



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

December 2020

FROM THE EDITOR

'A cold coming we had of it, just the worst time of the year' say Eliot's Magi:

- the worst time of viral pandemic and nuclear threat;
- the worst time of scorched earth and melting glaciers;
- the worst time of polluting fumes and vanishing forests.

Just the worst time, like at the first Christmas:

- when there was no room at the inn;
- when cold shepherds struggled to keep warm beside their night fire; and
- when a tyrant king launched genocide upon a whole generation.

And yet, hope was not completely dashed - at least one child survived and probably, beyond the myth, a great many more just as in our present 'worst time' shafts of hope and light and vaccines are penetrating the soaring black clouds of human mortality.

Also - in our present worst of times and as a very special Christmas gift - our chapel is soon to welcome its own very special 'shaft of light'

when in the New Year, we will be welcoming Stephanie Bisby as our new minister.

Stephanie lives in Doncaster and several years ago participated in a York congregation worship studies course. Now she is the new Unitarian College's first graduate. For the time being she will be obliged by public health circumstances to explore her ministry by telephone, e-mail and

zoom rather than by traditional face to face in person physical encounters. The 'hand shakes' and the 'hugs' will have to wait until safer times. In this sense, Stephanie's will be a pioneering ministry.

Post-pandemic, one of the legacies of this situation will surely be that the 'virtual' world of computers, internet and zoom - which have shown us an alternate and additional way of being 'church' - will take its place alongside face to face and physically present ways of being 'church'. So may it be.

Meanwhile our worship on the Sunday before Christmas will, of necessity, be 'virtual' and which would seem to provide an appropriate occasion to enable our remarkable group of Chapel poets to flourish. Their written poems and carols appear in this edition of *The York Unitarian* magazine and hopefully the authors will be reading them for us in our 'zoomed' pre-Christmas worship.

Andrew M. Hill



A MONTH OF SUNDAYS
at 10.30a.m.
on Zoom

Sunday 6 December
Elizabeth Faiers
Who or what to care for?
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 13 December
Claire Wilton
Dressing the tree
Music by Helen Drewery

Sunday 20 December
Andrew Hill
A Christmas Celebration
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 27 December
Serendipity for the year's end
Music by Myrna Michell

SERENDIPITY

'the faculty of making lucky discoveries'

Sunday 27 December

Please bring along readings, poems, passages, objects to briefly talk about - all appropriate to the time between Christmas and the New Year.

- Maybe - zoomed - this is an appropriate year for 'objects' to tell us about since you won't have to carry them to Chapel;
- or maybe we can enjoy each other's Christmas trees -
- or maybe -the possibilities are endless ...

ZOOOOMUSIC!

Our pianists are back! York Unitarians have got the live music option again on Sundays. You may remember how hard going our sound was at the start! Persistence and exploration of zoom has paid off.

Every contributing musician is in a different context and the results vary, so we needed to collaborate. Some have a strong wifi signal, and some do not but we still end up tripping over cables. Some of us play a piano while others have a keyboard. An acoustic instrument requires a particular zoom audio setting, as the instrument gives out sound from itself but a keyboard usually has just two exit-points for sound, needing different solutions. When Zoom upgrades its musical sound quality, another round of information passes around the musicians!

Tips we offer each other have included use of external mic rather than laptop mic; to buy an ethernet cable and feed the signal straight from the hub/router to the laptop; on a keyboard, ideally you buy a 'jack to jack' cable between keyboard and device. Sound feeds straight through – but can still be affected by zoom/wifi strength. Then you can sing as you play and no-one will hear. Your dog can bark and annoy the neighbours – and yourself - but zoomers won't hear it. But if you are a music-teacher using zoom, your pupils can't hear you speak until you unplug the jacks. Sigh...

Shall I start talking about how choirs are adapting to zoom? I'd better not start – it's a whole new world. But that takes me to *UNI-SING!* Unitarians from around the country have gelled into a warm-hearted community to sing hymns and songs every Saturday. In the New Year, we are planning to 'enlarge our stall', so look out for information about weekday evening musical workshops. *Myrna Michell*

OUR NEW MINISTER



The Chapel Committee is pleased to announce that the Revd. Stephanie Bisby has been appointed as half-time Minister to York Unitarians, and that she will commence her ministry with us on 1st January 2021.

FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met by zoom after service on Sunday 16 November. Claire Wilton joined for the first item of business regarding the ministerial appointment.
- Thanks were expressed to the members of the Future Ministry Sub-Committee for the successful completion of their work. *Revd. Stephanie Bisby* has been invited and has accepted the congregation's invitation to become its part-time minister from 1 January 2021.
- A ministerial support group was proposed and volunteers will be recruited.
- Ex gratia payments have been made to our regular chapel musicians who, in recent weeks, have been 'furloughed'.
- There was a progress report regarding 'zooming' or similar transmission of acts of worship and other events from the chapel. 3 different providers have produced at least 3 different schemes. For financial comparison, inquiries would be made regarding alternate ways of transmission. There has been an anonymous donation of £3000 towards this project.
- It was agreed to pursue inquiries regarding professional help to assist the treasurer with financial book keeping, PAYE etc.
- The Pastoral Care Team will be provided with a budget of £200 to cover the costs of greetings cards, flowers etc as appropriate.
- Claire Lee was thanked for her work over recent years as membership secretary and Laura Cox as 'pulpit secretary'. Andrew Hill will act as 'pulpit secretary' for the time being until a new appointment is made.
- Margaret Hill will recover sets of Chapel keys from those who no longer need them.
- Nick Morrice will programme an appropriate level of chapel heating for the present circumstances.
- Our 'St. Crux' sale day for 2021 will be Saturday 16 October .

YORKSHIRE UNITARIAN UNION

- The Yorkshire Unitarian Union held its 2020 AGM by Zoom on 24th October with representatives from Bradford, Hull, Mill Hill Leeds, Scarborough, Whitby and York.
- In 2019-2020 The EC had sent an extra donation to The Nightingale Centre instead of one to Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow.

- There were no reports from Leeds, Lydgate or Pepper Hill. Lydgate are not meeting for worship but have been attending to maintenance work. Pepper Hill has re-opened after lockdown.
- The President, Christine Dawson, has one more year to serve. Laura Cox was elected for a 2 year term and Myrna Michel for a 1 year term on the YUU Executive Committee.
- The YUU Spring gathering will be at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds in March 2021; and the Summer gathering at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in June 2021.
- York Chapel was granted £500 towards the installation of wi-fi; £250 each was granted to *The Nightingale Centre* and to the *Send a child to Hucklow Fund*; £300 each to *The Unitarian Students Fund* and *The Unitarian College* and £200 to *The Inquirer*.
- Margaret Kirk reported on the *Whitby Chapel 'Innovation Hub'* project for which a CIO has been set up. *Margaret Hill* was thanked for producing the new YUU banner.

UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY EC seeks new members

Applications open on 15 December. The EC works with the Chief Officer and staff team to lead and serve the Unitarian movement.

Research shows that diverse boards are more effective, and we particularly welcome candidates in their 20s, 30s and 40s LGBTQ folk, People of colour and with disabilities.

This year has shown that video conferencing is an effective addition to in-person meetings. We anticipate that the EC members meet for 90-120 minute Zoom meetings every 4-6 weeks, with two 2 day in-person meetings in the year.

Candidates should have been Unitarians for at least 3 years and been a member of either their congregation's governing body, or a trustee of another charity.

Applications by 26th January 2021, with support from the candidate's congregation or another Unitarian organisation.

[Call For Nominations](#)

[Guidance \(Document A\)](#)

[Declaration \(Document B\)](#)

[Nomination Form \(Document C\)](#)

Questions please do get in touch with either [me](#) or [Marion Baker](#), our Convenor.

Elizabeth Slade Chief Officer

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OUR CHAPEL POETS CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

AND SO THIS CHRISTMAS

And so this is Christmas
God rest ye merry Gentlemen
And Gentlewomen
Who've not made it this far

And so this is Christmas
The holly and the ivy
The only guests
Round our table

And so this is Christmas
Away in a manger
No ICU bed
To be had

And so this is Christmas
Three French hens
Enjoy them while you can
Brexit kicks in in 6 days' time

And so this is Christmas
Through the rude wind's wild lament
At least we have each other
At this service on Zoom

Anneliese Emmans Dean, October 2020

DING DONG MERRILY

Ding dong merrily on high
The Minster bells are ringing
Ding dong verily we sigh
For us there is no singing?
Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no
How can we keep on singing?

