



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

December 2021

FROM THE MINISTER

In November our hybrid services showed their value as friends of Meike Dux-Harrap's from all over the world joined on Zoom for the Remembrance Sunday service. On the same day Jenny Jacobs represented York Unitarians nearer home by laying a beautiful handmade wreath at the War Memorial.

The following week it was a joy to see the Chapel so lively for the closing service of York Interfaith week, and a particular pleasure to have with us so many wonderful guests, including the Civic party and a number of friends from other faiths. As we approach another holiday season still shadowed by the pandemic, I hope we will carry with us the energy and spirit of openness which have characterised these events.

One comment I heard frequently after the Interfaith Week closing service was how much people enjoyed the music and singing, having been starved of live music during all the lockdowns over the last two years. We have been blessed with some wonderful concerts in Chapel recently, as well as the live music we enjoy during worship, and I'm delighted that music will also form part of our festive celebrations.



Claire Wilton will lead the tree dressing service on 12th December and our carol service will be on the 19th, though I've given it the title 'Songs of the Season' to reflect the fact that our focus will be wider than just Christmas. There is of course a place for nostalgia at this time of year – I always get slightly choked up singing "I heard the bells on Christmas day Their old familiar carols play" – but there's also space, as last year's poetic contributions proved, for us to "sing to the Lord a new song."

Since the following Sunday will be Boxing Day, with limited public transport, and people will no doubt have family commitments, the chapel will be closed, but members and friends are invited to join me online for a Serendipity Service – bring along readings, prayers or music appropriate to the season, or just come along and listen. In the words of John Irving Daniel's carol – not nearly so well known as it deserves to be – we hope our festive celebrations will "lift the darkening year."

*Joy to the world, these festive days;
Nowhere may hope be dim;
And as the gladsome spirit glows,
Sing carol, song and hymn!*

Stephanie Bisby

A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

at 11.00a.m.

Sunday 5 December

Revd. Stephanie Bisby

For the journey

Music by David Hammond

Sunday 12 December

Tree dressing service

Claire Wilton

Festive tales and Christmas tree dressing

Music by Helen Drewery

Sunday 19 December

Revd. Stephanie Bisby

Songs for the season

Music by David Hammond

Sunday 26 December

Seasonal Serendipity service on Zoom only

MUSIC IN THE CHAPEL

Late Music Concerts: 20th & 21st century music
Lunchtime £5; Evening £12

Saturday 4 December @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
York Music Centre and Yorkshire based ensemble Spelk

Saturday 4 December @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm
Ian Pace (piano) The Art of Fugue (Bach, Schostakovich, Schumann and new works

OTHER EVENTS IN DECEMBER

Poetry Group

No meeting in December

Contact person: Dee Boyle

Meditation Group

11.00a.m. Thursdays

In chapel and on zoom

Contact person: Dee Boyle

York Interfaith Group

7.30 p.m. Tuesday 7 December

Zoom Meeting contact to be announced:

Soon Amore choir rehearsals

every Monday evening 8.00p.m. -9.45p.m.

Discussion Group

The Discussion Group meets on Zoom at 6.30p.m. on Tuesday 14 December to discuss the nativity stories in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and in the Qu'ran.

ABOUT PEOPLE

- *Andrew Hill* participated in an international Unitarian webinar about 'Transylvanian Unitarians Resisting and Surviving in Authoritarian times'.
- *John Issitt* gave a fascinating talk to chapel members and friends about Jeremiah Joyce and the so-called Unitarian Bible version of 1821
- Our thoughts are with *Alfred Fletcher*, daughter *Janet* and family after the recent death of *Joyce*. [see page 3 for tribute]
- As part of the Unitarian College's 'Introduction to Chaplaincy' course, *Janet Eldred* recently led an online session about her role as voluntary chaplain to the residents of the Colton's Hospital almshouses associated with the Cha
- Welcome to *Richard McGeary* who is our new 'techy person' on Sunday mornings.
- Our best wishes to *Dee Boyle* who has been resting at home.
- Many thanks to all those who provided food and labour for our Interfaith service on Sunday 21 November.
- Thank you also to *David Harrap* for sweeping up the fallen leaves from the two trees in the in our chapel yard.

