



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York YO1 8NQ
December 2018

FROM THE MINISTER

Well, I lost the first half of my original message which is probably just as well as I wasn't feeling very festive at the time. It's a funny old time of year isn't it? I am very resistant to the huge commercialisation attached to the festival, every year more and more exhortations to buy, to have the perfect Christmas.

I couldn't resist the Christmas edition of my old favourite magazine with its gorgeous pictures of tinselled rooms and gleaming plates of special Christmas food which you, yes you, are going to cook for your admiring friends and family (never mind the fact that if I attempt anything with more tang than mince and tatties it always ends up an unmitigated disaster, looking nothing like the picture and raises my stress levels through the roof.) Which might be why the magazine also

features and article on how to keep stress under control at Christmas.

It takes a strong will and a clear mind to resist at least some of these shenanigans. Though I must admit the Christmas lights brought me joy on a chilly bus ride through town. If you are the kind of person who revels in it then go for it! If not, try to make some clear decisions about what you want your Christmas to be about and communicate them to those around you. So much of our Christmas is determined by what

we ought to do to make it 'a proper Christmas', in line with your values and needs for companionship. Christmas, New Year and Yule are all about new life, and new beginnings, the promise of the return of the light, and hope in the new year. New traditions can be made. Let's hope for new insights and

understanding and more compassion in 2019.

Happy Christmas and a good New Year to you and yours!
Nicky Jenkins

CAROL SINGING AT COLTON'S ALMSHOUSES



Colton's almshouses in Shipton Street (adjacent to St. Luke's church) have a special relationship with the Chapel: the majority of its trustees are chapel members. Come and join us singing traditional carols for our 12 residents on Monday 17th December at 6pm. More details from Chapel member Elizabeth Faiers (01904 415096) who is clerk to the trustees.

**A MONTH OF SUNDAYS
at 11.00a.m.**

Sunday 2 December
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Volunteer recognition
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 9 December
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
The tree of life
Christmas tree dressing
Sparklers children's programme
Music by David Hammond
12.15p.m. Chapel Committee

Sunday 16 December
Andrew Hill
Poinsettias: Flowers of the Holy Night
A Christmas Celebration
Music by Nick Morrice
Bring and share Christmas lunch

Sunday 23 December
Jenny Jacobs
Reconstructing Christmas
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 30 December
Serendipity for the year's end
Music by David Hammond

OTHER EVENTS IN DECEMBER

- Monday 3 December 7.00p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Monday 3 December 10.00a.m.-4.30p.m. *Alex McCartney recording session* (Chapel)
- Tuesday 4 December 10.00a.m.-4.30p.m. *Alex McCartney recording session* (Chapel)
- Tuesday 4 December 7.30p.m. *York Interfaith Group: 'Fasting & feasting – food in worship'* (York Council Offices)
- Thursday 6 December 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Saturday 8 December 12 noon *Bootham Baroque* music for Advent and Christmas by Schütz, Telemann, Handel and others. (Chapel)
- Sunday 9 December 12.15p.m. Chapel Committee (Upper Room)
- Monday 10 December 7.00p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 13 December 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

- Friday 14 December 7.30p.m. *York Opera carol concert* (Chapel)
- Monday 17 December 6.00p.m. *Carol singing* (Colton's Hospital, Shipton Street)
- Monday 17 December 7.00p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 20 December 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

BRING & SHARE CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Our annual Bring and Share Christmas Lunch this year will be on Sunday 16 December. There will be a sign up sheet on the vestry notice board where you can indicate what dish you will be bringing so as to avoid a surfeit of quiches! Also - do you have a poinsettia plant we might borrow for the day?



SERENDIPITY FOR THE YEAR'S END

On Sunday 30 December - the final Sunday of the year please bring with you to chapel an appropriate reading, poem or object to speak about and share with others for 2 to 3 minutes each. The service will be held in the round in the chancel area of the Chapel.

SEND A CHILD TO HUCKLOW FUND

In December the Chapel traditionally supports this Unitarian charity, which enables children to spend a week at The Nightingale Centre – the Unitarian centre at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire. Many York Unitarians have attended events, family occasions and conferences at the centre. On Sundays - 2nd, 9th and 16th December there will be retiring collections for SACH [Send a Child to Hucklow]. Cheques should be made payable to *The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund*, and gift aid forms will be available. Cash donations cannot be gift aided. A bowl for monetary gifts will be on the table in front of the reading desk. SACH offers Monday to Friday holiday breaks for 200 children and leaders selected by Family Service Units, Women's Refuges, Social Service Departments, Schools, Community Associations, Congregations. These are children, often from inner cities, who would otherwise not have a holiday at all. SACH funds accommodation, travel and excursions for some 200 children each year at a cost of around £250 per child.

