



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

June 2020

FROM THE EDITOR

Thirteen years ago when Margaret and I moved to York and turned up for our first Chapel Sunday service it was announced that the next Saturday was 'St. Crux Day' - just that, no more! "Who or what was St. Crux Day" I pondered.

Was it a day of commemoration? or of celebration? or of what? Even two born and bred Unitarians from elsewhere couldn't fathom that one out; and we left Chapel that Sunday none the wiser!

Well we know now - that St. Crux [it's just another way, like 'St. Saviour's', of saying 'Christ Church'] parish room on Whip-m-whop-mag-gate was built (1888) on the site of the former church (demolished 1887) in order to house its monuments and windows.

The room is rented out to charities and other organisations for fund raising events and sales. For our Chapel - once located on a very busy thoroughfare and now isolated in a very quiet street - St. Crux Hall has proved to be a 'godsend' for an annual money raising event. Regretfully, present circumstances mean that this year a Chapel sale at St. Crux is highly unlikely.

Opposite St. Crux Hall, across Pavement is a half timbered building known as Herbert House

because of its associations with the York mercantile family of that name several of whom are commemorated in St. Crux parish room. You will have drunk your coffee in the company of Alderman Sir Thomas Herbert d.1681; and

there hereby hangs a tale. Elizabeth, his daughter married Richard Hedworth of Chester-le-Street in County Durham and they had a son Henry Hedworth (1626 - 1705) who joined Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army rising to the rank of captain.

Henry was also a religious radical - probably an Anabaptist - and eventually, post civil wars, - turned up in London associated with an early Socinian (after Faustus Socinus) preacher by name John Biddle. Henry also travelled to the Netherlands and met

there Polish refugee Unitarians who were about to publish 6 large volumes called *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum quos Unitarios vocant* (*The library of the Polish Brethren, called by others Unitarians*). Henry Hedworth, thereby adopted the Unitarian (God is one not three) word and used it for the first time in printed English as more meaningful than the obscure Socinian (named for Faustus Socinus who happened to teach a unitarian view of God).

THE GREAT WEB

In this holy time,
when we are
physically distant
and yet
our interconnectedness
is undeniable,
help us to feel
the great web
that holds all of us.

 Rev. Susan
Frederick-Gray

Susan Frederick Gray is President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of America

**A MONTH OF SUNDAYS
at 10.30a.m.**

Zoom passwords are sent to members
and friends by e-mail a day or two
before each Sunday

Sunday 7 June
Janet Eldred
The labyrinth postponed

Sunday 14 June
Rev. Jo James
(Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel Leeds)

Sunday 21 June
Dee Boyle
Imagine: Refugee Action York

Sunday 28 June
Laura Cox

OTHER EVENTS IN JUNE

The Thursday meditation group is meeting virtually by zoom. All concerts recitals and other events at the chapel during June and July have been cancelled. This includes Lunchtime Concerts, York Early Music Festival and Late Music concerts.

HEART & SOUL SESSIONS

4pm Sundays

The 'heart and soul' sessions that have been organised through the Unitarian network allow time for anyone who needs to talk about anything in a smaller group rather than within the usual 'zoom' session of the congregation. They take place each week and usually have either a Minister or one of the Pastoral Care team to lead the session. Anything discussed is confidential.

Anyone joining the group has the option of switching off their video or muting their voice at any time during the session if they get emotional about anything being discussed. They can just listen without taking part in session if they want to or can take an active part and speak openly from their heart.

Some sessions have music and readings within them but, as ours in York are limited to 40mins, they are just an opportunity for people to chat about any concerns or worries that they have or just be able to talk in a smaller group about anything that has happened to them during recent weeks. Contact Dee for details if interested. *Dee Boyle*

FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met briefly (by Zoom) on Sunday 3 May 2020.
- The secretary reported that the Chapel building remained closed. A government announcement was expected on Thursday 7 May.
- The officers have decided to postpone the annual meeting until we can re-open the Chapel. In the present circumstances the Charity Commission are being flexible.
- The Unitarian General Assembly meetings were cancelled. Claims for reimbursement of accommodation fees have been made.
- Jo James, minister of Mill Hill Chapel Leeds has been co-opted by the GA Executive Committee and also made Yorkshire Unitarian Union (YUU) link person.
- The Chapel secretary responded to the GA survey on how the 'lock-down' was affecting congregations. No minister's stipend is presently being paid but rental income from concerts and recitals is no longer available. 70 congregations responded.
- 2 new Lindsey Press books - *Seeking Paradise* by Stephen Lingwood and *Life's Journey, creating Unitarian rites of passage* have been purchased for the Chapel library with a YUU grant.
- Peter Exley checks the Chapel on his exercise bike rides. Melissa has been in a few times for cleaning. The Pastoral Care Group is keeping in touch with vulnerable Chapel members.
- Total cash reserves are £142,371. A Gift Aid claim of £4000 has been paid into the new York Unitarians CIO Cafbank account and the old chapel account closed.
- A new chapel e-mail address for use by the officers has been set up by Laura Cox, initially to handle the Zoom account. David Zucker & Dee Boyle have agreed to oversee Zoom gatherings.

FOOD

A sermon by Jenny Jacobs on Sunday 8 March and an article which Jenny wrote for the Unitarian Penal Affairs Panel's newsletter.

MORE THAN FUEL FOR OUR BODIES

Food is far more than just the fuel for our bodies. It is freighted with memory, desire and emotion. From our earliest days, food is connected with love, giving, peace and plenty. When we share meals with friends we are building relationships, not just satiating our appetites. Foods trigger memories in the same way that music does – suddenly we are transported to another time, another place. For me, the smell of Heinz tomato soup instantly takes me back to long country walks with friends and family, usually in vile weather, when we'd stop and heat up soup on a primus stove. The smell of soup and paraffin combined to spell comfort and luxury; exactly what I craved after what felt like hours tramping through brambles and mud, with my fingers and toes turning to ice. Each one of you, I'm sure, will be able to think of foods that take you back to other times and places.

And cooking for family and friends and sharing meals with them is one of those great pleasures which cross cultures and boundaries, bringing us together the whole world over.

Food is a means of building family, friendship, community. It can also be divisive; we may identify with our particular food culture or religious food taboos and denigrate someone else's. This can lead to seemingly ludicrous arguments about whether you put the jam or cream first on a scone (or indeed whether you call it a *sconn* or a *scohne*) or whether the seam on a pastry should run across the top or down the side.

FEEDING THE WORLD

However, food can give rise to far greater divisions than these. One of the most uncomfortable features of our present times is the rise of foodbanks. This seems incomprehensible in what's still the fifth largest economy in the world. Does the UK really not have enough food to go round, enough food for everyone to have an adequate diet?

And the situation in twenty-first century Great Britain is a microcosm of the world at large, where the rich nations have an over-abundance of food while other nations do not have enough.

Many are worried that if we can't feed the world now, how will we feed it when the

population reaches ten billion, as it is expected to do shortly after 2050? Fears such as these may licence genetically-modified foods, sold to us as the answer to feeding the world. But they are actually being designed, not from an altruistic desire to solve world poverty, but to line their investors' pockets – and at worst, potentially to patent the global food supply.

In fact, Mahatma Gandhi was right when he claimed that— 'Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed.'

Because we *can* feed the world now. Globally, our farmers are incredibly efficient; they currently produce enough food to feed the world one and a half times over. So we could even feed that potential ten billion *now*, given our current surplus. The issue is not one of under-production but unfair distribution – same as with the global money supply. Other factors also play a part; poor geographical distribution lines and massive amounts of waste. These are issues that can be tackled. So can economic systems that rely on impoverishing some to enrich others and trade which is free but not fair. If we collectively had the will, we could ensure that everyone currently had enough to eat. It would be difficult and require both technological improvements and structural change, but it is possible. However, that's not the end of the story.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLITICAL CHOICES

By far the biggest challenge to the global food supply is climate change. That too can be tackled if only there is the political will to do so. The jury is still out on whether this will happen; we need the USA, currently a huge over-consumer, to step up to the mark, take responsibility and lead on this issue. While Trump remains president, the prospects of this seem vanishingly small. But we can hope.

