



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

June 2019

FROM THE MINISTER

May has been so beautiful, that I can't imagine it can be topped by June!

It is a month when the chapel sees two weddings, one a same-sex couple, the other a mature couple. It's also *Pride in York* on the 8th. The very last weekend is our *General Assembly Sunday* when we remember the work of our wider movement and our officers and employees and make financial offerings to support the movement as a whole.

I have chosen the theme of commitment for this month. In some ways it seems rather an old-fashioned word, at odds with our desire for individualism and our distrust of institutions. In others it seems a very modern word. The huge upswelling of emotional demonstrations on our streets tells us that people are committed. They are committed to saving our planet, leaving Europe, staying in Europe, stopping fracking, saving trees. They have a visceral response.

Commitment is a relational word. I remember problem pages in teen magazines where readers complained of their boyfriend's lack of commitment and it is true that marriage as an institution has been on the decline. People are marrying later, perhaps when they have a better understanding of themselves and what they want in life.

We fear commitment when we worry that the person or the body to which we are committing may not be as perfect as they seem. They may

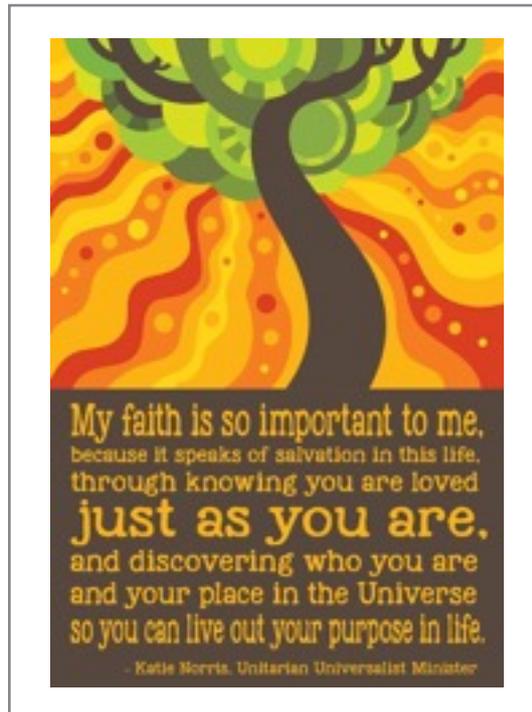
let us down; they may harm us or not keep us safe. Of course we can't guarantee that our lives will be a rose garden. But commitment means that we are going to hang on in there through ups and downs because we know at heart that this person or this church is good and we understand that it takes two to tango. In order for us to have a commitment we need to trust, to a certain extent, that the other also has our best interests at heart and in a cynical and hurting world this can be difficult.

We also need to trust that we ourselves are up to the task. But not to commit can leave us vacillating in an unfulfilled world. Perhaps you can be encouraged by the words of Scottish mountaineer William Hutchinson Murray:

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to

help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now."

Nicky Jenkins



My faith is so important to me,
because it speaks of salvation in this life,
through knowing you are loved
just as you are.
and discovering who you are
and your place in the Universe
so you can live out your purpose in life.

- Katie Morris, Unitarian Universalist Minister

A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

at 11.00a.m.

Sunday 2 June
Rev. Nicky Jenkins
The fire of commitment
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 9 June
Andrew Hill
Where the bee sucks
Music by Helen Drewery
Sparklers children's programme
12.15 Chapel committee meeting

Sunday 16 June
Rev. Nicky Jenkins
Flower Communion
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 23 June
Bright Lights with Claire Wilton
The Spirit of Trees
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 30 June
Unitarian General Assembly Sunday
Music by David Hammond

- Thursday 20 June 10.30 for 11.00a.m
Meditation Group (Upper Room)
- Saturday 22 June 7.30p.m. *St. Nick's Summer Concert with Stonegate Singers and Bryn Price* (Chapel)
- Saturday 22 June 10.30a.m. onwards
Yorkshire Unitarian Union Summer Gathering at Pepper Hill, Shelf, Halifax and Shibden Hall
- Monday 24 June 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 27 June 10.30 for 11.00a.m
Meditation Group (Upper Room)
- Friday 28 June 12.30p.m. *Last Friday: Stuart O'Hara bass & Rosie Morris (piano)*(Chapel)
- Saturday 29 June wedding: *Fran McDonnell & Lloyd Massingham* (Chapel)

FLOWER COMMUNION Sunday 16 June



The Flower communion, created by Norbert Capek, is an inclusive service centred on our community and the different talents and personalities we bring to it. Bring a flower that you feel represents you, or any flower or foliage to add to our bouquet and take a different one home with you. Spare flowers will be available if you forget.

