



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ
July 2020

FROM THE EDITOR

Googling around recently I came face to face with this piece of mine originally written some years ago for the Scottish Parliament's weekly 'time for reflection'. In the circumstances of the present pandemic and the many new rules and regulations about how we behave and interact with one another it seems strangely relevant.

Good afternoon. There was a Jewish rabbi who lived during the first century of the Common Era, and the rabbi's name was Hillel. One day, someone came up to Rabbi Hillel and said:

"There are so many laws and so many regulations that it is quite impossible to remember them all. Please teach me one rule that covers them all and that I can remember while I am standing on just one leg."

I wonder whether you can imagine for yourselves just one rule that could sum up every law and every regulation that has already passed through this [Scottish] Parliament, and every law and every regulation that will pass through it in the future—one rule that you could remember while you were standing on just one leg.

There must be a human limit to how many important rules even legislators can actually remember. Nevertheless, there have to be rules about common ways of doing things, otherwise

we would continually collide with each other. But most rules are neither right nor wrong. They are simply codified conventions, such as driving on the same side of the road as everyone else who is going in the same direction.

Laws and regulations exist from necessity, but in normal everyday living we rarely think of them or refer to them. There simply is no time to live by the rulebook, and the danger of doing so is that we end up looking for loopholes in the law, or searching for ways round regulations, and then proudly pronouncing, "But it's not against the rules."

Rabbi Hillel had an answer for his questioner. His answer was,

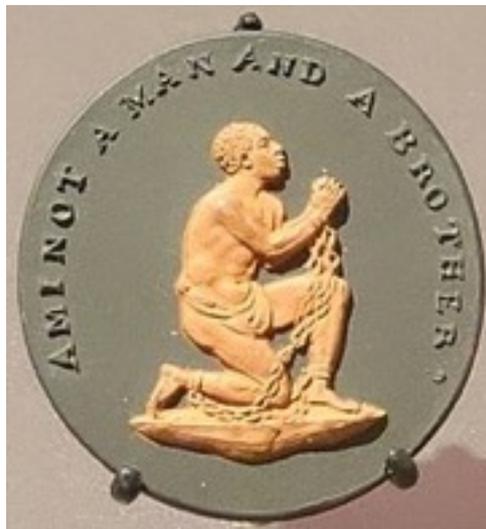
"Don't do to anyone else the kind of thing that is hateful to you."

This, Hillel said, was all the laws put together, and all the rest was just an explanation of that one short rule. His rule was a version of what ethicists know as the golden rule. It exists in many different forms and can be found in Christian, Hindu, Confucian, Taoist, Bahai, Buddhist, Moslem, Hebrew and Jain

scriptures, as well as in humanist and secular literature.

I wonder what your golden rule is that sums up all the laws and all the regulations that have passed through and will pass through this Parliament - and remember that the older we get, the shorter our memories become, and the shorter the time we can actually stand unaided on one leg. Thank you.

BLACK LIVES MATTER



**The Wedgwood
Slave Emancipation Medallion**

A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

at 11.00a.m.

Sunday 5 July 10.30 a.m.

Francis Elliot Wright

Changing your mind

on Zoom - details will be e-mailed.

11.30 a.m. Committee Meeting on Zoom

The following services will be in the Chapel,
subject to confirmation by the Committee

Sunday 12 July 11 a.m.

Jenny Jacobs

Heavens above

Sunday 19 July

David Zucker

Freedom

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 26 July

Andrew Hill

Statues and things similar

The Meditation Group will continue to meet via zoom at 11am each Thursday until chapel reopens again. If people would like to be added to the email list please contact Dee. Those not able to join us via zoom can continue to meditate on their own at home but know that others are joining in from elsewhere.

The Heart and Soul Group session will continue to take place every Sunday afternoon via zoom starting at 4pm and ending by 5pm. This too will continue until Chapel reopens again.

YORK UNITARIANS CIO 1181531 NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Sunday 19 July 12 noon

(Subject to the agreement of the Committee at their meeting on Sunday 5th July)

The First Annual General Meeting of Members of York Unitarians Charitable Incorporated Organisation, postponed from Sunday, 29th March, will take place on Sunday 19th July immediately following the morning service.

The meeting will be preceded by a brief meeting closing St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel as an excepted charity.

The AGM will receive the Annual Report and accounts, and appoint Officers and Trustees for 2020/21. A nomination form for officers and trustees can be e-mailed, printed copies are on the chapel table. All nominations received in March still stand, but others nominations would be appreciated, these may be sent to the secretary by e-mail. The closing date for nominations is Sunday 12th July to allow time for ballot papers to be prepared if needed.