In this country, it is not yet climate change nor lack of actual supply which sends desperate people to food banks in ever-increasing numbers, but political choices. Those of us lucky enough not to need food banks are torn between feeling it is only fair to support them whilst at the same time deploring the political necessity for their existence. Worst is the increasing normalisation of food banks and the daily need for charity to step in to repair the gaping holes in our welfare safety net. Something is hugely wrong with our economy when the number of billionaires has more than doubled since the global financial crisis in 2008, but the number of children living in

poverty is rising fast and is predicted to reach record levels by 2024.

Further, although climate change is not yet having a significant impact on harvests in the UK, unless action is taken soon, we can expect to see the same sort of challenges that already affect more vulnerable areas of the globe. We ourselves **are** vulnerable to these changes as currently we import just over 50% of our food from other countries, some of which are already severely impacted by climate change. And even here, farmers are reporting early impacts; for example, the 2018 UK heatwave led to low yields of most UK crops, such as cereals, carrots, potatoes and livestock fodder.

This winter has brought record flooding, which will undoubtedly have an impact on this year's crops. People who doubt that climate change is happening can think what they like, but denial won't stop the heatwaves, the fires and the floods.

CHANGE AND RIGHT RELATIONSHIP

In all this doom and gloom, it's easy to forget that change is possible and that our world is still a beautiful, bountiful place whose gifts could be shared much more fairly and which can still sustain us all. It's important not to take it for granted and, largely thanks to people like David Attenborough, Greta Thunberg and the thousands of people of all ages all over the world who are joining in Extinction Rebellion's demonstrations, I think we are all waking up to the challenges and the possibilities of our current climate crisis.

The Quakers have a principle which I think we could all do well to adopt: right relationship. This concept requires that we live in such a way that we live in harmony with the commonwealth of life, which includes the animal and vegetable kingdoms as well as our own. It's a way of life that sees the interconnectedness of every living thing and although it's a foundational principle of Quaker living, its time has never been so urgent as now. Living in right relationship means living mindfully, conscious of the impact of our choices on the web of life which sustains us. More and more people are choosing a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle, and in response there are far more products available which can help ease this transition. In this way, perhaps a virtuous circle is emerging.

FLIGHT FREE

Similarly, people have taken up the Flight Free 2020 campaign and pledged to stay on the ground this year. All around the world, people are rising to the climate challenge and it is groundswell actions like these which give me hope. Governments are generally reactive rather than proactive, conscious that unpopular decisions could see them lose office in short order. But when they see mass action on climate change, then they start to take the subject seriously. Already Governments like our own are pledging to go zero carbon by 2050 or even 2030.

WHERE WE COME IN

And this is where we come in and why everything we do matters. Climate change may be a challenge where the whole world needs to act to effect change; but that change has to start with *us*, with ordinary people and the choices we make on a daily basis. We *do* have power and what we do does make a difference.

And all the things we need to do to tackle climate change will not only secure our global food supply but will result in a better world for all of us. Creating a steady-state economy rather than pursuing endless, unsustainable growth means that we will spend:

- less time at work and more time cultivating our gardens.
- less time and money buying endless new bits of must-have electronics or fashion items, more time making the most of what we already have.
- less time keeping up with the Joneses and more time with friends and family.

LIVE SIMPLY SO OTHERS MAY SIMPLY LIVE

I've heard talk of there only being a hundred harvests left. I don't know if there's any scientific basis for this. But we are ingenious and resourceful creatures. And we're surely not that stupid. This is a challenge we all can take individually as well as collectively; to live more sustainably, eat less or no meat, make do and mend, live simply so that others may simply live. And if we can do all of that, the reward will be that our children, grand-children and great grand-children will continue to survive and thrive, along with everyone else's, on a cleaner, greener, more beautiful planet. And who could possibly not want to sign up to that?

A GOOD DIET: WHAT SHOULD WE BE EATING NOW?

*an article by Jenny Jacobs for the Unitarian Penal
Affairs Panel's newsletter*

What is a good diet? At its most basic, it is one which sustains life. But there is so much more to it than that.

Here are some questions whose answers might help us determine what constitutes a good diet here and now.