A FURTHER NOTE FROM STEPHANIE

From January I will be taking over the booking of worship leaders from Andrew Hill on a trial basis, so if you would like to take a service, or to find out what's involved if you haven't led worship before, please get in touch with me at

reverendstephaniebisby@gmail.com or
on 07930 390686

(and if you don't feel like leading a whole service, I also always welcome volunteer readers for the Sundays when I am leading worship).

Please also send details of events for the newsletter to me. Huge thanks to Andrew and Margaret Hill for all their work on it up to now, and thanks also to Janet Eldred who has agreed to take over from Margaret as proofreader. We still have space on the editorial team if anyone would like to get involved, and would be especially thankful for help with layout.

JOYCE FLETCHER



Joyce instructing chapel member Janet Eldred how to make lace

Jen Atkinson writes:

Joyce celebrated her 90th Birthday a few weeks before she died. Close friends and family were all present and she glowed with happiness receiving her guests with her beloved husband Alfred by her side. Joyce died peacefully on the afternoon of 5th November, having spent her last four weeks in hospital. Alfred and daughter Janet had been with her in her last hours.

Alfred and Joyce met on a blind date at the 21st birthday of a friend, when all the other couples were already paired up. They were way ahead of Cilla Black! Their friendship grew, later they married and attended Stand Unitarian Chapel [north of Manchester]. Before Janet and Mark were born, Joyce was an Infants School Teacher in Prestwich. Later they moved to Sheffield and when the children went to school she returned to part time teaching at their school. Alfred recalls that the children called her 'Mrs Fletcher' not 'Mum', causing amusement in the family.

The family were active members of Upper Chapel in Sheffield where she was a Sunday school teacher for many years. Alfred was Treasurer and a founding trustee of the Unitarian Charity 'Send a Child to Hucklow', Joyce became Assistant Treasurer. When Alfred became Lay Pastor at Great Hucklow, Joyce supported him in his role.

Thirty years ago, Alfred and Joyce settled in Poppleton and quickly became part of the then small congregation at York Unitarians, taking an active and valuable role. Joyce occasionally played the organ until arthritis affected her

fingers. She will always be remembered for her ready smile and interest in others. With Alfred, she joined the Poppleton Arts Appreciation Society and after 20 years of service, they were made Life Members. Joyce was a member and secretary of Ebor Lace makers, she gave a demonstration at Chapel and we were encouraged to try. Her work was exquisite and much admired.

This was a life well lived. Alfred and Joyce faced joys and sorrows together including when their son, Mark, was tragically killed in a motorbike accident some years ago. Family, friends and the Unitarian Community were supportive and they bore their grief bravely and with dignity. A brighter moment was many happy holidays spent in Germany, beginning when Janet was at Trier University, returning year after year to stay at the same hotel where they became friends with the owners.

Jen Atkinson Nov 2021

Alfred Fletcher writes:

On Monday, 29th November at 12 noon at the Chapel there will be "A celebration of Joyce's life". The service will be about an hour long. There will be a chance to give donations in her memory to *The Send A Child To Hucklow Fund*. [see page 4] No black ties please.

THE UNITARIAN PATH

The Unitarian path combines personal freedom in religious faith with mutual, interdependent and supportive community.

It prefers reflective thinking to rigid believing. Emerging from the Jewish and Christian faiths it is fiercely loyal to Jesus and his teaching that we should love both God and our neighbours as ourselves.

This has brought Unitarians to a grateful recognition that their neighbours may be of other faith or different values, and may draw upon alternate resources of faith and strength.

Unitarian religion is more earthy and practical than heavenly and passive, It maintains an ongoing conversation of mind and body defining, refining and incarnating those qualities of life, growth and love which make for a better world.

AT THE YORK INTERFAITH SERVICE ON SUNDAY 21 NOVEMBER



In the centre the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, the Sheriff and the York MP (Rachel Maskell) with representatives of the faith communities of York
The York Interfaith Quilt made during 'lockdown' by members of the different communities is displayed (right) hanging from the pulpit

SEND A CHILD TO HUCKLOW

For most recent Christmases our Chapel retiring collections have been for the Send a Child to Hucklow Fund . This year, there will also be an opportunity to make donations in thankfulness for the full life of chapel member Joyce Fletcher. Both Joyce and Alfred Fletcher had a strong relationship with the Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow during the time Alfred was lay pastor of the Unitarian chapel in the village.



