



# THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

March 2019

## FROM THE MINISTER

March. Perhaps it's definitely spring by now. Here in York we seem to have escaped the worst of the winter weather. March to me has a feeling of anticipation to it. Maybe as a child I looked forward to the end of term and Easter. Growing up in Scotland I may have noticed the days getting longer - no longer going to school and coming home in the dark.

March also contains International Women's Day and I am pleased that

Laura Dobson from Chorlton in Manchester will be here to lead our service on Sunday March 3<sup>rd</sup> on Hildegard of Bingen. She has recently been accepted for Ministerial training. I have chosen the theme The Divine Feminine for March because of International Women's week. Unitarians have been at the forefront of having women in Ministry with Gertrude von Petzold appointed as a Minister in 1904.

We will also be having a visit from the current President of the General Assembly Joan Cook and hosting our local district meeting, The Yorkshire Unitarian Union, on the Saturday beforehand. And Mother's Day falls on 31<sup>st</sup> March when we will be having a café church.

So there is a lot to ponder on the role of women in the past and how we want

to see things in the future. Would it help if we conceived of God as female? Although many of us have moved away from an Old Testament God as a bearded elderly man looking firm while sitting on a cloud, we may still be beset with the Father or Son images.

How might we relate to a God who displayed feminine attributes, motherly attributes, who seemed more like us if we identify as women or more unlike us if we identify as male? From

ancient times consciousness has been divided into masculine and feminine, yin and yang and we need both to operate as balanced human beings. The Divine feminine is associated

with creation, intuition, community, sensuality and collaboration. All worthy qualities which we might like to nurture.

"In a balanced viewpoint that includes both masculine and feminine perspective, healing is seen not as a technique, but as a process."

*Jeanne Achterberg, Woman as Healer*

So maybe it will help not just ourselves, but others and the world we live in to include this feminine energy in our lives more consciously, to be open to a balanced way of being and to heal ourselves and the earth.

*Nicky Jenkins*



## **A MONTH OF SUNDAYS**

**at 11.00a.m.**

Sunday 3 March  
Laura Dobson  
*Hildegard of Bingen*  
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 10 March  
Joan Cook  
Unitarian General Assembly President  
The universal language  
Music by Helen Drewery  
Sparklers children's programme  
Bring and share lunch

Sunday 17 March  
Revd. Nicky Jenkins  
*The Celtic Connexion  
and the Divine Feminine*  
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 24 March  
Alan Pennington  
*Holy Water?*  
Music by David Hammond  
12.30 p.m. Annual General Meeting

Sunday 31 March (British Summer Time)  
Revd. Nicky Jenkins  
*Cafe Church*  
*The trouble with mothers*

- Friday 15 March 1 p.m - 4.00 p.m. Late Music Workshop
- Saturday 16 March 7.30 p.m. 'Songs for Roger Trew': A benefit concert for St Leonard's hospice, tickets £10
- Sunday 17 March 12.30p.m. -1.45p.m. *Death and dying discussion 3 'Making decisions about life-prolonging treatment for others'* (Upper Room)
- Monday 18 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore choir rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 21 March 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Friday 22 March 7.30 p.m. Rehearsal of *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Chapel)
- Saturday 23 March Private performance *Rime of the Ancient Mariner: choral work* (Chapel)
- Sunday 24 March 12.30p.m. *Chapel Annual General Meeting* (Chapel)
- Monday 25 March 7.30p.m *Soon Amore choir rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 28 March 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Thursday 28 March 3-8p.m. Recording session: Chris Bartram, *Communitas community choir* (Chapel)
- Friday 29 March 12.30p.m. *Last Friday concert: Jane Parkin sax forte* (Chapel)
- Saturday 30 March 2.00p.m. *Early Music concert: Palisander (recorders)* £12/10 (Chapel)

## **OTHER EVENTS IN MARCH**

- Saturday 2 March 7.30 p.m. *Late Music* (Chapel)
- Monday 4 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore choir rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Tuesday 5 March 7.30p.m. *York Interfaith Association: Interfaith issues and community cohesion* (Hudson Room, Council Offices)
- Thursday 7 March 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Friday 8 March 12.30p.m. *Occasional Friday: Adam Heron & Aida Lalou* (Chapel)
- Saturday 9 March 11.00a.m-4.00p.m *Yorkshire Unitarian Union general meeting* (Chapel)
- Sunday 10 March 11.00a.m. *Joan Cook GA President at York* (Chapel). Bring & share lunch.
- Monday 11 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore choir rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 14 March 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Thursday 14 March 7.30 Wilberforce Trust - poetry evening