- What is the impact of our diet on the climate?
- What is its social impact?
- What about the impact of meat eating on the animals?
- What's my fair share of the global food supply?

1 IMPACT OF OUR DIET ON THE CLIMATE

In the summer of 2019, many of us were horrified by the fires raging in the Amazon. These are not accidents. Deforestation of the Amazon rainforest is a deliberate policy of the Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, and although the attention of the world's media has moved elsewhere, the Amazon is still burning. Deforestation by burning not only contributes to carbon emissions in itself, but the reason for it is to fuel the world's desire for meat. The clearances are for meat production, either directly (farming of beef) or through the introduction of farming of soya for animal feed. 90% of global soya production is fed to livestock (cows, pigs, chickens) which is then fed to us. Meat eating is thus directly linked to the destruction of the Amazon rain forest.

The rain forests of the Philippines have also been largely destroyed. "When Ferdinand Magellan "rediscovered" the Philippines in 1521, forests blanketed 95% of the country. When the Ormoc City, Leyte tragedy happened (Typhoon Thelma, 1991) – which left 8,000 people dead – timber cover was only 18%." Deforestation has led to soil erosion, silting up of rivers and reservoirs, species extinctions and a huge depletion in water resources at the same time as flooding disasters.

Rain forests are destroyed not just by logging but increasingly by burning, simply to create bare land to farm animals, or crops to feed animals, largely destined for the dinner plates of the global North. This is an incredibly inefficient use of land (and water). The impact of this farming on the climate comes in many forms; the clearance of the

forests, the emissions created through agriculture, the impact of transportation around the world, the refrigeration necessary, the processing of meat in factories, the packaging, and the waste, where so much of our food (a third) ends in landfill.

Globally, agriculture is responsible for 75% of deforestation, between 19-29% of all greenhouse gas emissions and 56% of non-carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions. There is no doubt whatsoever that our current food production practices are contributing in a major way to climate change which will have adverse effects on all our lives. We cannot go on as we are.

2 WHAT IS ITS SOCIAL IMPACT?

12% of our food supply comes from the global South (products such as tea, coffee and chocolate, amongst others). In these areas, production of cash crops for export may at first seem like a preferable option to the typical small farmer in these countries, increasing income. However, the production of crops for export rather than food crops for consumption lays these small producers open to gluts and price drops. Climate change also affects their ability to keep producing these crops, rather than the indigenous drought-resistant grains and roots formerly produced for home consumption. Market failures mean that there are scarcities at home and farmers are prey to debt and food poverty. In India, the suicides of small farmers have reached epidemic proportions. These suicides are blamed on climate change and debt.

There is much talk (particularly post-Brexit) of the advantages of free trade. But should trade simply be free or should it be fair? Wealthier nations use free trade to prevent poorer, weaker countries (usually in the global South) from enacting policies to protect their smaller farmers. Fair trade, however, seeks to protect the incomes of indigenous farmers and protect workers' rights. It also helps to eliminate pay differentials between countries. Ethically, fair trade beats free trade, and prevents richer nations from impoverishing poorer nations still further.

3 WHAT ABOUT THE IMPACT OF MEAT EATING ON THE ANIMALS?

If our lives are being sustained by the loss of other lives, how do we weigh up whose life is worth the sacrifice of many others? In a lifetime, the average person will eat more than 7,000 animals. That's a lot of animal deaths to sustain one human life.

It's not just the killing which many find unethical. It's the miserable lives of many animals, brought

into being for the express purpose of being killed just a few weeks later, and during their lives, confined in conditions which are completely unnatural. Pigs have a natural lifespan of 15-20 years, but pigs reared for consumption are typically slaughtered at 5 months. Around 1.5 billion pigs are slaughtered worldwide per annum. The vast majority of these are intensively reared. Even in the UK, only 3% of pigs will spend their entire lives outdoors. Pigs are intelligent animals, mammals like us, and typically are deprived of everything that would give them some semblance of natural life. Chickens are also bred intensively, in even more vast numbers; over 50 billion chickens are reared every year, mostly in extremely unnatural conditions. The average chicken reared for meat grows up in less space than an A4 sheet of paper and has more space around it in the oven while being cooked than it ever did in life.