DEATH AND DYING DISCUSSION

In the New Year, we will have a series of discussions on the broad topic of Death and Dying. All of the discussions will take place at the chapel and each will be on a single topic, so it's not necessary to have attended any previous discussions:

- Friday 8 February 11.00am-12.15pm: "Why we need to talk about dying and death"
- Sunday 24 February, 12.30-1.45pm: "How to die well, spiritually and practically"
- Sunday 17 March, 12.30-1.45pm: "Making decisions about life-prolonging treatment for others"
- Friday 5 April, 11.00am-12.15pm: "Advance directives: when you can no longer state your wishes"

Feel free to bring your lunch and/or make a hot drink.

One of our ground rules is that participants will do some preparatory reading, video-watching, and/or audio-listening before each session. The materials used include those developed during a series of conferences entitled, "Christian Perspectives on Death and Dying"; see www.christiandyng.org.uk.

If you can't access the internet, please let me know so that I can provide hard copies or a digital copy via email ahead of time. As an alternative, please read one of the following books: *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande, *With the End in Mind* by Kathryn Mannix, or *How to have a Good Death*, based on the 2006 BBC2 programme with foreword by Esther Rantzen. There may be copies in the chapel library (*Being Mortal*), or I'm willing to loan my copies.

Want to express your interest or borrow a book? Please contact Janet Eldred at jbe100@yahoo.co.uk or 07951 600907.

2019 UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 16 - Thursday 18 April
Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel
(close to Birmingham International Rail Station)



GA President Joan Cook with York Unitarians minister Nicky Jenkins in the Chapel on Sunday 28 October

- Business - come and help on the future of the Movement;
- Worship with over 300 other Unitarians;
- Socialise - come and catch up with your friends, and make new ones;
- Listen to the guest speakers; purchase Unitarian books and enjoy the various stalls;
- Young people and children - participate in the parallel youth programme.
- Free creche for 0-4 year olds; GA Kids for 5-11 year olds; GA Teens for 12-17 year olds.

The Chapel can send 2 voting delegates with financial assistance from the Chapel. Others must pay their own way. Please tell the Chapel secretary as soon as possible if you are interested in being a delegate, booking deadline 26th February. Booking forms should be available in December. A decision on delegates will be made at the committee meeting in January.

Margaret Hill, Secretary.

mhill.york@gmail.com

TOILET TWINNING

Nicky Jenkins writes: At the end of July we held a toilet-twinning café church. We laughed at toilet humour, heard about the difficulties people around the world had without proper toilet provision and decided what we wanted to let go of in our improvised toilet flush.

2.3 billion people don't have somewhere safe and hygienic to go to the toilet. The lack of a loo makes women and girls a target for sexual attack as they go to the toilet in the open, late at night. Every year, women and girls spend 97 billion hours finding a place to go. Almost 1,000 children die every day from preventable diseases linked to dirty water and unsafe toilets. 663 million people live without safe water and children worldwide miss 443 million school days each year because of dirty water and poor sanitation.

Toilet Twinning funds the work of international relief and development agency Tearfund. I am pleased to be able to report that we raised £120.00, enough to twin both our toilets! Your donation will be used to provide clean water, basic sanitation, and hygiene education. I have chosen a Latrine in Keeru, Muyanje, Kabale District, Uganda, Africa [30936] because there are Unitarians in Uganda and a Latrine in Tistung VDC, Makawanpur, Nepal, Asia, a country we have supported in the past, to be our twins. Pictures have been placed in our loos. Well done everybody! <https://www.toilettwinning.org/what-we-do>

A WINTER PRAYER

*written and used by Claire Wilton
for a Bright Lights service Christmas 2017*

We give thanks for the short days of winter.
The green boughs of fir trees which drip
towards the ground
And drop their precious cones which we
collect and bring inside.
The red berries and the glossy leaves of
holly;
The sappy smell of pine and yew which
freshen the air.

We give thanks for the dark days of winter.
For the opportunity to sit quietly and
think;
Light a fire, watch its flames and feel our
heartbeats slow.
For the rest from the dazzle of daylight
And the briefest, cherished respite from
the glare and the blare of the shops.

We give thanks for the precious days of
winter.
For the reason to make extra time for
family, neighbours and friends;
The gifts of warmth and laughter freely
shared.
For the joyous songs of the season
And the preparing of food and
nourishment to sustain us until the spring.