OTHER EVENTS IN JUNE

- Saturday 1 June 1.00p.m. *Late Music: Lesley Schatzberger (clarinet), Alan George (viola) & Shelagh Sutherland (piano)* (Chapel)
- Saturday 1 June 7.30p.m. *Late Music: Bingham String Quartet – Aspects of Eno part 1 – Obscure Records* (Chapel)
- Monday 3 June 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Tuesday 4 June 7.30p.m. *York Interfaith Association: Expressing faith in clothes and symbols* (Hudson Room, Council Offices)
- Thursday 6 June 10.30 for 11.00a.m
Meditation Group (Upper Room)
- Saturday 8 June *York Pride*
- Saturday 8 June 1.30p.m. - *Wedding: Evangelos and David* (Chapel)
- Sunday 9 June 12.15 p.m. *Chapel Committee meeting* (Upper Room)
- Monday 10 June 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 13 June 10.30 for 11.00a.m
Meditation Group(Upper Room)
- Friday 14 June 12.30p.m. *Occasional Friday concert* (Chapel)
- Monday 17 June 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)

UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY Sunday 30 June

The service will focus on the work of the Unitarian General Assembly:

- Progress the agreed "Next Steps" priorities
- Develop ministry and local leadership education and training
- Raise our profile nationally
- Organise the annual meetings
- Promote religious education and youth programmes
- Provide congregational resources and advice
- Support *The Inquirer*
- Help congregations improve Safeguarding
- Promote social justice & a sustainable world

There will be retiring collections on Sundays 30 June and 7 July Cheques may be made payable to the *General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches*. Associate members of the G.A., for whom the G.A. holds gift aid declarations may gift aid cheques. It is not possible to gift aid cash in church collections for other charities.

FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met on Sunday 28 April with David Zucker in the chair. New members Joan Sinanan and Laura Cox were welcomed. Apologies were received from Nick Morrice and Simon Hardy. Andrew Hill provided opening words.
- The handover between former and present treasurers has now been completed. An audit of the 2018 Chapel accounts has been organised and gift aid for 2017/2018 arranged to be recovered. Accounting software recommended by Simon Bland the congregational support officer at Unitarian HQ has been purchased and the future possibility of paying 'a book keeper' discussed.
- Now that *York Unitarians CIO* formally exists it will open a CAFCash bank account. Andrew and Margaret Hill had held an informal and useful CIO conversation with our solicitor (Roderick Ramage) during the recent Unitarian General Assembly meetings.
- A contribution of £100 has been made towards a testimonial for retiring Unitarian General Assembly staff - chief officer, Derek McAuley and a further contribution to a testimonial for Essex Hall staff member John Crosskey, who retires June, will be made in due course. Both have given long and loyal service.
- The grant to the Yorkshire Unitarian Union to support the district administrator will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- The Secretary reported that Scarborough Unitarians would visit York on Sunday 4 August when a 'bring and share (after service) lunch' would be organised.
- The chapel will be in use as a polling station on Thursdays 2nd (York City Council) and 23rd May (European Parliament).
- It was confirmed that while the Chapel has its own Public Liability Insurance (PLI) covering events organised by the Chapel, this insurance does not cover outside groups hiring the Chapel who must have their own PLI. Furthermore the chapel does not have a licence for selling alcohol and outside groups claiming to have their own are peddling a myth. This was confirmed by an e-mail from the city council's licensing department.
- Updated information for couples wishing to be married in the Chapel was confirmed with thanks expressed to Dee Boyle for dealing with this important aspect of Chapel weddings.