A list of voting members is on the Vestry Notice Board prior.

Non-members are welcome to attend and may speak but not vote.

Some members collected an Annual Report in the Chapel in March, but if you didn't and would like a copy of the Annual Report as a pdf attachment, please let me know and I will e-mail it to you.

Margaret Hill, Secretary

RESUMING SERVICES IN THE CHAPEL

The committee will discuss the re-opening of the Chapel on Sunday 5th July following a risk assessment conducted by David Zucker and Margaret Hill. An e-mail will be sent following the meeting giving details of future plans.

ONLINE SERVICES

The Zoom details for our Sunday services are sent out to those on our mailing list 2 or 3 days before each Sunday. This is for security reasons.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, many of other congregations are offering online services either on Sundays or during the week; some zoomed like ours some on You Tube. See the Unitarian General Assembly website for details.

CHAPEL GROUPS

The Poetry Group will be on the last Wednesday of the month - July 29. We may be at Simon & Marta's if the social distancing is different by then as we will aim to be in the garden if 8 or more people are allowed to meet together. If weather bad we may be in the lounge and dining area, spread out if that is permitted. If that is not possible then we will continue to do it via zoom as we are doing this Wednesday at 7pm.

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE FOR SAFE USE OF CHURCHES

an edited version of the UK Government's long-winded [6000 reduced to 600 words], repetitive & poorly written statement of Monday 29 June.

From 4 July, gatherings of 30 people for communal worship, including led prayers, devotions or meditations by a Minister of Religion or layperson will be permitted. All parties should adhere to social distancing guidelines. 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation. Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following a risk assessment. Where a place of worship's premises are used by other user groups, only those activities permitted by law should take place.

Key principles for safely opening places of worship Apply this guidance with reference to specific circumstances, including its size and type of activities, how it is managed and regulated. Venue managers will have discretion over when they consider it safe to open or remain closed. A COVID-19 risk assessment should be completed.

The use of shared items such as prayer mats, service sheets, religious texts or devotional material should be removed from use. Single use alternatives should be provided as long as they are removed and disposed of by the worshipper. Where worshippers cannot bring their own books, places of worship should keep a selection of clean books quarantined for 48 hours since their previous use.

Singing, chanting and the use of musical wind instruments Avoid singing, shouting, raising voices and/or playing music at a volume which makes conversation difficult or encourages shouting because of the increased risk of transmission from aerosol and droplets. Playing of instruments that are blown into should be specifically avoided because there is an additional risk of infection where individuals are singing or chanting as a group (i.e. hymn singing). This applies even if social distancing is being observed or face coverings are used.

Where music plays a big part in worship, and recordings are available, we suggest you consider using these as an alternative to live singing. Organs can be played

for 'faith practices', but should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.

Cash donations should be discouraged. Use online or contactless giving and resources. Where this is not an option, cash should be collected in a receptacle that is set in one place and handled by one individual only. Wear gloves to handle cash offerings.

Children Shared facilities for children, play corners, soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean, should be removed and/or put out of use.

Restrictions on capacity The number of people permitted to enter at any one time should be limited, so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigation. Size and circumstance (including ventilation) of the premises will determine the number of people accommodated. This may be lower than the maximum 30 people who can attend life-cycle events such as weddings. Total floorspace as well as pinch points and busy areas should be taken into account (such as entrances, exits) and alternative or one-way routes introduced.

Hygiene On entering and leaving everyone should be asked to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser. Download a [Public Health England poster](#). You should provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to toilet facilities.

Toilets inside places of worship should be kept open and managed to reduce the risk of transmission of virus.

Cleaning All surfaces, especially those touched such as door handles and rails, should be regularly cleaned. Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this cleaning to take place.

Face coverings may be worn to offer protection to others and if so it is important to use them properly. Thoroughly wash hands before putting them on and taking them off.

Individuals aged 70 years and over attending the place of worship are advised to stay at home as much as possible and to minimise contact with others outside of their household.

THE CHAFFINCH

by Brinley Price

So is our God worthy of worship
Creator of Covid 19?
Allower of Auschwitz and A-bomb?
Or am I exhibiting spleen?

And should we bow down and obey Him?
For most of his laws appear wise,
Commanding us love one another . . .
But doubts in my heart start to rise"

It isn't a matter of reason,
It's when for the victims 'feel';
The Ruler of all remains silent
And deaf to our every appeal.