Pray you dutifully prime
Via zoom now all ye singers
May you beautifully rhyme
Your songs now all you bringers
Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no
We must now keep on singing!

So here's another thought
how our songs can be sungen
We can sing at home
or through our masks we'll humen.
Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes
We can now keep on singing

We now sing again at home
alone and in our room
We can sing from our hearts
and see others sing via zoom
Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes,
We know how to keep singing!
(Repeat last two lines)

Dee Boyle

I WANDERED DOWN A SNICKLEWAY

on a dark December Day
And heard St Peter's bells rise through
the skies of misty grey
The people smile and walk around
the city which is crowned
With golden lights and silver stars
in shops and bars they've found
*With a hey ding ding and a ho ding ding
And a ding-a-ding ding ding dong*

And just below the ancient walls
our traders raise their halls
In Parliament Square at St Nick'las Fair
they decorate their stalls
God rest ye merry gentlemen,
the Sally Anns they play
With cymbals clash and tuneful brass
to cheer us on our way
With a hey ding ding . . . etc.

Down Stonebow Minster Gates ahead
the freezing wind has chilled
The Opera choir in weather dire,
their hearts with carols filled
Through the dark West Door and
the peaceful core
of the mighty building's heart
The candles burn and they shine their light
in this happy Advent night
With a hey ding ding . . . etc.

Angelic voices raise their sound
where life and love abide
We gather cares and joys to share
on York's own Christmastide
With a hey ding ding etc.

Joan Sinanin

WHEN THE CHRISTMAS STAR IS SHINING

In the night sky overhead
And the city streets are silent
And the children safe in bed,
You may not see Santa passing
With his reindeer and his sleigh,
But a horde of willing helpers
Still prepare for Christmas day.

We are each a tiny fragment
Of the boundless world around,
Yet with voices raised in chorus
We can match an angel's sound.
All our humble gifts and gestures
Pave a path this Christmas day
To a world of loving kindness,
And the starlight guides

Stephanie Bisby

DECK THE HALL WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY

Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
'Tis the season to be jolly
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Don't you think that we deserve it
after all we've just been through
We should have some time of cheer now
to ourselves we must be true.

Deck your home with decorations
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Linked into our country's nations
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Tartan ribbon, scarlet dragons
Emerald shamrock and roses too
Add some lights, a bit of sparkle
Seasonal bits to warm us through.

Deck your doors with festive greeting
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Pass them on to all you're meeting
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Send them cheer and all good wishes
Send your thoughts to all nearby
Pass on cheer to all your neighbours
Since we can't meet eye to eye.

Deck your windows with some light
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Make your home a festive sight
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Through the dark times in this winter
Let us please send cheer to all
Sing we now of days much lighter
Pass your blessings on to all.

Dee Boyle October 2020

IN A TIME OF DARKNESS

sickness and of blight;
'mid so much that's harmful
seeps a glint of light.
*Hope was born at Bethlehem when the
Christ was born.
Hope is born each new day
with an awak'ning dawn.*

In a world of conflict
bitterness and war;
creeps in resolution
compromise and law.

In a place of sickness
sorrow, pain and grief;
comes the birthing season
new life and belief.

Andrew M.Hill

THE TURNING OF THE MAGNATES

with apologies to T. S. Eliot

A cold Cummings we had of it . . .
Just a worst time of the year
For a second surge, and such a long pandemic,
The government fumbling, unwilling to be
stringent
In case the Rich squealed when their thumbs
were pricked,
And wearing the white coats of medicine and
science
In order to save votes not lives:
In the dim closets of their minds
Survival of the fittest, weakest to the wall,
'Here immunity' their tactful term.
So millions sickened, thousands died
And yet the government was deaf
To voices screaming in their ears , saying
That this was ideology gone mad.

