



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

January 2019

FROM THE MINISTER

A new year.

A fresh start. A time to put right all those omissions and indulgences of the preceding year. A time to, at last, be perfect. To eat healthily; to exercise more; to do more to save the planet. How good does it make you feel? This resolution to be a better person. It's nice isn't it? A warm glow. You can feel proud of yourself. You are going to be great!

Maybe you are a bit more cynical. Maybe you have joined the gym in previous Januaries and found that you don't quite manage to keep it up. Maybe you have dieted for a month but not persisted. Maybe you know yourself too well. No point in making a resolution, you say to yourself, I won't keep to it.

Even though spring is quite a way off our souls seem to cry out for that clean sweep. The tinsel seems tacky and tawdry, the Santa trying too hard. Their time is over for the year. It's quite a relief when we can take down the decorations, tidy

up, attempt to get the pine needles out of the carpet and get access to now dusty corners. Often we feel a new sense of energy, a space to let in the new, and a willingness to cast off the old.

Things are moving in my family, a period of adjustment is leading me to review my outlook, to look forward with curiosity, to make plans. Life continuously moves on, bringing us surprises, both pleasant and tricky. We are not

automaton and we need time to adjust. So be gentle with yourself this New Year. Take the time to reflect on the past year and to bury the nut of your learnings carefully in the warm soil of your heart. Come spring it may well burst into life, making it clear to you what you choose to do and be.

And if you must make a resolution for 2019, make it some form of self-care, rather than another goal to beat yourself over the head with. Make

time for yourself. Love your body enough to treat it well. Everybody around you will also benefit! Happy New Year!

Nicky Jenkins

MANY COLOURS



ONE FLAME

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

Sunday 6 January
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Beginnings
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 13 January
Nick Morrice
The Vikings are coming
Music by David Hammond
Sparklers children's programme

Sunday 20 January
Elizabeth Faiers
Music by David Hammond
12.15 Chapel Committee

Sunday 27 January
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Holocaust: never forget
Music by David Hammond
York Residents' Festival weekend

OTHER EVENTS IN JANUARY

- Monday 7 January 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 10 January 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Monday 14 January 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 17 January 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Saturday 19 January 3.00 – 8.00p.m. Valerie Pearson: private recital (Chapel)
- Sunday 20 January 12.15p.m. *Chapel Committee* (Upper Room)
- Monday 21 January 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 24 January 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Saturday 26 January 10.00a.m. - 4.00p.m. *York Residents' Weekend: Charles Darwin Exhibition*
- Sunday 27 January 12.30-4.00p.m. *York Residents' Weekend: Charles Darwin Exhibition*
- Monday 28 January 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 31 January 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

**2019 UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Tuesday 16 until Thursday 18 April**



Meeting at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel - within walking distance of the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham International Railway Station. Change trains at Birmingham New Street Station. There is a courtesy bus from Birmingham International Station to the Hotel.

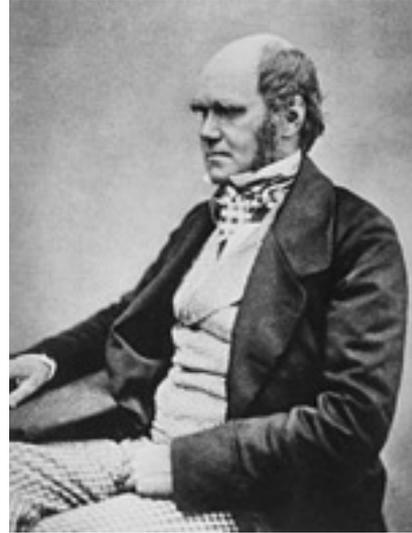
- Business - come and help on the future of the Movement;
- Worship - Worship with over 300 other Unitarians;
- Socialise - come and catch up with your friends, and make new ones;
- Listen to the guest speakers;
- Books - purchase Unitarian books and enjoy the various stalls;
- Young people and children - participate in the parallel youth programme;
- Relax - in a 4-star conference hotel, with comfortable bedrooms, good food and a spa

The Chapel is entitled to 2 voting delegates who will get financial assistance from the Chapel. We have applied for a bursary from the G.A. for one of our newer members. Others may pay their own way. Free creche for 0-4 year olds; GA Kids for 5-11 year olds; GA Teens for 12-17 year olds. Ask the Chapel secretary for booking forms and mention if you are interested in being a delegate. A decision who to appoint as delegates will be made at the committee meeting on 20th January. Early bird booking closes on 26th February.

FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met on Sunday 9 December with apologies from Sue Catts, Dee Boyle and Claire Lee. Elizabeth Faiers provided opening words.
- 16 weeks have passed, without response, since the Chapel's CIO application was submitted and provided with a registration number. This was double the Charity Commission's stated length of time (8 weeks) for expecting a response. The CC's e-mail address simply directs enquirers to a telephone number which will be the next 'port of call'.
- An accessible post box has been fitted against a wall within the chapel railings.
- An inconclusive discussion took place about 'a welcome here' poster.
- The minister reported that she had concluded her 'rites and passage' course with the Sheffield District and had completed her terms as President of the Ministerial Fellowship and as a member of the Unitarian College Manchester committee.
- Our 2019 fundraising day at St. Crux Hall (top of St. Saviourgate) will be Saturday 11 May.
- We will, in future, provide a collecting receptacle instead of the usual Smartie tubes, for financial gifts to our annual chosen charity.
- The treasurer has uncovered an historical variant - which he is investigating - as to how a particular investment was/is described in the Chapel's annual accounts.
- An updated Contract and Indemnity agreement for outside individuals and groups using the Chapel was approved. The long-term issue of care taking was raised again.
- The 2019 Unitarian General Assembly meetings will be held at Birmingham. Jenny Jacobs and Laura Cox are interested in attending. An application for a grant from a special fund for newer members attending for the first time will be made on behalf of Laura.
- The City Council has granted a licensing application - with 60 conditions - for the new 'food hall' in Stonebow House (top of St. Saviourgate). The Chapel was among the objectors.
- The Self-Realization Fellowship has begun holding alternate Monday 5-6p.m. meetings at the Chapel.
- Booking is open for the 2019 Summer School at the Unitarian (Florence Nightingale) Holiday Centre on the theme of 'embodiment'.

CHARLES DARWIN YORK RESIDENTS' WEEKEND 2019 Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 January



The Chapel will be open to the public on Saturday 26th January from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday 27th January from 12.30 to 4 p.m.

This year we are repeating an exhibition about Charles Darwin organised a few years ago by Margaret Kirk and displayed at a previous Residents' Weekend.



As background: elsewhere in this magazine there is an article by Andrew Hill about Charles Darwin and his Unitarian connections.

DEATH AND DYING DISCUSSIONS

Starting next month, 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:

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

Come to any you can, and feel free to bring your lunch and/or make a hot drink. We will have heat!

One of our ground rules is that participants will do some preparatory reading, video-watching, and/or audio-listening. I encourage anyone who plans to attend a discussion to dip into the talks and materials on the website "Christian Perspectives on Death and Dying": www.christiandyng.org.uk.

There also is a tray with books and printouts that you can borrow, along with a green sign-out book. If you do borrow something, please return it as soon as you can so that others may also access it.

Questions to Janet Eldred at jbe100@yahoo.co.uk or 07951 600907.
Janet Eldred

HUCKLOW SUMMER SCHOOL 17th-24th August 2019

'Theology in the Flesh' –
How Might our Embodied Experience
Shape our Answers
to Life's Ultimate Questions?

Hucklow Summer School 2019 is open for applications www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk
The theme for 2019 is 'Theology in the Flesh: How Might our Embodied Experience Shape our Answers to Life's Ultimate Questions?' There is a programme of talks and engagement groups on offer so get your applications in early if you can (and tell your friends)!

There are some bursaries available to help with the cost of attending, so contact via the website soon if you would like to hear more about sources of support.

LOCAL CHARITY 2019



Each year we fundraise for a local charity, during 2018 this has been for the Peasholme Charity for the Homeless.

In 2019 we will fundraise for the York Blind and Partially Sighted Society (YBPSS). The committee has decided to do it differently this year, while there will still be a sponsored walk and maybe a concert, the Smartie tube collection will be discontinued, and instead we will have a collection tin out every Sunday from mid-January for donations - think of all that loose change weighing heavily in your pockets or purses and put it in the collection box instead.