But yesterday's sight of the chaffinch
That perched in a still naked tree
Then made me love `God without thinking
And feel that God also loved me.

The chaffinch like God remained silent;
It spoke with its pink, white and grey,
A beautiful vision soon vanished
And with it my doubts flew away.

I guess that there's no easy answer
To questions of evil and death
But God still sings out from the chaffinch
For She in all beings is breath.

ABOUT PRAYER

Jo James, minister at Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds shared these thoughts recently on his Facebook page.
Hi

I wanted to share some research that I turned up following a post I watched on Russell Brand's Channel on YouTube in which he expressed amazement that people have been googling 'Prayer'.

I think it is relevant to us in our ongoing work to discover substance and value on an insubstantial medium like Zoom or YouTube, but also given that one of our goals is the inclusion of more young people.

A quarter of adults in the UK have watched or listened to a religious service since the coronavirus lockdown began, and one in 20

have started praying during the crisis, according to a new survey.

The survey of more than 2,000 people, commissioned by the Christian aid agency *Tearfund* and carried out last weekend, found that a third of young adults aged between 18 and 34 had watched or listened to an online or broadcast religious service, compared with one in five adults over the age of 55.

One in five of those who have tuned into services in the past few weeks say they have never gone to church.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/03/british-public-turn-to-prayer-as-one-in-four-tune-in-to-religious-services>

Jeanet Sinding Bentzen, an associate professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and executive director of the Association for the Study of Religion, Economics and Culture writes:

"Google searches for "prayer" have surged worldwide in step with the surge of emerging cases of Covid-19, the rising interest in seeking information about "prayer" on Google "skyrocketed during the month of March 2020 when Covid-19 went global," wrote

Using Google Trends data on internet searches for "prayer" for 95 countries, she said she found that "search intensity for 'prayer' doubles for every 80,000 new registered cases of Covid-19."

The data-timeline showing search intensity on 'prayer' is flat before a country registers its first case of Covid-19 and then drastically rises after the first case is registered in a country for all regions of the world, including Muslim majority nations.

Daily data on Google searches for 95 countries demonstrates that the COVID-19 crisis has increased Google searches for prayer (relative to all Google searches) to the highest level ever recorded.

The level of prayer search shares in March 2020 was more than 50% higher than the average during February 2020.

Google Trends measures keyword searches as a share of all total searches so any increase in internet activity doesn't skew the data."

I don't know about you but I don't get the feeling that this current crisis is likely to be a flash in the pan, more of an ongoing and escalating modus operandi. In light of which are focussing of our collective energy on prayer might be a valuable avenue of attention.

Thanks for reading this far

Jo James

FROM THE TROUBLES OF THE WORLD

The sermon by Revd. Celia Midgley on Sunday 24 May 2020

From troubles of the world I turn to ducks is the first line of a long poem by Frank W. Harvey, (b. 1888) who served with distinction in the First World War, surviving the Somme offensive before capture and imprisonment in German camps. He died in 1957.

NEW LANGUAGE

During the period of this current lockdown, we have been learning new behaviours, and new language –

‘social distancing’,
‘lockdown’

itself, and difficult words in big books that we have avoided reading until now

HARSH LANGUAGE

(‘Mithridate’ is a word used in *The Winthrop Woman* by Anya Seton – 624 pages long! Mithridate was a potion, a universal panacea obtained from the apothecary in the 17th century)

Well, that was then, but today’s leaders have been using a different language, a harsh language to describe coronavirus and dealing with it. It is

‘an invisible mugger’ that Britain has ‘wrestled to the ground’.

And we have the language of war; we are

‘fighting the battle’

and the brave souls doing the fighting are

‘on the front line’.

THE WORLD IS TROUBLED

No wonder, then, that there is among us a sense of danger, of constant anxiety, even if we are keeping safe, keeping well and generally staying alert. And, as more people die, people we know, people we love, there is real sadness, personal grief. By now there is no-one among us who has not been touched by this virus. The world is troubled.

NEW BEHAVIOURS

So we seek distraction – for consolation, for reassurance that the world will keep on turning and we with it.

“When did we last have fun?!”

I exclaimed to John the other day.

“Do you remember fun?!”

Fun still seems a long way off, but there are diversions, even small delights – and behaviours and activities never experience until now.