A second time in our history
Christmas was threatened with a ban
Though not by Puritan but virus now.
This set down (Less malleable than facts and
figures):
Were we led down this U-turning garden path
For death or birth?
There was an ocean of death
Where countless life-drops fell, a sea of tears,
But let us hope this ache is a natal pain,
That ailments in our ways of doing and seeing
Are cured by this enduring confinement,
That maybe Easter will not be abolished too,
That in our sad land this storm is mowing
From death may rise new life. *Brinley Price*

I WROTE THIS PARODY OF POSSUM'S VERSE

'A cold Cummings we had of it' began
Those stern yet mocking lines that did not scan;
later I found my tone too grim and terse,
Demanded by my subject, Covid's curse;
For Christmas had been threatened with a ban
By virus now as once y Puritan
(Though some blame government,
officious nurse)

The humorous parodic form combined
With content bleak, voice harsh,
could only jar. . .
Or was it that this season of the star
Through dark pandemic only dimly
shined . . . ?
And yet is not Yule's message one of birth
From pain and death that are so much of Earth.

Brinley Price

LEADING CHANGE IN THE CONGREGATION

AN ONLINE COURSE JANUARY TO APRIL 2021

We need strong, inspiring and courageous leadership in our congregations more than ever. This course will equip you with skills to lead change in your congregation, so that we can help support the spiritual, emotional, and organisational needs of our communities and play our part in making a better world.

Based on Gilbert Rendle's classic book *Leading Change in the Congregation*, the course leaders Rev Andy Pakula and Rory Castle Jones will guide you through the hurdles, challenges and exciting possibilities involved in leadership for change in congregations.

Session 1: Getting There from Here: Leadership and Change

Session 2: A Place in the Story: The Spiritual Assumptions of Leaders

Session 3: Beyond the Trees: Systems Theory as a Way to Look at Your Congregation

Session 4: Welcome to the Wilderness: The Spiritual Journey of Congregational Change

Session 5: Riding the Roller Coaster: The Emotional Cycle of Congregations in Change

Session 6: Spinning Wheels Gather No Traction: Congregational Preferences in Change

Session 7: A Postscript for the Faith Community: Behaviour Appropriate to a Congregation

Session 8: Wrapping it up and taking it home

Who is it for? Leaders, congregational committee members, and any aspiring lay and clergy leaders in Unitarian and Free Christian congregations in the UK and Ireland, and other groups with similar values. We strongly encourage people to attend with other members of their congregation if possible.

When is it? Monday evenings, via Zoom, 6.30-7.30pm (with an optional extra 30 minute discussion) twice a month, starting 11th January 2021. (Dates: 11th and 25th Jan, 8th and 22nd Feb, 8th and 22nd Mar, 12th and 26th Apr).

How much does it cost? We ask participants to donate £20.00 or more to the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches. If you can't manage this for financial reasons, please get in touch. Participants also need to buy a copy of Gilbert Rendle's *Leading Change in the*

Congregation (available to buy online in hard copy or for Kindle, from £8.95). The course leaders are offering their time for free to help the Unitarian movement and its leaders.

Who are the course leaders? Rev Andy Pakula is minister of New Unity non-religious church in north London. New Unity has grown from a tiny congregation to become a large, vibrant, youthful congregation with a wide variety of programmes offered and deep involvement with social action and social justice work in the community. Andy has 14 years' experience in ministry and is a fully credentialed minister in both the British Unitarian and American Unitarian Universalist movements. He was an active lay leader before he began to study for ministry. Rory Castle Jones is a student minister, training at Unitarian College. He is at the start of his ministry and comes from a small, rural congregation in Wales which in the past 5 years has grown from an average Sunday attendance of 6-7 to 25-30 people. The congregation has become an active, vibrant church with a thriving youth group, deeply involved in community work. Rory's background is in Higher Education teaching and research.

What commitment do I need to make?

You need to commit to attending the eight sessions, plus reading a chapter of the book (which you need to buy in advance) before each session and doing some 'homework' exercises. The course will be hard work – but worth it!

How do I sign up? To sign up, [click here](#). Deadline: 18th December 2020.