York Blind & Partially Sighted Society is a thriving, independent, local charity working to help people with sight loss in York to remain independent and to live well. YBPSS has been one of the Lord Mayor of York's charities in 2018.

PEASHOLME CHARITY



On Sunday 24 December cheques from the Chapel amounting to £1,200 were presented to Yvonne from The Peasholme Charity.

The charity works to empower homeless people living locally. Its core values are respect, inclusion, quality, integrity and empowerment

CHARLES DARWIN & THE UNITARIANS

A sermon by Andrew Hill

CHARLES DARWIN, along with Nicholas Copernicus and Sigmund Freud, must be regarded as among the major influences upon the modern mind. Together they have effected a revolution which has

- toppled the human habitat from the centre of the universe;
- toppled the human animal from an extra special place in the creative process; and
- toppled the rational faculties of the human mind as the sole arbiter of human behaviour.

Others laid the ground around them, so that conditions were right for their particular revelations, and others have modified and developed their insights, but Copernicus, Darwin and Freud were the right people, at the right time and in the right place.

Charles Darwin's theory of the origin of species and the cause of variation among them by a process of natural selection, a theory called evolution, is now so common place that it presents the danger of becoming ossified orthodoxy. However, Darwin has a special interest for us, not simply because he was British but because of his Unitarian connections.

- Did these Unitarian connections influence him particularly?
- Was there anything about these associations which contributed to his thinking?
- Is there any relationship between a religious tradition displaying a variety of thought conditioned by the free interchange of minds, and a biological theory explaining the variety of species selected by the free interchange of species with their environment ?

The Wedgwoods

We need some family history. Darwin's mother and his wife were both Wedgwoods, members of the famous pottery family. His mother, Susannah, was the daughter of Josiah Wedgwood the master potter himself. Darwin's wife, Emma, was his first cousin, the daughter of his mother's brother. Emma was the famous potter's grandchild. Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the pottery firm was a thoroughgoing Unitarian, a life-long supporter and attender of the Unitarian Old Meeting in Newcastle-under-Lyne in the Staffordshire Potteries. Susannah, Charles's mother, was a regular attender at the Unitarian Chapel in Shrewsbury nearby where the Darwin family lived. She took Charles with her. But his mother died in 1817 when Charles was only eight years old. "I can remember hardly anything about her except her death bed, her black velvet gown, and her curiously constructed work table", Charles recorded in his autobiography.

The Unitarian Chapel's minister was George Augustus Case. He kept a school. Shortly before his mother died Charles began a year's schooling there. Annoyingly, hardly anything is known about George

Augustus Case beyond his spending 33 years in Shrewsbury. He never ministered anywhere else and he never published anything. He

"lived in perfect harmony with all members of his congregation ... as a preacher he was admired, his sermons free from bigotry and moroseness and abounding in liberality and goodwill to all men",

reads his obituary notice. This suggests that if he happened to have any original ideas, which seems doubtful, he kept them all to himself.

Emma Wedgwood

As for Emma Darwin, Emma Wedgwood as she was before her marriage to Charles in 1839, their daughter Henrietta testifies of her mother:--

In our childhood and youth she was not only sincerely religious - but definite in her beliefs. She went regularly to church and took the Sacrament. She read the Bible with us and taught us a simple Unitarian Creed, though we were baptised and confirmed in the Church of England.

Erasmus Darwin

Let us look at the Darwin side of the family. The Darwins, when obliged to say so, were members of the religious establishment, the Church of England. Charles's grandfather Erasmus has been described as the greatest Englishman of the eighteenth century. Whether he was or not, he was a physician by profession, an inventor of some calibre, and a poet of sorts by hobby. He was associated with that group of scientific and technological geniuses who spearheaded the Industrial Revolution –

- James Watt with his steam engine,
- Matthew Boulton with his manufactory and
- Josiah Wedgwood with his pottery and canal schemes.