We give thanks for the short days of the
winter and for the earth's promise that the
sun will return. Amen.

GIFTS FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

Following the October's Committee Meeting's decision to supply parcels for refugee children for Christmas, Patricia Millar from Refugee Action York has been approached for advice. She suggests any of the following items:

- Small games and jigsaws
- Toiletries, including toothpaste
- Warm gloves, tights and woollen hats
- Chocolates

There will be a box for donated gifts in the Chapel *any Sunday from Sunday 25th November to Sunday December 16th when gifts will be wrapped and labelled.* If you gift-wrap your gift yourself, please indicate its contents and for what age of child/young person it is suitable. Thank you.
Barbara Barnes

2018 FUNDRAISER AT ST CRUX HALL

Our annual Chapel sale at St.Crux hall (top of St. Saviourgate) on Saturday 20 October raised £1,305.18 Special thanks go to those who provided goods to sell and especially to those who helped on the day: Marta Hardy, Simon Hardy, Dee Boyle, Joan Sinanin, Nicky Jenkins, Margaret Hill, Barbara Barnes, Betty Rumsby, Meike Dux-Harrup, Mike Tracey (Hull), Hilary Lumb, Hannah Fife, Adrienne Wilson, Nick Morrice, Jenny Jacobs, Elizabeth Faiers, Laura Cox, Brinley Price, Denise Reynolds, Erica Barnes, Josie Johnson, Margaret & Andrew Hill.

2019 St. Crux sale will be on Saturday 11 May.



THE JUDAS IN US ALL

A sermon by Revd. Nicky Jenkins
on Sunday 14 October 2018

THE YORK MYSTERY PLAYS

This year my husband and I, who are newish to York, had seats to see the Mystery Plays at Kings Manor up by the Art Gallery. I thoroughly enjoyed it all and the way the different scenes from the Old and New Testaments were portrayed but one scene really hit home for me personally.

It was the scene where Jesus is betrayed by Judas to the High Priests and to the Roman Governor.

The drama students from York St John's had done a very good job of this with somewhat stylised movements and dramatic montages. Judas was played as a tortured soul caught in an impossible bind; expecting the authorities to play fair. Wanting to do the right thing but torn by the sense that it wasn't the heart's right thing. It could have been any of us, I thought, as the actor stared deep into our eyes and hearts.

So often we find ourselves pulled in several directions. We know the law, we know we should have empathy for the downtrodden and we fear for ourselves and our lifestyles.

The older I have got, the less idealistic I have become. I know this is not universally the case. I am, however, much more likely to accept a compromise or a fudge than press angrily against all slights and wrong-speak. I favour the rational, the calm, the discursive approach. I am polite. I don't cause trouble.

JUDAS

Judas doesn't appear in any of the earliest Christian writings, *The Letters of Paul*. He first appears in *Mark's Gospel* which was finished around AD 70 where he is named as one of the disciples and, in our reading, as the betrayer of Jesus. More and more details are added in later *Gospels*, but Judas' motives are not at all clear. His name has, of course, become synonymous with the ultimate betrayer, someone who put money over his loyalty to his friend and leader. But, you will say, "I'm not like that. I stand by my friends."

Judas became a justification for antisemitism; his name equating with the word 'Jew' and his characteristics ascribed to an entire nation. The story of Judas, scholars believe, played a part in the early Christian church trying to establish itself as distinctly separate from the Jews.

And it has to be said, none of the disciples has an unblemished record in those last days. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asks the disciples to stay awake with him as he wrestles with his fate. Three times

they fall asleep and he asks them again but they fail. Peter (the founder of the church) denies even knowing Jesus three times before the cock crows.

REDEEMING JUDAS

But maybe Judas can be redeemed by looking at his motivation? Why would he betray his master?

- One pointer is that the word usually translated as 'betrayed' could also be translated as 'handed over'. At the Last Supper, Jesus says that one of the people there, dipping their bread into the shared bowl, would be the one to hand him over. Could it be that is Judas

the dutiful one who follows his master's prophecy? Could Judas be doing God's will by fulfilling the plan that Jesus' work could only be complete when he left the earthly plane and returned as the Messiah? Perhaps it was necessary in order for Jesus to die on the cross to save mankind. He wasn't acting from free will if Jesus had already foretold it. So he was not to blame for his actions.

- Or what about the "Che" Jesus? Perhaps Judas expected Jesus to overthrow the Roman invaders and free his country and when he failed to do so Judas took out his disappointment and shattered dreams on Jesus, handing him over to the authorities. He deserved it after all!

