening, since by the early 1980s the congregation was at an extremely low ebb. It had been without a minister for 25 years and the average Sunday attendance for 1985-1986 was just 7 persons.

That the congregation survived was due to the devoted loyalty of Elizabeth Faiers together with the devoted enthusiasm of 4 Unitarians from elsewhere who, in their retirement, removed to York - the Revd. Sydney and Mrs. Margaret Knight in 1987 (York was Margaret's birthplace) and Alfred and Joyce Fletcher (former Sheffield Unitarians; Alfred was lay pastor at Great Hucklow) in 1991. In addition there were 2 brand new Unitarians, Simon and Marta Hardy, who joined the congregation also in 1989. Without these arrivals the congregation might well have 'petered out'.

TRUSTEES

The Chapel's trustees, often referred to as the Colton Trustees, have been responsible for looking after the congregation's permanent endowment and income (i.e. in recent years this

has been referred to as the Chapel Charity) since at least 1731 when Thomas Colton died; and since the Colton Trustees had the money, they also looked after the chapel building. Hence they have also been referred to as the Fabric Trustees.

There was another Colton's trust - Colton's Hospital Trust - which was responsible for a



**A view of St. Saviourgate Chapel
most of us never see!
[notice the vestry, upper room and chimney
intruding into
the original + shape of the building]**

group of almshouses for elderly women. These were originally in Tanner Row but, because of road widening, they were replaced in 1920 by new premises in Shipton Street off Burton Stone Lane.

These two Colton trusts had a common source - the bequests of Thomas Colton (minister 1692-1731) and his wife Mary. Until 2010 both Colton Trusts had the same trustees and met in a solicitor's office

(Langley's on Micklegate) for 2 consecutive meetings. When enquiries were made of the Charity Commission (c.2010) if there was any reason why the two Trusts should have the same trustees the answer was 'No! They don't have to be the same people!'. It was the Colton's Hospital trustees who had appointed the Colton's Trust/Chapel Charity trustees as trustees of the Lady Hewley almshouses. This opened up the possibility that while - for historical association - a majority of Colton's Hospital trustees would be chapel members, a minority could be appointed from the local neighbourhood or even from St. Luke's parish church next door. This was agreed to in 2011. The sterling work of Alfred Fletcher and of Elizabeth Faiers as secretaries/treasurers of the almshouses trustees should be recorded; as also the willing and generous skills of chapel friend Peter Exley in maintenance and other matters.

Also associated with the Colton's Trust/Chapel Charity was the Garforth Trust (named for William Garforth) which Alfred Fletcher also administered and from which he passed one

third of its income to the Hull Unitarian Church. Alfred negotiated with the Charity Commission the transfer one third of its capital to Hull Unitarians.

CHAPEL SCHEDULED BY HISTORIC ENGLAND

Since 1954 (14 June 1954) the Chapel has been listed by Historic England (i.e. English Heritage) as Grade 2* [starred] and recognised as "being a particularly important building of more than special interest". An aspect of this listing has been regular 5 yearly inspections of the fabric of the building encouraging essential maintenance and restoration work. However, such work has required considerable funding, a source for which was found with a redundant chapel property: the Kenrick Rooms in Spen Lane.

SALE OF THE KENRICK ROOMS

The Kenrick Rooms in Kenrick Court, Spen Lane was the Chapel's Sunday School and ancillary accommodation. Built at the expense of an unknown donor during the ministry of George Vance Smith (1859-74) it was largely a white elephant and rented out most of the time to a local spiritualist group. In 1989, this group was given notice; the Charity Commission appointed trustees - Elizabeth Faiers was one and Sydney Knight another - and in the summer of 1990 the building was put up for sale. By September it was sold (it is now two flats in Kenrick Court) and the Charity Commission gave permission for the Chapel to use the financial proceeds to help pay for the Chapel's restoration. A condition was that the money was paid back for re-investment.

1990 - 2005 RESTORATION WORK

Important restoration work costing £64,000 began in 1990. However, just as the work was nearing completion the brick work in the south-eastern angle of the tower began giving way adding a further £60,000 in emergency repairs. This Work, including the reinstatement of floors, pews, wiring, ceilings and wall cladding, eventually brought the total cost the building work done in 1990-91 to about £160,000. Then in 2004 it became necessary to re-slate the whole Chapel roof at a cost of a further £102,000 and for which a special appeal was launched. The next English Heritage inspection is due this year (2021).