In religious thinking Erasmus Darwin was influenced by his student friend at Edinburgh, Albert Reimarus. the son of a notorious father Hermann Samuel Reimarus, the German deist and Biblical critic, who had rejected miracles and revelation and sought to convict the Biblical writers of conscious fraud, innumerable contradictions and fanaticism. Erasmus Darwin was as a result of this association, if nominally Anglican, first and foremost a religious sceptic. So was his son Robert, Charles's father.

Charles Darwin

So what about Charles? The extraordinary thing is that having abandoned his medical studies at Edinburgh, this son of a Unitarian mother and sceptical father, went to Cambridge intending to enter Holy Orders, which meant subscribing to the Church of England's 39 Articles of Faith! One suspects that after his mother's death his associations with the Shrewsbury Unitarian Chapel petered out. He went to the local grammar school where traditional Christian theology would have been

taught and about which his sceptical father not wishing to lose good paying patients said nothing. So Charles could write of himself "Whilst on board the Beagle I was quite orthodox". But the wealth of knowledge with which the Beagle trip endowed him led him to reflect:

- that the clearest evidence would be requisite to make any sane man believe in the miracles by which Christianity is supported;
- that the more we know of the fixed laws of nature the more incredible do miracles become;
- that the men at the time were ignorant and credulous to a degree incomprehensible by us;
- that the Gospels cannot be proved to have been written simultaneously with events;
- that they differ in many important details, far too important as it seemed to me to be admitted as the usual inaccuracies of eyewitnesses; -

by such reflections as these he gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation.

"The fact that many false religions have spread over many large portions of the earth like wild-fire had some weight with me. Beautiful as is the morality of the New Testament, it can hardly be denied that its perfection depends in part in the interpretation which we had put in metaphors and allegories ... I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all my best friends will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine."

Eventually Charles decided to follow his friend and associate T. H. Huxley and call himself an agnostic.

Charles and Emma Darwin

Actually Emma Darwin maintained her simple, if distinctly conservative and by then old fashioned sort of Unitarian views inherited from her childhood right to the end of her life. (This was a scripturally orientated faith in God as creator and revealer and in the man Jesus as his Messiah). It was fast being overtaken by a variety of Unitarianism which grounded its faith in the enlightened human conscience. The differences between husband and wife caused both of them some pain, pain which they could bear because their marriage was good. Charles was concerned lest his disbelief needlessly hurt Emma. Emma was concerned that Charles deprived himself of the comforts of faith which supported her and which she thought could help him. It was a strange combination of an old fashioned Unitarianism, which by isolation from a vigorous Unitarian community was stunted and had failed to grow with new insights, and a radical agnosticism which today might be at home in any vigorous Unitarian community.

Some conclusions: for Charles

What conclusions might one draw from this! Firstly about Charles Darwin's religion. As for Darwin, he

quite obviously inherited more of the radical scepticism of the Darwins than of the Unitarianism of the Wedgwoods. Placed alongside Christian orthodoxy it led him to a distinct and radical disbelief. Had he been firmly located within the Unitarian tradition he might possibly have retained a greater understanding and appreciation of the religious perspective. After all Sir Charles Lyell, the Scottish born geologist and friend of Darwin who much influenced him, found the religious perspective he was seeking in the newer Unitarianism being preached by James Martineau.

Some conclusions: for us

For ourselves, we have taken evolutionary theory right into our religious perspective. Not only does it not distract from our religion, it enhances it. Evolutionary theory is indicative of order and constancy within the natural world which suggests organisation rather than chaos. We have left far behind us any false classification of reality into natural and supernatural. There is nothing supernatural about the religious perspective, not even anything unnatural. Religious truths are verifiable just as scientific ones are. They are not dependent upon a different order, nor are they supported by supernatural occurrences.

We have taken evolution into the very nature of religion itself. Religion, Christian or otherwise, is developmental. The Bible shows the faith of a people developing from primitive times into the Christian era, and a faith evolving at different speeds and ways in different strands of the tradition. The Bible illustrates superbly a pattern of religious growth and development which can be repeated again and again around the world down to the present day.