- In future, new Chapel members will be presented with a copy of Cliff Reed's *Unitarianism: some questions answered*.
- There was no report about building maintenance.
- A number of books - related to the recent death and dying course - have been donated by Janet Eldred to the Chapel library. Barbara Barnes will making the annual stock take in the coming weeks.
- Laura Cox was given the go-ahead to set up Chapel *Twitter* and *Instagram* pages. Laura, who had attended the recent Unitarian General Assembly meetings, made useful contacts and has booked to go to Summer School at Great Hucklow.

A PRAYER BY CLAIRE WILTON written for a Bright Lights intergenerational service in February

Let us begin today the *joyful* way:
putting aside the things
that bother or preoccupy us
or drain our well of positivity.

Let us begin today the *peaceful* way:
forgiving the ones who have
annoyed or angered us
or belittled our values.

Let us begin today the *compassionate* way:
sharing the pain of those
who are hurt or suffering
or finding life difficult

Let us begin today the *courageous* way:
exploring new ideas that may
challenge or dismay us
and embracing difference.

Let us begin today as a *community*:
valuing our shared ideas and experiences;
building a web of support
that begins in this chapel
and reaches out far beyond our walls
to places where we can only imagine
what it's like to feel joy, peace, compassion,
courage and community.

Amen.

REVIEWS

Barbara Barnes reviews two items in the chapel library - an older book and a recent addition

I AM SURE (1975) by Basil Viney

"I Am Sure" is the autobiography of a Unitarian minister now well into his 80s, who may be known to some in our chapel. The book is subtitled "The Autobiography of a Theistic Parson", and such it is. His surety is in his conviction that one God exists and has made him/herself known to humankind. I suspect he would regard our, to me, happy band of mixed-view chapel attenders, as watered-down Unitarians and he regrets there is no longer a Unitarian creed.

Basil Viney, who had no children, has many interests and time to give them attention. He decries competitive sport and vivisection and has been consistent in his adult life in support of socialism, vegetarianism and to resurrecting 'obscure' composers of a kind of music I suspect I would not enjoy. Yet he can be endearing. Included among chapters about the many moves of home and congregation he and his wife made during a long career, there is one on "Animals We Have Known" about their pets. And the chapter that moved me most was the Epilogue, a moving tribute to his late wife, containing accounts of conversations with her from "the other side", assuring him she was by his side always.

A PATTERN OF YORK FEMINISM: CATHARINE CAPPE AS SPINSTER, WIFE AND WIDOW

(*Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* 2019) by Andrew Hill

The above article written by 'our own' Andrew Hill, is published in the April edition of *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, a copy of which is displayed on the bookshelves in the chapel entrance lobby. It is a highly readable account of the three "distinct streams" of the life of Catherine Cappe, née Harrison, 1744-1821.

Catherine did not confine herself to the conventional roles of a woman of her time. Noting as a child that her brother's education and expectations were denied her and that dancing and needlework were "not enough to occupy my mind" at boarding school in York, she demanded to study arithmetic and languages. Her gradual introduction to Unitarianism started with overhearing her clergyman father's doubts about the Trinity followed with personal study inspired by the views of her friend Hannah Lindsay, whose

father Theophilus resigned as Vicar of Catterick in 1773 and set up a Unitarian congregation in London. One clergyman who wrote in defence of Theophilus Lindsay's actions was Newcome Cappe, a widower, then minister of our own chapel of St Saviourgate.

After her father's death in 1763, then her brother's, Catherine and her mother's various house moves ended up in 1782 near their aunts in York, where Catherine recorded that she preferred Newcome's ministry "to any other". They married in 1788, Catherine, then aged 44, taking on a household of five of his six children still at home, aware even then that her husband was in poor health. When Newcome had a stroke in 1791, Catherine became his amanuensis and editor: after another stroke in 1793, it was Catherine who found an assistant for St Saviourgate in the young Charles Wellbeloved.