Take the Thursday evening clapping for the NHS. To see the neighbours emerge from their houses and clap vigorously while John bangs a wooden spoon on a saucepan is wonderful.

We are sharing our sense of vulnerability as well as our gratitude. We have also dared to hold ‘socially-distanced’ coffee mornings each Sunday. Who knew that Michael at number 16 baked cakes?

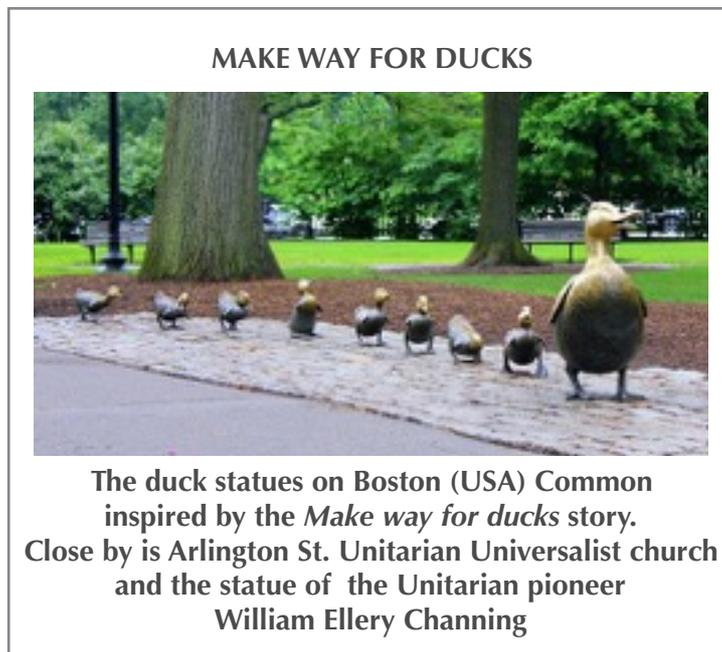
Everything takes more time now – shopping, cooking, staring.

“What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?”

We do now. We have time now to stare

“at sheep or cows,”

to lament the blossom that has blown, to scent still the wild garlic on the woodland walk. We have time now. Shall we make time in the future?



RELIGIOUS FAITH

Many people find comfort in their religious faith. How strange it must be for our Muslim friends right now, unable to meet, to eat, to celebrate as they wish. The Anglican church near us [in Skipton] has a sign on the gate which reads,

‘The Church is closed, but prayer continues.’

Many Christians will turn to their Bible for solace and we Unitarians will find hope in those beautiful words from the *Song of Songs*, offered to us by Nick [Morrice] in the service two weeks ago:

For lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
And the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

THE DUCKS

Then there are ducks. I enjoy ducks – their beautiful colours, their silly sound, their waddling walk. You may have spotted the duck on the bookcase behind me and my brooch which depicts Mrs Mallard from Boston with three of her ducklings.

Currently, on the canal outside our house, there is a family of swans – two adults and eleven cygnets. They swim past our house every day, in a line, like the ducklings in the story earlier.

But the ducks, mallards of course, are always there, pottering and pleasing the humans who just stand and stare at them. They are one of the constants in our world – here today, here tomorrow and the next day.

Our lives will not be the same when this is over. The sense of loss will linger. But all that has sustained us till now, that has given us joy or comfort, may still be there, if we only take time to look and listen, and so give thanks. Amen.

**We are the Chapel of
the Open Minds,
Loving Hearts and
Helping Hands**

Roslyn Hill Unitarians, Hampstead, London

PRAYER

Jan Struther wrote:

*Hard words will break no bones:
But more than bones are broken
By the inescapable stones
Of fond words left unspoken.*

And so let us pray:

So let us in the quiet of our minds
speak fond words:
for those to whom we are close
and who are close to us;
for those whose presence is now a memory;
for fond friends and helpful neighbours;

And let us in the quiet of our minds
speak fond words for those
we too often forget:
for those who are struggling with poverty,
with tyranny, or with disasters;
for those who seek work, a home,
or better health
for those who are discriminated against
because of who they are.

And let us in the quiet of our minds
try speaking fond words;
for those about whom we have difficulty
speaking fond words;
for those whom we never see
but on whom we depend;
for those who irritate us
when they are only doing their job;
for those with whom we are out of sorts.

And let us in the quiet of our minds just hope
that someone else is speaking fond words:
for those whom we find it difficult to love;
for those whom we cannot love
and who are unlovely to us;
for those whom we have forgotten.