## **THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**of Members of the Congregation  
will take place on Sunday, 24th March,  
at 12.30 p.m.  
following the morning service.**

**The Annual Report for 2018 will be available  
and Officers and the Chapel Committee  
for 2019/20 will be appointed.**

**Nomination forms for officers and committee  
members are available from the Secretary.**

**A list of voting members will be on the  
Notice Board prior to the meeting.  
Non-members are welcome to attend  
and may speak but not vote.**

**Margaret Hill,  
Secretary**

## FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE

- The Chapel Committee met on Sunday 17 February with apologies from Sue Catts.
- The issue about whether or not to continue locking the Chapel yard gates was reviewed following the previous Sunday's congregational meeting. It was decided, on the grounds of safety to continue doing so.
- The group taking forward the implementation of York Unitarians CIO (Sue Catts, Nick Morrice, Margaret and Andrew Hill) had met once. Simon Hardy will be joining them at their next meeting on Tuesday 5 March.
- The minister will be leading a private memorial service for Joan Rowland at Hartrigg Oaks on 22 March. She will also be arranging a meeting of the pastoral care group.
- The secretary has been gathering material for the 2018 annual report to be presented to the annual meeting of members on Sunday 24 March.
- An application for chapel membership has been received and accepted from John Brogden.
- Residents Festival opening at the end of January had welcomed 110 visitors. The committee were disappointed that the listing of local churches together and separately from other open venues had resulted in a lower turn out than previously. A exhibition about Charles Darwin arranged by Margaret Kirk was displayed. Thanks were expressed to Chapel members who had helped.
- Our fundraising day at St. Crux Hall will be Saturday 11 May.
- The Yorkshire Unitarian Union meeting at the Chapel on Saturday 9 March starts with coffee at 10.30a.m. Sandwiches from Marks and Spencer's will be provided for lunch. We need cakes for lunch time at 1 p.m. The Unitarian General Assembly President is taking the Chapel service the following day.
- The Chapel will be used as a polling station on Thursday 2 May and has been put on standby should there be a 'snap' General Election.
- Barbara Barnes has selected a group of books to discard from the Chapel library in order to make room for new books.

**I get the blues thinking of the future,  
so I left off and made some marmalade.  
It is amazing how it cheers one up  
to shred oranges and scrub the floor**

[D.H.Lawrence]

## JOAN ROWLAND

We note the death of our oldest Chapel member, *Joan Rowland* a resident at Hartrigg Oaks. Joan, who has been unable to attend on Sundays for a long while, had been a founder and regular member of the meditation group. She was fascinated by ideas and by philosophy and enjoyed engaging with quite complex ideas. She attended services regularly and enjoyed the variety of services and service leaders while she was able. Some months ago her son was able to bring her to service. Her body was left to medical research and there will be a private memorial service.

## ABOUT PEOPLE

Our thoughts and prayers are with *Jen Atkinson, Sarah* and *Chris* following the recent death of *Tony*. Several York Unitarians travelled to Hull for the funeral which was conducted by former York minister, Margaret Kirk.

Diary date if you are in Manchester on Friday 26 April. Chapel musician *David Hammond* is giving a lunchtime recital with James Gaughan (baritone) at Cross Street Chapel - the home of our sister congregation - in central Manchester.

## YORKSHIRE UNITARIAN UNION March gathering and general meeting Saturday 9 March 11a.m - 4.00p.m. St. Saviourgate Chapel York



featuring a presentation and workshops led by  
Unitarian General Assembly President 2018-19,

Joan Cook

10.30 - Coffee

11:00 – Welcome and housekeeping

11:10 - Opening devotions

11:15 – Talk by Joan with 11.35 Q & A

11:50 - Break

12:00 – YUU meeting

13:00 - Lunch

14:00 – Workshop

15:30 - Reflection on day

15:45 - Closing devotions

## **CHAPEL'S ETHICAL INVESTMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES**

The Chapel's permanent financial endowment is held by a separate charity known as the St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel Charity. Both the Charity and the Chapel (building and congregation) will be vested in the new York Unitarians CIO. The Chapel Charity's investments are held in CCLA COIF [Churches, Charities & Local Authorities Charities Official Investment Fund] which has strong ethical policies. as explained in these two extracts reprinted below:

"We are keen to control the individual underlying investments made by the fund, and as a result limit as far as possible the use of third party pooled funds. This allows us to ensure that the holdings are consistent with the investment objectives and also with the ethical and responsible investment policies our clients select.