The *Send a Child to Hucklow* Fund [SACH] is a charity to arrange and administer holidays at the Unitarian Holiday Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire in the United Kingdom for groups of disadvantaged children, having no regard to religious, political, racial and other considerations.

The Centre had its beginnings in the closing years of the 19th century, being the idea of Rev Lawrence Scott of Manchester - who had a famous brother, C.P. Scott, founder editor of what

a famous brother, C.P. Scott, founder editor of what was then *The Manchester Guardian* newspaper; and Rev Charles Peach of Sheffield - whose son was the famous local playwright, L. Du Garde Peach. These two so enjoyed the village and countryside of Great Hucklow that they began to bring poor children from Sheffield and Manchester, children brought up amidst the grime and bustle and squalor of these industrial



cities, to have a few days enjoying the quietness and cleanliness and spaciousness of life in the countryside. One of the most attractive areas of the North of England is the Derbyshire Peak District, with its many pretty villages. One such is Great Hucklow, underneath Hucklow Edge with its well-known gliding field. This is the site of the British Unitarian denomination's Holiday and Conference Centre; some few years ago renamed "The Nightingale Centre".

[photos and text, with thanks from the SACH website]

ON BELONGING

*the sermon by Stephanie Bisby
on Sunday 17 October 2021*

I have been thinking a lot lately about belonging, about what it means to belong somewhere.

“Talking about place, where we belong, is a constant subject for many of us,”

writes feminist author and cultural critic bell hooks’ in the preface to *Belonging*.

“Again and again as I travel around I am stunned by how many citizens in our nation feel lost, feel bereft of a sense of direction, feel as though they cannot see where our journeys lead, that they cannot know where they are going. Many folks feel no sense of place. What they know, what they have is a sense of crisis, of impending doom. Even the old, the elders, who have lived from decade to decade and beyond say life is different in this time ‘way strange’ that our world today is a world of ‘too much’ – that this too muchness creates a wilderness of spirit, the everyday anguish that shapes the habits of being for those who are lost, wandering, searching.”

For her, as for generations, belonging is intricately linked with place. She writes:

“Like many of my contemporaries I have yearned to find my place in this world, to have a sense of homecoming, a sense of being wedded to a place.”

There have always been those who travel, those who are citizens more of the globe than of one country, never mind a single county, town or village, but perhaps it’s more common now than it has ever been. We move for work, for relationships, for the buzz of the city or the peace of the country, but as often as not, wherever we are, we’re just as much someplace else: immersed in a book, a documentary or a film, protected by the page or insulated by earbuds from the reality that surrounds us.

TWO DISTINCT WORLDS

I’ve just re-read a detective novel I very much enjoyed, from Stephen Booth’s series featuring Fry and Cooper, two detectives with the Derbyshire police force. As Sherlock Holmes belongs to London and Ian Rankin’s Inspector Rebus belongs to Edinburgh, Ben Cooper belongs to the Peak District, and an ongoing strand of the stories is the contrast, which could hardly be stronger, between Cooper – locally born and bred, following in his father’s footsteps

in the force, embedded in the community, familiar with local folklore and agricultural practices – and Diane Fry, brought up in a series of foster homes in and around Birmingham, and having just moved to the Peak District in search of a fresh start after a traumatic experience in the city.

In the book I was reading, *The Kill Call*, their investigations take them to a part of the National Park where property sales are restricted to people with a minimum of five years’ permanent residence, with exceptions for those with an essential need to live close to work, or to care for an elderly or sick relative. Cooper finds himself musing on the contrast between “the young migrant workers who had been replacing students” in the part of town where Diane Fry rents a room, and the villages where

“properties could only be bought by someone from the very same parish, by a person who *belonged* here, in the old-fashioned, traditional sense.”

He describes the migrant world and the world of the stay-at-home villagers as:

“two distinct worlds, existing alongside each other,”

and that’s very much the feeling that I think many of us have had as we move back into in-person meetings and events and travel after a year or more of lockdowns and limitations and keeping it local from necessity not choice.