2003 RE-ORDERING OF 'CHANCEL' AREA

In 2003 discussions arose concerning the better use of the Chapel's internal

space. Although its original ground plan is 'cruciform' in shape there never was 'a chancel' until 1869. We have no interior picture of how it used to look but a floor plan shows the earlier pew layout. Box pews in all 4 wings faced inwards towards the pulpit set against an internal corner at the crossing. However, the whole internal space had been re-ordered during the ministry of George Vance Smith 1859-74 and under the supervision of the architect, George Fowler Jones, to make it appear more 'churchy'. The traditional 'communion pew' - using a second-hand rail and background imported from elsewhere - was converted to look like an altar and reredos and the box pews facing towards the pulpit turned to look like choir stalls. The organ (long gone) was removed to the balcony. No decision about removing the 'choir stalls' was made until 2008 and, until approval from Historic England was granted, no work carried out until 2010 when 'the choir stalls' were removed and the space opened up enabling a variety of uses including group activities, performance space for musicians and worship in the round. Also, at this time, an anonymous donor gave the Chapel a concert quality Yamaha grand piano.

One aspect of these internal changes was that they highlighted how Chapel affairs were managed. The congregation's officers and committee - on their own - had very little authority and very little money. These lay heavily with the 'Trustees' such that the congregation only saw the plans for the proposed alterations after the contractors had pinned them to the 'vestry'/kitchen wall. The congregation's committee requested and secured changes including more cupboard space in the kitchen! Furthermore, an agreement was made with the Chapel Committee that all building alterations should in future be approved by both 'the Trustees' and the Chapel Committee.

YORK UNITARIANS CIO

Another significant matter to which attention turned somewhat more recently was that of the custodian trustee (i.e. the incorporated 'owner' of last resort of the chapel building, property and funds). An investigation was made as to when the last properly appointed trustees had actually been present at a chapel annual general meetings and whether a custodian trustee [such as the British and Foreign Unitarian Association Incorporated] had ever

been appointed. It turned out that neither were any of the last appointed Chapel building trustees living - the last one had died mid-twentieth century; nor had a custodian trustee ever been appointed. Our Chapel solicitor, Roderick Ramage, was able to persuade the Charity Commission that it was unreasonable to try and find the current representatives/descendants of any of these long deceased trustees and that the best solution was for the Chapel to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation [CIO] an option which, after much campaigning by the charitable sector, had only recently become available. With Roderick's help - and with the hard work of Margaret Hill, Sue Catts, Elizabeth Faiers, Nick Morrice and Andrew Hill who gradually worked their way through the complex application form - CIO status was successfully achieved in 2019. Now with chapel congregation being an incorporated charity, the current Chapel Committee members for the time being are the Trustees of the Chapel funds and property.

MINISTRY and MEMBERSHIP

Between 1894-1920 the York congregation experienced six brief ministries and an interregnum averaging 3 years each. Then, from 1921 and for the next 30 years until his death in 1951 the minister was George Savile Woods who from 1935 until his death in 1951 was also a serving MP and only in York at weekends. Such circumstances were hardly conducive for active congregational life and this is clearly reflected in the available attendance figures. In 1936 Sunday morning attendance was given as 3-4 and in 1986 as 7. In 1948 evening attendance was 12-15 and in 1954 18 perhaps a response that there was a new minister T. Brett Davies. However he only stayed for 4 years, 1952-1956. For the next 30 years the congregation was again without ministerial support and guidance and the Sunday attendance dwindled to 7. In 1986 Sydney and Margaret (who came from York) Knight 'retired' to Elvington just outside York. Before long Sydney was invited to become part-time minister until he retired for a second time in 1994. Margaret Kirk followed and provided steady and sustained leadership for 13 years, followed by the two shorter ministries of Myrna Michell (2009-2013) and Nicky Jenkins (2016-2019). Stephanie Bisby is the present minister. Chapel membership is 44 and the average Sunday attendance is in the upper 20s.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

York Unitarians,
St. Saviourgate Chapel,
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www.york.unitarians.org.uk

Minister: The Revd. Stephanie Bisby
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Chairperson: David Zucker
<davidgzucker@gmail.com>

Secretary: Jenny Jacobs
☎ 01423 548793
<yorkunitarians@gmail.com>

Treasurer: Richard Brown
☎ 01904 705382
<richardcabrown@btinternet.com>

Chapel Committee Members:,
Barbara Barnes, Dee Boyle, Elizabeth
Faiers, Andrew Hill, Joan Sinanan, and
the Officers

Colton's Hospital Trustees
Elizabeth Faiers (Treasurer), Stephanie
Bisby, Dee Boyle, Trevor Gant, Marta
Hardy, Simon Hardy, Nicky Jenkins
(Chair), Joan Sinanan, Richard
Thompson, (registered charity: 221281)

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