



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8
December 2019

FROM THE MINISTER

December is, of course, Christmas month. I wonder if you, like me, are becoming increasingly conflicted about how to celebrate and why we are celebrating. It has become clear to me that we cannot just go on acquiring stuff, using resources and creating waste. Maybe it's the age I am. I have a house full of stuff. My children have moved out but aren't settled and I have no grandchildren.

I see that more and more people are giving each other presents which are donations to charity on their behalf but for me that seems to miss the point of presents. Christmas and presents are about having that little extra luxury in clothing or food perhaps that you can't normally afford. Nowadays most of us can afford what would have been luxuries all year round. We are sated, over-filled, cluttered. People see time and space as luxuries. A yoga retreat or a phone-free time together as a family are tempting; much more so than a very expensive fizzy wine.

A big midwinter feast is a feature of many societies and religions. Indeed, they now think that Stonehenge may have been a gatheringpoint for such feasts. A chance to meet

up, drink too much mead and find a mate perhaps? It is also the time of year when we are in plenty as the pigs have been slaughtered, the preserves made and the harvest is stored up for the lean times ahead. So it made sense to have a bit of a party with too much food which could be shared before it went off. This sharing cemented alliances and hospitality is a necessity in a land where people travel unprotected and without reserves. You may need it yourself one day.

Why do we continue to give presents? As a mark of friendship or love or as a duty? She gave me one, so I have to give her one? It is lovely when you receive a present that has been specially made for you or just fits your personality so well. It seems to boost our self-esteem a bit. We say to ourselves, "I am liked enough to be given a present". And it is the thought that counts. Even if the jumper doesn't fit or the smelly thing makes you cough. People are saying, "I love you" and you are saying it back.

Let's all have a conscious Christmas this year and share what really counts. Our time and our concern. And maybe give the money you saved to a charity. January is a lean month for them.

Nicky Jenkins

I
Joy
Frieden
Shalom
Buin Natale
Joyeux Noel
Glaedelig Jul
Feliz Navidad
Nollaig Chridheil
Merry Christmas
Frohe Weihnachten
Beannacht Kerstdagen
Propsero Ano Nuevo
Glucklisches Neues Jahr
Happy New Year
Peace

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

Sunday 1 December
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Light and darkness
Presentation to My Sight York
Music by Nick Morrice

Sunday 8 December
Claire Wilton
Bright Lights Intergenerational Worship
Christmas Tree Dressing
Sparklers children's programme
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 15 December
Andrew Hill
The 5 births of liberal religion
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 22 December
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Carol service
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 29 December
Serendipity for the Years' End
Music by Nick Morrice

- Monday 16 December 6.00p.m. *Carol Singing* (Colton's Hospital Almshouses, Shipton Street)
- Monday 16 December 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 19 December 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room))
- Wednesday 25 December [Christmas Day]

GENERAL ELECTION 12 DECEMBER

The Chapel will be in use all day on Thursday 12 December as a General Election polling station. The Thursday morning meditation group will not meet at the Chapel.

**Sunday 29 December
SERENDIPITY FOR THE YEAR'S END
'The faculty of making lucky
discoveries'**

The service on Sunday 29 December will be a Serendipity service in the round in the chancel area of the Chapel.

*Let us gather the old year into quiet minds.
Let us for a while not think to the year
ahead.
Let us wait for a few moments within this
motionless while.*

Please bring along readings, objects, memories, concerns and other 'lucky discoveries' (2-3 minutes each) suitable for the interval between Christmas and the New Year's beginning.