TANGIBLE & VIRTUAL WORLDS

The outside world is coming back, but many of us have learned to live with the technologies we have embraced, albeit from necessity more than choice, and discovered that there are certain advantages to being, in some ways, liberated from the restraints of geography. The tangible world and the virtual world, “two distinct worlds existing alongside each other.” For many of us, of course, this isn’t a new thing. In 2002 the company I worked for published two reports on the emerging phenomenon of remote working. The first name listed as co-author on the reports was David Clutterbuck, chairman of the company. The second name was mine. David and I worked out of the same building, a charming red-brick ex-doctor’s-surgery in Burnham, Buckinghamshire. And the third name was Sue Kernaghan, a freelance journalist and longstanding friend and collaborator of David’s, who was based at the time in a rural location in Canada. We’d written half the book together

before I met her for the first time, when she took a 2-week trip to England, and after those two weeks we didn't meet again for the duration of the project. And I can honestly say it was one of the easiest and pleasantest work collaborations I ever experienced.

By the turn of the century, the Internet was already changing things. Along with 'remote working' came 'telecommuting,' then 'location independence,' 'hotdesking' and 'co-working spaces.' And according to marketing guru, Seth Godin, these things brought with them the return of an ancient and largely lost way of structuring human community: tribes. Godin argues that for a long time society was organised predominantly along geographic lines, but with the rise of the internet came the ability to organise instead around a concept or a preference. Godin says:

"A tribe is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea. For millions of years, human beings have been part of one tribe or another. A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate... Human beings can't help it: we need to belong. One of the most powerful of our survival mechanisms is to be part of a tribe, to contribute to (and take from) a group of like-minded people."

He explains that,

"Geography used to be important. A tribe might be everyone in a certain village, or it might be model-car enthusiasts in Sacramento."

It might be farmers in a Derbyshire village or classical musicians in York.

"Corporations and other organisations have always created their own tribes around their offices or their markets – tribes of employees or customers or parishioners."

Yes, churches are tribes too. But now...

"Now, the Internet eliminates geography. This means that existing tribes are bigger, but more important, it means that there are now more tribes, smaller tribes, influential tribes, horizontal and vertical tribes, and tribes that could never have existed before.... Tribes where everyone knows your name."

And,

"there's an explosion of new tools available to help lead the tribes we're forming."

Where before we might have limited our communication with our tribe to a poster on the

board and a piece in the newsletter, now we might add a post on facebook, a tweet, an instagram graphic. We might put a shout out in the Whatsapp group or maybe a message in the Slack forum.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

There's a whole new world of possibilities out there, and for some of us that's an exciting adventure, while for others it's a big terrifying unknown, marked 'Here be dragons.' This is bell hooks'

"too muchness... a wilderness of spirit, the everyday anguish that shapes the habits of being for those who are lost, wandering, searching."

We feel, in John O'Donohue's words,

a "longing to be free"

but we also need

"the frames of our belonging."

We reach out for

the "wild beauty of the invisible world"

but we also need to

"look within" with "kindness in our gaze."

We need adventure, but we also need safety, and like any balancing act, we don't find success in a simple, consistent, 50:50 split, but in a constantly shifting pattern where we seek to fill the gaps in that moment. When life is simple, we reach out for more – more excitement, more adventure – but when we are gripped by the fears and anxieties of pandemic, of climate change, of politics, by bell hooks' "sense of crisis, of impending doom," we may need to step back a little, look inward, seeking more simplicity and safety, more kindness and compassion.

CHURCH

Church at its best fills the need for a place and a people, for a sanctuary of the soul and an adventure of the spirit. We come together, week after week, to fill our need for somewhere to belong, for someone to belong to, for a temple and a tribe. May we all, long-standing members and new members and friends of this Chapel, be a place and a people for each other. May we hold our attachments, whether to places or to principles, as firmly as we need, to stand for what we believe is right, but also as lightly as we need, to stand together in love.

AN ALTERNATE CHRISTMAS STORY

c. 6th century BCE

There lived once upon a time a king of the Shakyas whose name was Shuddhodana.

He had a wife, splendid, beautiful and steadfast who was called the Great Maya.

These two tasted love's delights, and one day she conceived the fruit of her womb, but without any defilement.

Just before her conception she had a dream. A white king elephant seemed to enter her body, but without causing her any pain.

She remained free from the fatigues, depressions, and fancies which usually accompany pregnancies.