- Or maybe it was all arranged. Jesus would be handed over to the Chief priests and put to trial, giving him the opportunity to convince them he was The Messiah.



"Probably it was a complex human story. Most human beings have very mixed motives, and to see Judas only as a terrible person with very bad motives is probably a mistake,"

said Los Angeles Episcopal Bishop Frederick H. Borsch, a New Testament scholar.

JUDAS AS ARCHETYPE

So what of Judas as an archetype?

Betrayer

Perhaps he represents an aspect of us all. The Betrayer. The betrayer is one of our inner circle, someone we think is "one of us" and yet he or she can betray us to our enemies because they know stuff about us. Judas had to identify Jesus in a crowd to the authorities. He betrayed the trust of the group. But we wouldn't do that would we?

Logician

Maybe reason took over. Maybe Judas masked his fear with logic. Maybe he thought this was the best course of action.

Have you ever turned aside from a group, a person or a cause because it was all getting too much, too emotional? Perhaps you felt that you should go back to the way things should be done, to follow the rules and trust to the system?

- Perhaps you have begun to feel out of your depth.
- Perhaps you start to believe the naysayers.
- Perhaps you doubt your own motivation.
- Perhaps you are tired or too old or really not at all well. Increasingly we understand that our reasons for our choices are not the ones we rationalise. Our reasons are much more visceral, not logical, caused by our limbic system. When it comes down to it what will you protect and save?

Will it be your ideals or will it be your family?

Will it be your theories of compassion for others or your need to preserve yourself?

I don't say these things to make you feel guilty, although they might. I say these things to point to our common humanity. We need to have humility. What's that old hymn? "Are we are weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?" (What a friend we have in Jesus)

Traitor

The story of the Traitor is also a moralistic reminder to all of us, that we should be leading a life based on trust, open-ness and loyalty.

But remember that the traitor was 'one of us'.

The Judas story also teaches us to be wary. The enemy *within* is far more dangerous than the external demon or monster we at least know we're at war with. The traitor is an archetypal metaphor for the inner struggle between good and evil.

In order for us to have hope that we might win this battle, the traitor, the Judas, must receive his due desserts. Judas reaches increasingly foul ends in variations of the story. Let us just say he hangs himself. Presumably he cannot live with his guilt. Or maybe he just began to doubt he had done the right thing for the right motives. He was, say some versions, possessed by Satan and was evil.

LIFE IS SHADES OF GREY

But I am increasingly wary of the black and white thinking of good and bad. The dualistic view of life does not give us much room for manoeuvre. Life is more shades of grey than black and white. We try to do the best and for the best motives but we are not perfect. We never can be perfect.

Judas suffered from the eternal damnation of believing he had made the wrong decision and, in doing so, condemned the man who was different to death. Many of us suffer under lesser, but still excruciatingly painful, regret. No one forgave Judas. He could not forgive himself.

And yet from the cross, the betrayed one said

"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"

Is it not true that we did the best we could with what we had? Even if we detect a baser motive for our actions, can we not redeem ourselves by learning and changing and becoming more aware of what it is that really drives us?

And if we can extend our forgiveness to ourselves, can we not extend it to others?

A SHARED DIVINITY AS WELL AS

A SHARED HUMANITY

Really talking to each other seems to be the oil that is necessary to help this process. If we can own our own humanity and imperfection, we allow others to own theirs and to come to a greater understanding of our shared divinity as well as our shared humanity.

Let no ungenerous thought be in our minds today, no intent that is hurtful to another, no purpose that has harm in it. Touch us, O God, with the sweet simplicity of Christmas joy and may its gentleness and loving kindness fill our hearts.
A. Powell Davies

YES – BELOW ZERO

Dee Boyle writes Volunteers are still needed for the YES – Below Zero project. YES stands for York Emergency Shelter running between 1 November and the end of February/ March when the temperature drops below zero. It is to create a safe place for 5 of the homeless people within York to sleep during the coldest nights of the year. Those coming in will have been allocated as to be suitable for the flat by professionals at the Peasholme Centre or via City of York Council homeless officer. The project is being undertaken by Churches Together and voluntary organisations who are working together to help.

Although the two main training sessions have been held it is not too late for anyone else who would like to be one of the volunteers helping at the newly allocated flat in Howe Hill, Acomb for the project to use.

Help is needed from 6p.m. to 12p.m. in the evenings and from 7a.m. to 9a.m. in the mornings. Help is also needed even if you can't be one of the volunteers as they need people to cook meals for those staying in the flat.