*Hard words will break no bones:
But more than bones are broken
By the inescapable stones
Of fond words left unspoken.*

Amen

LOVING COMMUNITY

Former York Chapel minister Revd. Margaret Kirk wrote this article for a recent copy (28 May 2020) of *The Whitby Gazette*. It is reprinted here with Margaret's permission.

In these strange times, we have found things to sustain us in different ways. For many it's social media and a range of ways to video conference and have face to face contact with friends, family and work associates. Those of us more technically challenged are delighted with small victories when it comes to dealing with wayward technology or perhaps just basic lack of skill. For many of us it has been a novelty, a new experience but never an adequate substitute for real meeting. Throughout this time, we've felt the physical absence of those who are normally a part of our lives. Maybe it's also made us think a bit more about the meaning of community.

Community means different things to different people. To an elderly lady who lived near me who made the mistake of moving many miles away to be closer to relatives she barely knew, it was the realisation that the friendliness of neighbours and local shopkeepers was a more precious community than the family she found herself amongst.

Over the last few weeks we've experienced the shutting down of so much of that community affirmation: meeting friends for coffee, going to the pub, gathering on the beach in this beautiful weather, walking with a group of friends, attending a church service, – these are all part of meeting in community with others which we take for granted.. We realise how important they are when they have gone; we may not have valued them enough when they were at arm's reach.

People gather to share their joys and concerns often with humour and the lightest touch;

DO YOU HAVE A GARDEN?



If you are a Chapel member or friend:

- maybe you are missing the opportunity for chat and conversation with other members and friends; and
- maybe you have a garden; and
- maybe your garden has sufficient room for social distancing by two, three or four persons up to six; and
- maybe you could invite one or two other Chapel members and/or friends around for a cup of tea, coffee or juice and a chin-wag.

Zoom is one thing but the physical presence of other members of our chapel community is another!

people gather to share their sorrow at a funeral when someone dies – the togetherness of these moments gives us all strength to deal with the emptiness of loss. On these occasions physical contact can often be more precious than words: a hand on an arm, around a shoulder, an embrace – human touch may be all we need in this community of caring. The absence of that has been hard to bear.

At the heart of all religious practice is the beloved community whatever our spiritual or religious allegiance. It comes from the deepest of human needs: to meet, to connect, to be heard, to be valued, to be welcomed in. Mental health depends upon it. Let's hope these last few weeks have taught us something about the kind of loving community spirit that shapes our lives for the better and makes us eager to work towards it.

Margaret Kirk

FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met (by Zoom) on Sunday 28 June 2020. All members were present.
- It was agreed, now that *York Unitarians CIO* is functioning to rationalise the 5 different bank accounts into 3 The Chapel has total investments of approximately £150,000.
- A discussion took place regarding the payment of fees for those taking services.
- The Chapel will continue the 2019 *York Rescue Boat* good cause into 2020.
- *Margaret Hill* and *David Zucker* would meet in the Chapel on Monday 29 June to look at risk assessment issues relating to the re-opening of the Chapel after 'lockdown'.
- No outside bookings for concerts and recitals will be taken for the remainder of 2020.
- There will be further discussion at another committee meeting on Sunday 5 July.
- *Claire Lee*, *Simon* and *Marta Hardy* are standing down from the pastoral care team and will be replaced by *Joan Sinanan* and *Sue Elliott*.
- Nothing has been heard from *St.Crux* about the date for the 2020 Chapel sale.
- The next meeting will be held on zoom at 11.30a.m. on Sunday 5 July

ABOUT PEOPLE

Francis Wright, who is leading our worship on Sunday 5 July, is a member of Doncaster Unitarians presently taking the Worship Studies Course.

Liz Tomlin has a new great-granddaughter, Lily, born last week. She joins big brother Finley. All very proud.

TAKE A MUSIC BATH

once or twice a week for a few seasons,
and you will find that what it is to the soul
is what the water bath is to the body

Oliver Wendell Holmes

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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

Chairperson: *David Zucker*
<davidgzucker@gmail.com>

Secretary: *Margaret Hill*
☎ 01904 693427
<mhill.york@gmail.com>

Treasurer: *Nick Morrice*
☎ 01904 765424
<nickmorrice@gmail.com>

Chapel Committee Members:,
Barbara Barnes, *Dee Boyle*, *Laura Cox*,
Elizabeth Faiers, *Simon Hardy*, *Andrew Hill*,
Jenny Jacobs, *Joan Sinanan*, and the
Officers

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

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

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