She set her heart on going to Lumbini, a delightful grove with trees of every kind.

She asked the king to accompany her and so they left the city, and went to that glorious grove.

When the queen noticed that her time of her delivery was approaching, she went to a couch over spread with an awning.

A son was born to the queen, for the weal of the world. He came out of his mother's side, without causing her pain or injury.

So he issued from the womb as befits a Buddha. And since he had for many aeons been engaged in the practice of meditation, he now was born in full awareness, and not thoughtless and bewildered as other people are.

Instantly he walked seven steps, firmly and with long strides.

[edited from Edward Conze *Buddhist Scriptures* pp.35-36]

A CHRISTMAS 'LORD'S PRAYER'

Space-hanging Earth,
fragile as a Christmas Babe
delicate as a Christmas Tree ornament:
nurture us as a mother nurtures children
as Mary nursed Jesus.
Forgive our hurtful ways.
Guide us to fairer sharing;
and so sustain all earth's children
and all earth's beings
and even your Earthly self
unto all generations and
into all time to come.
Amen

A SANTA CLAUS CAROL

sung to the carol tune Falon-Tiding

St. Nicholas calmed the sea of strife
(his story we've been told)
how he restored three boys to life
and gave out bags of gold.

*So stockings hang and chimneys clear
for Santa Claus make room
who armed with presents may appear
if peace good will resume.*

To Netherlands St. Nicholas went;
and with him went Black Pete;
to all the children they were sent
with presents for the Feast.

St. Nicholas, Santa Claus became
and donned a bright red cloak;
and taking Father Christmas' name
returned to Europe's folk.

Good people all, this tale we weave
for children everywhere
how every single Christmas Eve
St. Nicholas may appear

Andrew Hill

*

Joy

Frieden

Shalom

Buini Natale

Joyeux Noel

Glaedelig Jul

Feliz Navidad

Nollaig Chridheil

Merry Christmas

Frohe Weinachten

Beannacht Kerstdagen

Propsero Ano Nuevo

Gluckliches Neues Jahr

Happy New Year

Peace

FROM THE EDITOR

I first came to the York Chapel 15 years ago but hardly as a new Unitarian. My great great grandfather joined Glasgow Unitarians 200 years ago! What particularly interested me on that first York Sunday was the Chapel notices. We were told that that Saturday coming was *St. Crux Day* and that Jean had more details; but Jean who? There was more than one Jean on the members and friends list so 'which one?'; and as for *St. Crux*, was that something to do with reformed criminals? The answers, to my mental queries would - no doubt - appear in the next monthly chapel magazine, except that they didn't and that by the time it arrived *St. Crux Day* was well and truly over.

Eventually I plucked up courage and cautiously asked the editor 'Would you like me to take over the magazine?' Well, before I'd even finished offering, I had a new job! January 2009 was my first issue.

As it happened, for 33 years I had edited a different church's monthly magazine. I had inherited the job from its journalist-minister who was accustomed to regularity and to deadlines — journalism is not part of a minister's job description by the way - and then left me to steer the magazine through old fashioned stencils and inky duplicators and into the brand new world of word processing and desk top publishing.

Nowadays, almost everyone has their own computer. Text arrives with an editor already typed up; and, in addition, most folk (except me!) have smart phones such that useful and essential information is frequently with chapel members and friends long before a monthly magazine can reach them.

How my successors take this editing task forward I wait eagerly to see. Meanwhile, my thanks to you all. I know that you have been loyal and loving readers - because whenever mistakes have occurred you have always gently and lovingly let me know! *Andrew*

RELIGION IS NOT AN EXPERIMENT

. . . it is an experience of life through which one is part of a cosmic adventure

. . . I started as a Christian.

I discovered I was a Hindu and returned as a Buddhist

without having ceased to be a Christian.

[*Raimon Pannikar*

poet, philosopher and Catholic priest]

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



York Unitarians CIO 1181531
St. Saviourgate Chapel,
St. Saviourgate, York YO1 8NQ
www.york.unitarians.org.uk

Minister: The Revd. Stephanie Bisby
☎ 07930 390686
reverendstephaniebisby@gmail.com

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)

York Unitarian editor:
Andrew Hill
☎ 01904 693427
<amckhill@gmail.com>

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

York Unitarians CIO
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 Richard Brown