OTHER EVENTS IN DECEMBER

- Sunday 1 December 3.00p.m. - 8.00p.m. *Val Pearson's Pupils concert* (Chapel)
- Monday 2 December 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Tuesday 3 December 7.30p.m. *York Interfaith Association: High points of my faith year in music and art* (Hudson Room, Council Offices)
- Thursday 5 December 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Monday 9 December 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 12 December 7.00a.m. - 10.00p.m. *Chapel in use as a UK General Election Polling Station* (Chapel)
- Friday 13 December 7.30p.m. *York Opera carol concert* (Chapel)

A CHRISTMAS CRIB



**by Chapel member Jenny Jacobs
Christmas 2018**

FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met on Sunday 17 November with apologies from David Zucker, Laura Cox, Dee Boyle and Jenny Jacobs. Nick Morrice took the chair.
- York Unitarians CIO - the CIO bank accounts are now in order; the inventories of Chapel property have been completed and our solicitor, Roderick Ramage, has been asked to proceed with the necessary vesting documents and other arrangements. The Chapel Charity transfer has still to be arranged.
- York Residents' Festival will be Saturday and Sunday 25 and 26 January. Andrew Hill will mount an exhibition about the Chapel 'then and now'.
- The minister will arrange a meeting with the pastoral care group ahead of her retirement in January. Plans are in hand for a special lunch on her final Sunday 12 January.
- The treasurer reported that both CIO bank accounts with CafCash were now functioning. Gift Aid issues had been sorted out. There was discussion about the difficulties in operating bank accounts at a distance rather than at a walk-in branch. Last Friday concerts during 2019 had produced an income of £1537.
- Chapel members and friends had raised over £1,000 for My Sight York. A cheque will be presented on Sunday 1 December.
- A successor to Janet Eldred producing the outside notice board list of service leaders and topics is required. Thanks to Janet for doing this for many years.
- There will again be three retiring Sunday collections during December for SACH Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow at the Nightingale (Unitarian) Centre in Derbyshire.
- A decision was made that our 2020 St. Crux sale day will be Friday 21st August.
- 5 new members had been welcomed at services during October - Keith Brown, John Brogden, Richard Brown, Susan Elliot and John Issett.
- The secretary reminded committee members that she would be retiring as secretary at the 2020 annual meeting in the spring.
- The next Chapel committee meeting will be on Sunday 19 January.

NICKY'S RETIREMENT LUNCH

Our minister Nicky Jenkins will take her final service at St Saviourgate on Sunday 12th January, 2020. This will be followed by a lunch and short musical entertainment in the chapel.

Soft drinks, wine and nibbles will precede the meal, giving time to set up tables etc....help welcome.

The planning group (plus a few others) will provide a choice of hot meals, including a dish for vegetarians, which will be served by helpers. There will be self-service accompaniments such as crusty bread, roast vegetables, red cabbage and salads.

We hope that all puddings and cakes will be provided by volunteers from the congregation! Please let Margaret or Barbara know details of a pudding or cake you would like to bring so we have a variety on offer.

Guests have been invited from outside York and there is no obligation to bring food. But we do need to know final numbers so please let us know *by 8th December at the latest* if you are coming on the day. Thank you.

Barbara Barnes

2020 UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 7th - Thursday 9th April Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel (close to Birmingham International Rail Station)

- 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.

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. Registration will open in January 2020. A decision on delegates will be made at the committee meeting in January.

Margaret Hill, Secretary. mhill.york@gmail.com

**I am an atheist
(or at best a Unitarian who winds up in churches quite a lot)
Kurt Vonnegut**

CAROL SINGING



Enjoy carol singing?
The more the merrier!

Wednesday 16 December 6.00p.m.
Colton's Hospital almshouses
(Shipton Street, off Burton Stone Lane
behind St.Luke's church)

We will sing 8 carols all with their very traditional words and maybe even sing 'While shepherds watched' twice to different tunes!

Colton's Hospital almshouses for 12 older women were established under the will of Thomas Colton our minister from 1692-1731 and his wife Mary. Formerly in Rougier Street they were relocated in 1911. Most of the trustees are Chapel members.

WE ARE UNITARIANS BECAUSE

1. our own reason and conscience are the foundations of our religion;
2. our religion is the foundation of our life;
3. we need the support and companionship of people following the same way;
4. we need the embodiment of our kind of religion in church, and worship and ministerial leadership;
5. we need a climate of tolerance for our faith;
6. we must have unlimited freedom to follow where reason and conscience lead us;
7. we cannot separate our beliefs from our actions;
8. and finally, we are Unitarians because the world as a whole needs the principles we need for our faith.