We always avoid investments in companies with unacceptable environmental, social and governance behaviour, and have ethical restrictions based on the guidance of our Advisory Group, drawn from the investors in the Fund.

We manage the Fund with the aim of ensuring that ethical restrictions do not impact on long-term financial returns.

The ethical restrictions are those prioritised by investors in the Fund, and include the following:

- Companies involved in the production of landmines, cluster bombs or nuclear weapons
- Companies which derive more than 10% of their revenue from alcohol, gambling, adult entertainment, tobacco, strategic military sales, civilian firearms or high-interest lending
- Companies in the extractives and utilities sector that lag in the transition to a low carbon economy
- The full ethical investment policy is available on our [CCLA COIF] website.

The Fund's approach to Climate Change is explained in this extract:

Climate change is of critical importance to investors and we pay particular attention to the risks and opportunities that it poses as well as the requirement for a transition to a low carbon economy.

We automatically exclude assets most immediately threatened by these

developments such as energy coal and tar sands.

We also avoid all energy companies that do not recognise the challenges ahead. The Fund has a low exposure to the conventional energy sector and has a carbon footprint that is substantially below that of the market as a whole.

In order to encourage companies to accelerate their move to a low carbon economy we have an active and broad engagement programme, seeking private dialogue but also co-ling shareholder resolutions at annual general meetings.

## **FROM YORK CITY OF SANCTUARY**



*To York Unitarians from Patricia Miller.*

A special thank you for your Christmas gifts and to those of you who also donated clothes and household goods throughout 2018. We now have 8 Syrian families in York under the Government sponsored resettlement scheme. Most families have school age children. We sorted your gifts into appropriate presents for each family. All were truly appreciative and loved the Christmas wrapping paper.

I personally took a bag of gifts to the Al-Gharawy family (widow with 5 school age children) where the spirit of giving was truly tested when the 6 year old preferred the pencil case given to her older sister. Older sister did the kind thing and was happy with her book!

The gifts for younger children and babies were sent to Wakefield. York CoS have been supporting refugees there as well as in York. Please pass on Wakefield CofS's thanks:

York CofS's support over the year has been wonderful and made a real difference to the amount of clothing we have been able to offer at the Initial Accommodation Centre at Urban House to local asylum seekers and new refugees. The toys, bedding and household goods have all been appreciated and well received. The gifts at Christmas were really appreciated as many families have nothing. Many thanks for your ongoing support and for enabling the Clothing Store to be such a positive resource for asylum seekers and refugees.

Kind regards,

*Linda, Wakefield CofS Coordinator*

## **DECLUTTERING YOUR LIFE AND SOUL**

*A sermon by Revd. Nicky Jenkins  
on Sunday 3 February 2019*

### MY PHONE

While I was away on holiday I used my phone to take pictures. The phone's memory became completely full.

The device had kept warning me that my storage was nearly full and I deleted a few wonky shots, but it wasn't enough. Eventually it was completely full! And the phone stopped working properly. Even when we got back to the UK. It was so full that it couldn't accept the next systems update and all my news notifications were two days old!

Once I got my act together, I downloaded all the pictures onto my computer and deleted them from the phone's memory and the phone works nicely now.

### LIMITED STORAGE

I wonder if we, ourselves, are like computers with limited storage. Certainly there is a fashion at the moment for Kondoing your house. Marie Kondo is a Japanese young lady who has written a book about de-cluttering your home and the benefits this will bring you. She also has a TV programme for those who watch other than terrestrial. In a nutshell she suggests that you hold each item you own and decide whether it sparks joy in you or not. If not you get rid of it.

### HOARDING

Now I must admit that I have been a hoarder for much of my life. My parents were part of the World War Two generation who went through rationing and had a special drawer in the kitchen with bits of string, random screws, candle ends and reusable bits of brown paper and tinfoil in it.