While she had always been interested in social reform and philanthropy, it was not until her husband's death in 1800 that Catherine became active in York in her own right. While other women of her education and standing would be involved in charitable giving and visiting, Catherine went further. This included introducing:

- classes after work for children employed in a local hemp factory, leading to setting up a Spinning School
- curriculum reform- and milk provision- introduced into Greycoat School.
- A financial society for women whose family wage-earner had died
- Radically reforming the management of and conditions at the then York Lunatic Asylum

All this while also maintaining regular contact with students and staff at Manchester College, then in York, and keeping a regular correspondence with several theologians of the time including William Channing, the noted American Unitarian. She died at home "after a cheerful evening with her daughters in law" on 28th July 1821.

**We believe
that Jesus was a man and
that you have to knit your own faith.
Anonymous**

THE CELTIC CONNEXION AND THE DIVINE FEMININE

The sermon by Nicky Jenkins on Sunday 17
March 2019

I have been thinking about the Divine Feminine and the connection to Celtic spirituality. This led me to St Brigid. Brigid is a hybrid of the pre-Christian religion of the Irish and the Celtic Christianity which arrived sometime in the 5th century.

VENUS OF WILLENDORF

Spanning 10,000 years and going back to Neolithic times the great creator was



acknowledged as birthing the universe. Just as in our story, the sun, moon, stars, galaxy were born from her. Archaeologists have found evidence of a sophisticated goddess worship. Dating from 30,000 BCE the Venus of Willendorf was an object of veneration - A tiny figurine with emphasised hips and stomach –All the better to give birth! (I somehow identified with her).

Meister Eckhart, the great German mystic of the Middle Ages, asks:

What does God do all day long?

And answers his own question:

God lies on a maternity bed, giving birth all day long.

Reflecting on Meister Eckhart's image, Diarmid O'Murchu notes:

"This is a metaphor we have known as a spiritual species for thousands of years, long before formal religions ever came into being . . . The Great Goddess of our Palaeolithic ancestors was perceived as a woman of prodigious fecundity, birthing forth the stars and galaxies, the mountains and oceans and every life form populating planet earth today. God, the great life-giver in the

pregnant power of creative Spirit, is probably the oldest and most enduring understanding of the Holy One known to our species."

O'Murchu concludes that:

"we are called to become co-birthers with our birthing God of the ongoing evolutionary re-creation of God's world in justice, love, compassion and liberation." (Diarmuid O'Murchu Jesus in the Power of Poetry (2009) pp. 45-46)

BRIGID OF THE CELTS

This Neolithic Goddess became Brigid of the Celts, a goddess related to the land. The Celtic tribes covered northern Europe from 500 BC to



Brigantia image found at Corbridge on Hadrian's Wall

500 AD. Brigid became the fire goddess, her attributes relating to creativity, inspiration, poetry, healing, the arts, smithing, fertility and the harvest Surely all aspects we could do with focussing on today.

Although she was partly in the other world, Brigid was very much of the earth, embodied, and her worship took place in the landscape, notably at the many wells

dedicated to her throughout Ireland as a goddess and a saint.

One of the interesting features of Brigid was her three in one identity. Maiden, mother and crone were all a part of her energy. New life, birthing and destroying when life had come to its end.

FEMININE POWER

Brigid is not just for women, however. Her qualities and energies can contribute to a more grounded and relational life for us all. Personally I grew up rejecting the messy earthiness of the female. I chose instead to follow the rational, the head-based, the logical aspects of myself and show that a woman can compete just as well in the man's world. Indeed our whole society and even Unitarianism has

MAY SERENDIPITY OFFERINGS

At our May Serendipity service on Sunday 5 May held in the round in the Chapel chancel the following word offerings were made by members of the congregation:

1. Sue Catts read the 'Whose garden was this?' from Tom Paxton's song *Earth Day*.
2. Claire Lee shared 'The angel of the north' from Nick Morrice's *Ballads and Songs*.
3. Mark Lee read a passage about mythical quicksands in the Arabian desert from *The Travels of Wilfred Messenger*.
4. Michael Archer spoke about bees and soil with the help of a small display cabinet.
5. Margaret Hill read a passage about May from *The Opinionated Gardener* by John Charlesworth.
6. Sue Ellis shared a personal serendipity story and read *I'm nobody – who are you* by Emily Dickinson.
7. Jen Atkinson read *Expect Life* from a favoured collection by Elizabeth Tarbox.
8. Joan Hill – 'Spring and Words' by Frank Walker from *A fair field full of folk*.
9. Barbara Barnes brought several items about climate change with references to T.S. Eliot's 'April is the cruelest month', Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, *The Guardian* 2020, and about the late Polly Higgins, Scottish climate attorney.
10. Sarah Emery found one of her favourite poems *Trees* by Philip Larkin.
11. Simon Hardy discovered *How everything adores being alive* by the recently deceased Mary Oliver.
12. Marta Hardy read Gerald Manley Hopkins' poem *Look at the stars*.
13. Keith Brown shared a passage from *The Sacred Depths of Nature* by Ursula Goodenough.
14. John Brogden had brought *The naming of parts* by Henry Reid.
15. Dee Boyle read Shakespeare's sonnet *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*
16. Bryn Price read his own poem *Good Friday* written recently at Sugar Hill Farm.
17. Mrs. Price shared a card from Bryn for her 90th birthday showing delightful spring blossom.
18. Finally David Hammond played a piano piece which he originally wrote for A level music.

ST. CRUX HALL SALE



Many thanks to all the volunteer helpers at our St Crux hall sale day for Chapel funds on Saturday 11 May:

Nicky and Phill Jenkins, Margaret and Andrew Hill, Marta and Simon Hardy, Claire Lee, Elizabeth Faiers, Jenny Jacobs, Dee Boyle, Denise Reynolds, Laura Cox, Brin Price, Barbara and Keith Barnes, Mike Tracey (Hull), Liz and Alan Pennington, Susan Elliot, Steve Crowther, Erica Barnes, Hannah Fyfe, Susan Leadley, Meike Dux-Harrap and David Harrap.



Thanks also to the cake makers, the soup makers, the car drivers, and everyone who provided goods to sell. We made a total of £938 for Chapel funds.

**Science and religion are two of the most potent forces on Earth,
and they should come together to save Creation. E. O. Wilson,**

ABOUT PEOPLE

Amy and Eddie Shannon brought Teddy Robin to the Chapel for naming on Saturday 26th May 2019. Teddy's big sister Elsie May planted a sunflower seed for Teddy. There were lots of children present who all joined in singing 'The wheels on the bus go round and round' The minister officiated.

We were saddened by the recent death of Chapel member John Grange on Monday 29 April at the age of 87. John, a back-pew worshipper who who liked intelligent sermons and good music was a resident of Hartrigg Oaks. Thanks to national service - the army sent him to Cambridge where he got a 'first' - John spoke fluent Russian; he had a particular interest in educational psychology and was a talented (mostly hidden) pianist. John's introduction to the Unitarian community was as the result of an encounter with the late Revd. D. Glan Morgan when they were both students at Leeds. At his funeral in the Chapel - conducted by our minister - there was a large gathering of family, friends and members of the congregation. The service was followed by burial beside his late wife in York Cemetery.

Chapel members will also be saddened to learn of the death of Vivien Irish, the Chapel's neighbour at 33 St. Saviourgate (at one time the Chapel's manse). Vivien, a widow, died unexpectedly on 3rd March aged 76. By profession she was an intellectual property expert. A published article of hers discusses the first bicycle as "a transport device for a human being characterised by two or more wheels; at least one wheel lying in front of the other wheel or wheels; a frame to which the wheels are rotatably connected; a manually operable bar arranged to change the position of the front wheel with respect to the rear wheel or wheels whereby the transport device can be steered; and foot-operable means to cause rotation of at least one wheel."

Our special thoughts are with Chapel member Jenny Jacobs whose father died recently in London.

Potentially 1307 persons visited the Chapel for each of the recent elections - York Council and European Parliament. Each time the Chapel is used as a polling station we receive £500.

**What is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?**
Mary Oliver

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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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),
Sue Catts and Claire Wilton.

Colton's Hospital Trustees
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