They could also do with additional bedding, (sheets, pillow cases, duvet covers) and towels. More information is available by contacting Charles who is coordinating it all. His email address is charles@christthelight.org.uk

GIFT AID, COFFEE MORNINGS & SALES

A press release from HM Treasury highlights steps that charities should take to ensure that fundraising at coffee mornings and bake sales can be eligible for Gift Aid. Gift Aid can be claimed on charitable donations from taxpayers, but not when the money is in exchange for goods. Many charity sales could be missing the opportunity to claim Gift Aid because they charge directly for the items they are selling.

On the day of Macmillan's Coffee Morning, which last year raised over £27 million to help support people living with cancer, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick, said that he was clarifying the Gift Aid rules for anyone running a coffee morning: "If you ask people to make a donation and offer them a coffee or cake, you could be making 25 per cent more on the funds you raise." For information from the Churches Legislative Advisory Service (CLAS) [Source: HM Treasury – 1 October] [UNI-NEWS 201 24 October 2018]

FUSE

(Festival of Unitarians in the South East)

15th - 17th February 2019

Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing

Registration for the FUSE Festival is now open: a weekend of fun and fulfilment by the seaside.

Guest speaker Jennifer Kavanagh.

For more information and video about workshops and other activities, visit www.fusefest.org.uk

SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP

Nick Morrice writes: I have met a few people locally who follow the same path as me i.e. Self-Realisation Fellowship, and we have started a meditation group fortnightly on Mondays which had its first session in the upper room of the chapel, from 5:00p.m to 6:00p.m. Like the Thursday meditation group, we make a collection at the end towards the coffee/charity collection. You are more than welcome to join us if you wish. Subsequent meetings will be on 26th November, then 10th and 24th December.

Nick Morrice

Self-Realisation Fellowship is a worldwide organisation carrying on the spiritual and humanitarian work of Paramahansa Yogananda, the father of Yoga in the West. He founded SRF in 1920 to make available the teachings of Kriya Yoga, a sacred spiritual science originating millenniums ago in India. These nonsectarian teachings embody a complete philosophy and way of life for achieving all-round success and well-being, as well as methods of meditation for achieving life's ultimate goal — union of the soul with Spirit (God). If you are new to SRF, we suggest reading Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

SOLSTICE WALK

Claire Lee and Rowena Lovett are arranging a lantern lit walk around Moorland nature reserve with whoever would like to join them. They will meet there at 3pm on Friday 21 December with lanterns, torches and flasks of hot soup!

May all of you
have the gladness of Christmas
which is Hope,
the spirit of Christmas
which is Peace
and the heart of Christmas
which is Love.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

*another prayer written and used by Claire Wilton
for a Bright Lights service Christmas 2017*

At this time of darkness we remember those who are burdened. Those whose thoughts and feelings weigh heavily; and our own friends and family members who we know will have a tough time this season.

Let there be light in the darkness.

We remember those who feel alone while all around them have company. We also think of those who find it hard to be surrounded by the noise, colour and commotion of Christmas.

Let there be light in the darkness.

We think of those who do not have a warm place to spend the cold days; who scuttle around the city looking not for Christmas gifts but for somewhere to sleep.

Let there be light in the darkness.

We remember those who are no longer with us. The people we will miss at the most unexpected moments. The friends – both human and animal – who we wish could still be here. Let us smile inside as we remember them.

Let there be light in the darkness.

There are those of us who do not celebrate the birth of a Christian king; we may have other faiths; we may have no faith; we may have strong beliefs of our own but find ourselves wondering what all this fuss has to do with the idea of God. So for all of us, whatever our beliefs...

Let there be light in the darkness.

And let's allow the Christmas tree to be a symbol of light and hope, bringing a sparkle of joy to this darkest season. Amen.

ABOUT PEOPLE

Congratulations to *Claire Lee* for raising £1080 for cancer research with her recent 'brave the shave'. She says a big 'thank you' to everyone who contributed.

**Therefore, Christian folk be sure,
wealth or rank possessing,
ye who now will bless the poor
shall yourselves find blessing.**

from a versified Czech legend

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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Barbara Barnes, Dee Boyle, Sue Catts,
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Claire Lee, David Zucker and the Officers

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel Charity
(registered charity:230167)
Trustees: Elizabeth Faiers, Alfred Fletcher
(treasurer), Simon Hardy, Jen Atkinson,
Andrew Hill (chair), Sue Catts
and Claire Wilton.

Colton's Hospital
(registered charity: 221281)
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