The Unitarian way in religion and life is not for everyone; we do not send out missionaries to convert all men [and women] to our way; but in every generation there are some who need this way; as knowledge grows there are probably more and more who need this way; and for those who find it, and follow it faithfully, it may be hard sometimes, but is never confining, and ultimately, we know it to be rewarding beyond price.

Bruce Findlow

SEND A CHILD TO HUCKLOW



In December the Chapel traditionally supports this Unitarian charity, which enables children who would otherwise not have a holiday 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 - 8, 15 and 22 December there will be retiring collections for SACH [Send a Child to Hucklow]. Cheques can be gift aided and 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.



BELONGING

The sermon by Nicky Jenkins
on Sunday 13th October 2019

MEMBERSHIP SUNDAY

Last week we had our lovely warm and welcoming Membership Service [Sunday 6 October]. Our new Members applied to be members because they felt they belonged here, perhaps. And we accepted them as Members because we felt the same. I sometimes speak of our duty to be here for those who are wandering in the wilderness looking for a spiritual home! So we hope that our new members feel at home: that they belong here.

'THE OTHERS'

But then I start to worry. If we belong in this tribe are there those who don't? Those who don't belong. From early times people banded together for defence from wild animals, for company, to work together to find food. Even as hunter gatherers we formed groups, but there was a limit to the size of the group because of the need to travel and hunt and forage. When we settled down to farm we could store food and have larger groups. But there were always people who weren't us. People who did not belong, people who were a threat to our livelihoods.

- They might steal the food stores or animals.
- They might infect our children and old people.
- They might be disruptive, mad, badly behaved, not obeying the rules.

We ostracised these people, defended our stuff from them. We made them "*the others*".

SCAPEGOATING

And what is it we are doing today after centuries of "development"? We are breaking down into smaller and smaller groups of those who belong and those who don't. And they seem to need an "other" in order to do so. It's such a basic approach of fascists to scapegoat others. To heap blame on those who seem a little different.

- They are the cause of all your misery,
- They are stealing everything that belongs to you,
- They are polluting your clean lines of belonging.

Give them an inch and they will take a mile. All this stuff should belong to us. We don't have enough to share. We were doing fine until they came along. So I'm suspicious about belonging.

LET'S BECOME MORE GREY AND MUDDY

By belonging are we setting ourselves up to become yet another exclusive little group? It's so nice to find somewhere where you feel you fit in, you belong. It's a relief, a comfort. You can settle down and be safe.

And it's because of the way it was when you chose to belong that you feel this way. What about those new people who have come in? They seemed OK but now they want to change the very things you liked and that made you feel safe and as if you belonged somewhere.

- You don't like it.
- You are sad and threatened with the loss of the place you have called home, the place that is so important to you: the place you belong!

Beware of judging people on externals. Our brains like to use short cuts. It's easier for them. But we need to be careful that we don't use our belonging to discount others as *not belonging*.

A WAY TO INCLUDE

We need to look for a way to include, not separate. When you come across someone who voted differently on Brexit to you, listen to them. Don't immediately start to argue your point. Maybe their heart is in the right place. Certainly their experiences are different to yours. Let's look to expand our belonging. Let's become more grey and muddy, less black and white.

Being part of a group is lovely, especially if you feel you have come home, but be careful not to exclude those you feel belong elsewhere.

You are only free when you realize you belong no place – you belong every place – no place at all. The price is high. The reward is great. *Maya Angelou*

BELONGING IN GOD

This need to belong is a very basic instinct. In prehistory you did not survive if you were alone. Much of the Old Testament is:

- about belonging to God,
- [about] being part of the chosen people,

- about the punishments and trials you would undergo if you set off to do your own thing.

To identify as part of the tribe you had to follow the rules which set you apart from the Gentiles.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Jesus appeared to challenge the rules and regulations. He was more interested in the spirit of the law. Having said that, he went out of his way to emphasise the need to comply with the Empire's rules. But his cunning instructions told his followers to go further than was required by the law. This made the Roman colonialists the ones who did not comply with the law.