Once one starts to look at farming practices, it is easy to conclude that only free-range meat is ethically sound. However, even here, animals are slaughtered when still infants and dairy cattle are separated from their calves. Are our lives worth these sacrifices?

4 WHAT'S MY FAIR SHARE ON THE GLOBAL IMPACT?

According to the United Nations (reporting in 2002), the average number of calories available per capita is 2800. This is actually as much as any one of us needs (and rather more than we need if our lifestyles are sedentary). Food, however, is not produced and distributed according to need. The problem, as with the global money supply, is one of unfair distribution, not lack of sufficient food globally. Nevertheless, it's reassuring to know that, so long as do not eat to excess, we are not taking more than our fair share.

However, we can't afford to be complacent. There is a huge threat to the global food supply – climate change. Already it is having a significant impact. And while harvests in the global North may actually benefit from the impact of warming, overall the global food supply is likely to decline, and to be most adversely affected in the global South, undoing decades of progress. Current agricultural practices will have to change, not only to accommodate climate change but because food production is responsible for around 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions. As noted above, a lot of these emissions are driven by animal husbandry and the desire for cheap and plentiful meat.

CONCLUSION

The IPCC's recent report, "Climate Change and Land" recommends measures to tackle climate change. These include changing our diet to one that is sustainable. "Examples of healthy and sustainable diets are high in coarse grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables, and nuts and seeds; low in energy-intensive animal-sourced and discretionary foods (such as sugary beverages); and with a carbohydrate threshold."

This would be a diet which is good not only for us but for the planet and our continued future upon it. Those looking for a diet which is not only sustainable but also ethically sound might wish to go further and cut out all animal products. Veganism has surged in popularity recently as people have become more aware of the impact of their diet on the climate and their fellow creatures. But if veganism is a step too far, we should seriously consider becoming vegetarians. And if even that seems too difficult, we can do worse than remember the wise advice of American professor Michael Pollan: "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants."

ACTION WE CAN ALL TAKE

1. Buy only what you need, use up leftovers, make soup, stews or crumbles with any vegetables and fruits that are past their best.
2. Cultivate your garden or your window box if that's all you have. Gardening is good for you and home-grown food has the lowest food miles possible.
3. Shop local, buy seasonal produce, preferably whole not processed.
4. Cut out meat and fish and go vegetarian or ideally vegan.
5. Choose fair trade products whenever possible.

Jenny Jacobs

ABOUT PEOPLE

• York Unitarians will be sad to learn of the death of Bradford Unitarian *David Dawson* an honorary member and past president of the Unitarian General Assembly, leading light of the Unitarian Music Society, joint editor of the purple hymn book and well known at the York chapel. A full obituary appeared in *The Inquirer* (30 May) and a thanksgiving service will be held at a later date when circumstances permit.

• Our special thoughts are with Chapel member John Issett on the recent death of his brother.

MEDITATION ON THE CLOSING OF CHURCHES

Churches may be glad of the stillness.
These great stone ships seldom have the chance to
Hunker down into replenishing silence.

Christianity is too talkative. Noisy religion.
The Society for Standing Up and Sitting Down Again.
The Society for Annunciation of a Momentary Silence.

You see your empty church and see shipwreck
And think that because you are not there in linen robes
With rehearsals of creeds, that prayer is not there.

But your church and temples are not empty.
Silence is there. Praying in her many houses.
Clergy nor creed nor any religion own Her.
Stillness beyond all religion,
Yet deeply at its core,
Even while you fill temples with the clatter of words.

Let Silence be the guardian and keeper of these stone vessels.
She who keeps the stillness on the ocean's floor
Who tends the cave where no noise echoes because no noise
enters
Hers is the aching heart that hides ancient atomic groan
And her home, the rest between the beats in every heartbeat
Look out to the stars beyond stars and listen
Listen to Her listening to the listening of your own

Go within and find Her in the hush.
In the breath of alleluia in the night
In the inhalation of hope before waking
Hers is the softness between the breath.
And the hidden quiet light that lingers at a death

Do not fret about your empty church.
Silence holds the space holy
And always did.
She holds all things and mourns all things
She is in all things

She holds every story but her own.
She knows each name, with no need to know her own
Let Silence guard the stillness and the stones.
While you care for the bereaved and those full of fear
That is your creaturely task.
The task of all who call each to be priest to each and every
other.