Finally we have come to recognise that the evolutionary principle applies to our cultural development as well as to our biological. Indeed, for all intents and purposes it has taken over. Human culture has built a protective screen against the jungle law of red in tooth and claw; a fragile screen most of the time, but nevertheless one which shelters people like us from the harsh and merciless world where survival alone matters. For us the need to reproduce is no longer the be all and end all of existence. We have other meanings which arise from an identity with our neighbours seen and unseen; a common sense of our humane-ness which senses common strengths and weaknesses and possesses knowledge that we are members one of another; a common sense that this identity extends beyond our human frames--not only to other living creatures--but beyond, because as Lyall Watson put it "a rose is a rose but it's also a rabbit". We share common substance, the stuff of whirling atoms which make you and me, the hard seats we sit upon and the Moors and Peaks of Yorkshire and Derbyshire . Can we but wonder? Here is sufficient for adoration and the source of faith. Can we but express reverence and praise?

CHAPEL CHRISTMAS 2018



Chapel Christmas Tree



Beneath the Christmas Tree



Socialising later



Jenny's crib

SERENDIPITY SUNDAY 30 DECEMBER

what we shared on the final Sunday of 2018

1. Joan Sinanan spoke about her past year and repairing the broken Spirituality Group dragon.
2. Dee Boyle: *Continual Beginnings* – a poem by her aunt
3. Janet Eldred: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *I heard the bells on Christmas Day*
4. Nicky Jenkins: a poem by Yvonne Aburrow
5. Brinley Price: his own poem *Happiness* following an afternoon gardening at St.Nicholas Fields
6. John Badeden from *Locksley Hall* by Alfred Lord Tennyson
7. Meike Dux Harrap a prayer from Bede's *A History of the English Church and People*
8. Alan Pennington: from Julian Baginni's recent *Guardian* article 'The spirit of Christmas doesn't have to be Christian'
9. Jenny Jacobs: a poem *Christmas Eve* by C. Day Lewis
10. Elizabeth Claughton: *The Orange* a poem by Wendy Cope
11. Susan Leadley: a passage by Krishnamurti about the setting sun in winter
12. Barbara Barnes: a poem by Felix Davis and part of Walt Whitman's poem *Miracles*
13. Michael Archer: about bees in his garden
14. Elizabeth Faiers: *New Year* by former York minister Sydney Knight and *All that is abundant living* by Andrew Hill
15. Margaret Hill: *Turning to one another* by Margaret Wheatley
16. Jen Atkinson: *New Year* by Elizabeth Tarbox
17. Claire Wilton: from *The Light in the Dark: A Winter Journey* by Horatio Clare
18. Andrew Hill: a wooden chalice jigsaw made by 7 year old granddaughter Maisie
19. Simon Hardy: a piece about love and charity from a recent e-mail

In addition we sang *Good King Wenceslas*, *Past Three O'clock* and *The Twelve Days of Christmas* and shared David Hammond's beautiful music.

WORSHIP WORDS FOR A NEW YEAR

"Behold" says an ancient scripture "I make all things new"

- We gather close to the beginning of a new day.
May it be a day such that towards its close we can say "this was a day well spent: a day for which I have earned my rest".
- We gather close to the beginning of a new week.
May it be a week such that when it ends we can say "this was a week of meaningful work and careful time; a week when I helped make the world just a little better."
- We gather close to the beginning of new month.
May it be a month such that on its final day we can say "I have completed certain tasks and used intervals well for recreation; a month which I lived with some purpose."
- We gather close to the beginning of new year.
May it be a year such that when complete we can say "this was a year when in circumstances of either pleasure or pain I did less harm and greater good; a year for which the world will be thankful."

But whatever the year, whatever the month, whatever the week, whatever the day, whatever the hour, whatever the minute, whatever the second let us be mindful that somewhere, somehow deep in the mysteries of time there is another new year beginning ... always ... Amen

SEND A CHILD TO HUCKLOW FUND

Our Christmas appeal for 'The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund' came to £516. The fund organises holidays at the Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire for children who would otherwise not have a holiday/

"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: religious scholar

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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Elizabeth Faiers, Andrew Hill, Jenny
Jacobs, Claire Lee, David Zucker and the
Officers

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

Colton's Hospital Trustees
Elizabeth Faiers (Treasurer), Dee Boyle,
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