The incarnation in Jesus, flipped the story of belonging. We humans no longer belonged to God but

- God belonged to us.
- God was in us, in each in equal measure.
- God was in the Gentile and the Jew.
- God was in the Greek.
- God is in us all.

Therefore we all belong.

BELONGING IN GOD

The Enlightenment journey brought us to a very individualistic place where we each searched for our own truth. This may have led us to obsessively focus on our own personal belonging. However I would say that if we can pursue a spiritual path leading to a sense of our own selves as worthwhile, loving human beings, beloved by God, then we will have that ultimate sense of belonging, of belonging in God. Then we will be able to resist that fear which drives us to protect our tribe at the expense of someone else's. Then we will all belong.

BETTER BELONGING STORIES

We can all help extend who 'belongs' in the stories we tell; the stories of shared values, of shared resources, of people we knew who worked, demonstrated, lobbied, wrote letters to spread the boundaries of 'us'. We can tell our stories of our ancestors leaving one country and going to live in another. We can sing a new song. We can adapt and create new ways of belonging. And let's have patience with those who are so threatened by all the changes in

society, women getting the vote, gay people getting married, petrol and plastic turning out to be bad things, that they dig their heels in and want to go back to their safe time when they knew what was what. Let's be gentle with them. Because we don't want to shut people out. We want to welcome and benefit from diversity, culture, food, stories and fresh new ideas. Then we can create even better stories about belonging.

FROM NOVEMBER'S UNI-NEWS from Unitarian HQ, Essex Hall, London

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

- Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE) (Worthing) - 21-23 February 2020
- Renewal and Rebellion: Faith, Economy and Climate (Derby) - 7 March 2020
- Unitarian General Assembly Annual Meetings (Birmingham) - 7-9 April 2020

MONTON UNITARIAN CHURCH

Monton Unitarian Church at Eccles, Salford - a large 'parish church' looking building with a lively congregation is involved with major building upgrading costing £120,000. The congregation is paying most of this £90,000 themselves but would appreciate help towards the difference.

RECENT UNITARIAN PRESS MENTIONS

Recent Unitarian press mentions have included:

- a new exhibition about Quarry Bank Mill and the Unitarian Greg family;
- about the Warrington Academy building [for-runner of Manchester College, York] becoming flats;
- campaigns to conserve our Whitby and Sidmouth chapels;
- about Tibetan monks creating a peace mandala at Shrewsbury Unitarian Church and
- about same-sex marriages at All Souls Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Belfast following recent Northern Irish legislation.

EXTINCTION REBELLION

Individual members of 17 British Unitarian congregations (including York) are known to have been involved in some way or other with recent Extinction Rebellion activities. There is an *XR Unitarians* Facebook group.

CAROL OF THE HEART

a contemporary Unitarian carol based on the traditional birth stories of Gotama, the Buddha, Confucius [Kung-fu-tze] of 'The Analects' and Jesus of Nazareth

Shudd-ho-dana the King
and Queen Maya his wife,
they set out on a journey,
the journey of life;
and they came to a grove,
where the virgin queen bore
Gotama the Buddha,
whose heart's evermore.

*I am part of the whole,
of the whole I'm a part
so with friends
and with neighbours
I'll lift up my heart.*

Great Tall Kung and his wife
had eight girls, but no son
so that when one was born,
something new was begun.
Kung-fu-tze, the great heart,
he was born on that night,
'Analects' he would make,
and the people do right.

*I am part of the whole,
of the whole I'm a part
so with friends
and with neighbours
I'll lift up my heart.*

Now when Joseph and Mary
to Bethlehem came
and sweet Jesus, their dear heart,
was born to great fame,
three kings and four shepherds
came by specially
and dear Mary she pondered
her heart motherly.

*I am part of the whole,
of the whole I'm a part
so with friends
and with neighbours
I'll lift up my heart.*

ABOUT PEOPLE

Our sympathies are with our Chapel chairperson, *David Zucker* and his family, following the recent death of his father-in-law.

Richard Thompson is well and back in circulation.