And when the great keys are turned, the wooden doors re-open,
Tread gently. Do not rush to fill the stillness

The great stone ships held their prayer for you.
They bade the Absolute to enter in.
They prayed with you.

Honour them with silence of your own.
Gilo (Co-editor, *Letters to a Broken Church*,
Survivor and Outsider Theologian)
suggested by Adrienne Wilson

SERENDIPITY OFFERINGS

'the faculty of making lucky discoveries'

on Sunday 26 April

- Anneliese Emmans Dean: *own poem about a bumble bee from France*
- Barbara Barnes: *Victor Hugo 'Be like the birds' + 'Great Happiness'*
- Meike Dux Harrap: *'The Door' by a Czech poet - At least there will be a draft*
- Susan Leadley: *wisdom from the Dalai Llama*
- Kim Baron: *'Serendipity' by Angela Jenkinson + an unhatched bird's egg*
- Keith Brown: *'Magic Penny' song*
- Dee Boyle: *own poem 'Changes'*
- Elizabeth Faiers: *Jamie Primate Sullivan about trust, hope, confidence and love*
- Eve Branson: *2 pieces by Walt Whitman*
- Claire Lee: *'I carry your heart' by e.e.cummings*
- Adrian Cooper: *about invisible cities and Marco Polo*
- David Zucker: *'Just the tide went out' by Max Boyce*
- Jenny Jacobs: *'A ship, an isle, , a sickle moon' by James Elroy Fletcher*
- Jenny Howard: *'New season' by Wendy Cope*
- Sue Catts: *quotation from Rumi*
- Andrew Hill: *poem by Chapel friend Lesley McKeown*
- Marta Hardy: *piece by Jeff van der Kleef*
- Simon Hardy: *3 quotations*
- Jen Atkinson: *'Good friends' by John Donagoe*
- Richard Brown: *'What is this life?' by W.H.Davis*
- Joan Sinanon: *Chinese story about 2 pots*
- Laura Cox: *closing words*

LIFE'S JOURNEY: CREATING UNITARIAN RITES OF PASSAGE

Life's Journey - edited by Daniel Costley - and very recently published by the Lindsey Press is the latest in a series of Unitarian guides and resource books for ministers and others called upon to officiate at events marking the births, marriages and deaths of human lives. A copy has been purchased for the Chapel library.

Intriguingly, *Life's Journey* follows in a series of volumes which follow developmental changes in how celebrants create and record these rites the most recent of which have been *A Book of Occasional Services* (1932) and *In Life and Death* (1968). These were almost 'take it or leave it' volumes. Copies- when they emerge - often have alternate passages either scribbled in the margins or pasted on the end pages by former users.

Celebrating Life (1993) was a much more diverse resource with many alternatives for each 'item'. It has been described as 'pick and mix' but, more accurately it was 'pick' without needing the mix. It was also aware that the availability of professional ministers for officiating at 'life journey' events was more limited than it used to be and that 'lay' people were sometimes being called upon to officiate. But also, it should be noted that *Celebrating Life* was the first Unitarian 'occasional services' volume of the computer age! Its editing was all done on an Amstrad PCW computer and it couldn't have been produced without one. Maybe you remember them.

Well, *Life's Journey* (2020) is most definitely a volume for present times and the computer age. It provides helpful guidelines for producing meaningful and worthwhile scripts for individualised rites of passage which until the recent arrival of computers was dependent either upon manuscript or upon typewriting. Word processing and the internet has changed all that. No longer do celebrants work with an established text with marginal notes and stuck in labels. Material can now be collected, stored, re-written and brand new individualised scripts produced for every new event. That is the context in which *Life's Journey* has been born and it is a very welcome child. In addition, throughout the book and in their appropriate places are many previously unpublished and very welcome sets of words by contemporary British Unitarians which celebrants will probably want to copy into their word processed scripts.

Andrew Hill

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