CHRISTMAS EVE

24th December at 6.30pm via Zoom
A Unitarian Christmas by Candlelight

Led by Rev Kate Dean

and Unitarian Ministry friends

Stephanie Bisby, Daniel Costley, Winnie Gordon, Mark Hutchinson, Anna Jarvis, Duncan Voice, Shammy Webster

A service of music, carols and readings from Unitarian congregations around the country. To take part fully, please have a candle with you. We encourage you to decorate your 'Zoom space' festively for the part of the service when we all light our candles together. A full programme and song sheet will be available to download from the Rosslyn Hill Chapel, London website. <http://rosslynhillchapel.org.uk/>

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. SACH normally provides holiday from Monday to Friday for 230 children in 12 groups. These are children, often from inner cities, who would otherwise not have a holiday at all. In 2020 these were reduced to groups in February and March before lockdown. It is hoped to have 13 holidays in 2021 mostly for children in the highest levels of lockdown who may have suffered most from this. SACH funds accommodation, travel and excursions at a cost of around £250 per child.

The suggestion is that members make direct donations to the SACH (Send a Child to Hucklow Fund). Cheques can be gift aided and should be made payable to *The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund*, and a gift aid form will be attached to the e-mail sending out this newsletter. SACH has become a CIO this year, so these are new gift aid form with the new CIO number. These should be sent to the donations treasurer, Mrs. Ruth Taylor, c/o Mrs J Duffell, 19 Compton Mews, Ford, Shrewsbury SY5 9NX, e-mail: prtaylor76@hotmail.com

There are various other ways for people to give, see the SACH website - www.sendchildtohucklow.org.uk - "Make a donation". This can be done by via Virgin Money Giving or PayPal, and a Gift Aid declaration made and Virgin or PayPal collects the tax refund for SACH. Another way to give is by a BACS payment to The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund, Sort Code 40-52-40, Account Number 00060131 and a Gift Aid form sent to the donations treasurer (address above).



A CHURCH IS NOT A HOLY PLACE

"The church is not a fellowship of saints. It is a fellowship of ordinary men and women who know all too well that they are not saints but wish at least to be somewhat better than they are." [Harry Meserve *No peace of mind* (1959)]

OUR GOLDEN RULE BOOK

Dee Boyle writes Following my service on November 15th which was our annual Interfaith service when we revisited the Golden Rule I wondered if anyone else would still like to send me a copy of their 'golden rule' to add to our book. During the service there was an activity where everyone was asked to write down their own personal Golden Rule. I then asked that if people would like them to be included into our own golden rule book to send them through to me and I will make sure that they are pasted into the book. Some people shared theirs within the 'chat box' section on Zoom and so I have been able to print those out and add them to the book. I am aware that not everyone knows how to use that facility on Zoom and so if you would like instead to send them via email please do so as I would love to be able to include everyone's rules who wants to take part. My email address is deeboyle.york@gn.apc.org Many thanks and I look forward to receiving them.

USED STAMPS



Remember, particularly over Christmas, that we are collecting used stamps for the RNIB, please keep collecting stamps, and bring them into the Chapel when we return there. The box to put stamps in is in the Vestry.

YORK UNITARIAN LAURA COX



especially made-up for the zoomed service which she led on the Sunday morning after Hallowe'en. Laura spent six years as a make-up artist

ABOUT PEOPLE

Janet Eldred writes:

- Warm congratulations to Margaret and Andrew Hill, who recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary.
- Jen Atkinson is about to have her second cataract operation and says she's looking forward to improved sight for Christmas.
- Adrienne Wilson has just had cataract surgery, too, and we wish her well for a swift recovery.
- The Pastoral Team wishes everyone a good December, with its celebrations of Advent, Hanukkah, Midwinter, Christmas, Kwanza and New Year, and reminds everyone that we are here if you need us.

The editor adds:

- Our best wishes to our friend John Howe in greater Boston USA who joined us via Zoom on clock-change Sunday 1 November. He has recently become a grandfather.

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

Let us withdraw from the cold and barren world of prosaic fact, if only for a season that we may warm ourselves by the fireside of fancy, and take counsel of the wisdom of poetry and legend.

David Rhys Williams

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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

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

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If you would like to make a one-off donation to York Unitarians CIO by BACS, the details are:

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Sort Code: 40-52-40

Account number: 00032702

A Monthly Standing Order is particularly welcome; please also consider GiftAid if you are eligible for tax.

Contact the Treasurer Nick Morrice