Elizabeth Faiers attended the Unifest family weekend at Great Hucklow along with daughter *Kathy* and grandchildren *Struan* and *Callie*.

THE YORKSHIRE UNITARIAN UNION

- The Yorkshire Unitarian Union's AGM was held at Hull Unitarian Church on 26 October. Jen Atkinson, the retiring YUU President was present from Edinburgh.

- During the year 2018-2019 two ministers: had retired: Margaret Kirk from Whitby and Ralph Catts from Hull. John Carter is the new minister at Hull and Stephanie Bisby is the student pastor at Bradford.

- Grants of £50 each had been made to members of Yorkshire churches attending Summer School at Great Hucklow, worship studies courses and the Unitarian General Assembly annual meetings. The budget for the year 2019-2020 was discussed. Churches were reminded that grants are available for building surveys and towards ministers' stipends.

- The printed annual report will be circulated when it becomes available.

- Christine Dawson of Bradford is the new YUU president. There are 3 vacancies on the YUU committee. The President announced that communication between the Executive Committee and member churches would be discussed at its next meeting.

- Two designs for a YUU banner were discussed- one by Ralph Catts and the other. by Margaret Hill. Margaret's design was approved with the suggestion of a flaming chalice in the middle of the white Yorkshire rose.

- The YUU spring gathering will be at Bradford on 7 March when the Unitarian General Assembly youth officer Gavin Howell will be in attendance. The summer gathering will be at Scarborough 20 June and the YUU AGM will be at York 24 October. Programme suggestions for future meetings would be welcome.

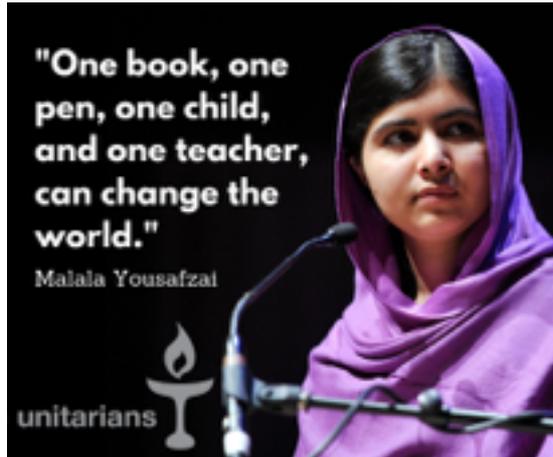
- The appointment of an administrator is working well; EC meetings have been reduced to 3 each year; Hull has a 'Unitarians celebrate diversity banner' available for borrowing and Whitby another.

- Future meetings will have less business but more socialising and guest speakers. Visits between churches were encouraged.

- Concern was expressed regarding the chapel and congregation at Lydgate.

The Yorkshire Unitarian annual meeting was followed by a power point presentation by Rory Castle Jones, the Unitarian General Assembly's publicity officer.

I AM MALALA



by Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb
a review by Barbara Barnes

This book in our Chapel library is not only about the shooting and recovery of schoolgirl champion Malala but of her earlier life in her beloved Swat valley in Pakistan. Her story brings to life her Pashtun family's daily routines, hospitality towards and from relatives, her love of learning and competitive spirit to come top in exams - and her close bond with her father. He ran schools including for girls at a time when it was dangerous to do so due to the presence of the Taliban. I could feel on reading the almost constant anxiety amongst local people, living under threats and reprisals, and also the amazing courage, perhaps foolhardiness of Malala's father as he spoke out in favour of girls' education and encouraged his daughter to do likewise. The book describes a country full of suffering and courage, of incompetence especially at government level, of a longing for peace. What I found especially shocking was the level of additional suffering as a result of natural disasters. The earthquake of 2005 claimed around 73,000 victims, including 18,000 children: in the floods of 2010, around 2,000 drowned. In Malala's Swat valley 34 of the 47 bridges collapsed. Yet Malala's family, semi-incarcerated in comfort in Birmingham miss their beloved valley and way of life to which they cannot return. It is a humbling read.

'A divine right to dictate a perfectly unreasonable faith cannot exist.'

James Martineau (Unitarian theologian)

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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Officers

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