When my husband and I went to live in New Zealand with two small children I was insistent that I take everything with me. I am ashamed to admit that this included several back years of women's magazines which might have contained useful recipes or knitting patterns (not that I ever knitted anything).

### IT WAS FEAR

It was fear that drove me.

- Fear that I might need something and not be able to find it,

- fear that I would lose my identity if I didn't have family bits of furniture,
- fear that I would never again be able to afford anything.

In short I did not trust the future and wanted to surround myself with a cushion of familiar objects.

### THE COMING YEAR

But when does a cushion become a stifling straight jacket?

Can it be true that physical clutter can affect you, making you feel constrained and restricted? I plan to explore this idea in the coming year, by taking some time to go through papers and books and deciding what I really want to keep before it's too late and my descendants are left to do it after my death. It's something to do with being in control, actually making the choices. I have always had a very cluttered mind, multi-tasking and busily filling any emptiness. However I find now that I am benefitting from regular attendance at our meditation group.

### UNCLUTTERING OURSELVES

Several religious traditions emphasise the need to unclutter ourselves.

- Jesus tells the rich young man to go and sell all his possessions. He tells his disciples to leave everything behind and follow him.
- Gautama Buddha, although born a prince, left his palace and his family to experience life as a poor traveller.

But it's not just physical possessions that we can usefully shed. So often we crave more:

- more of everything,
- more experience,
- more love,
- more knowledge.

Satisfying these cravings gives us a quick hit but does not last. We are never truly satisfied.

### EMPTYING – THE ULTIMATE LIBERTY

Zen Buddhism aims towards a total emptying of the self with the aim of merging with the oneness of all that is and The Desert Fathers of early Christianity tried to follow the self-emptying path. This I feel is not a path for all. But we do need to get a better understanding of

what ultimately is important to us. By hanging on to stuff we can end up living in the past. We need to be living in the present, fully living, and we can't do that if we are using our energy to try and find things in our piles of stuff.

Spiritually, a clearing out of physical stuff is a denial of our egos. It is an act of humility and trust. We don't need to keep all these things in case they come in handy. We can trust that, like the birds of the air, we will be provided for. This is the ultimate in liberty.



#### FREEING OUR MINDS AND SOULS

Somehow the letting go of these artefacts, also frees our minds and souls; and we can let go of outmoded ideas and restrictions too.

- Maybe it was a good idea when you were young; or
- maybe it wasn't even your idea, but your parents or your schoolteachers; or
- maybe it was your religion as taught when you were younger.

Remnants still remain, restricting your mind and colouring your attitudes. Watch and listen to yourself.

- If we prejudge we aren't listening and
- if we aren't listening, we can't hear.
- If we can't hear, we can't learn new things

about other people and maybe about ourselves.

#### SENTIMENTAL ITEMS

We become paralysed and mummified, no longer open to life and all its changes.

It's true some things are harder to let go of than others. The Kon Mari system (which always sounds like that Star Trek conundrum [Kobayashi Maru]) has a special approach for sentimental items which are amongst the last to be dealt with.

Why do we keep these things? Perhaps we connect them with someone we loved. But is it true that we dishonour them or will forget them if we clear out those items? And how far back do we need to keep our ancestral clutter?

I inherited my Mum's things when she died which included:

- her mother's things and
- her aunt's things and
- maybe her granny's things.

What do I do with the Ostrich feathers?

#### ADDICTED TO BEING ONLINE

I just read an article written by a man who felt he had become addicted to being online, social media and his smartphone. He realised

he simply wasn't present to the real world as he was always 'connected'. This led to a deep depression. As part of his treatment he went on a silent retreat where no phones were allowed.

He began to experience the natural world around him and slowly his mind calmed, but after a time he began to feel the pain and suffering of a difficult childhood.

- He couldn't tweet or blog about it.
- He couldn't talk to someone.
- He couldn't distract himself.

He just had to be with that pain.

- He sobbed.
- He prayed.
- He wanted the pain to go away.

It didn't. His counsellor advised him this was normal. "Be patient" he was advised, "It will resolve itself."

#### WE NEED OUR SABBATHS

What surprised him was that over the next few days he began to remember the positive aspects of his childhood and those who did support and love him. His painful feelings lessened and were replaced by feelings of calm and rest. It seemed a natural process of healing.

Modern life surrounds us with noise and action. We are deprived of the time and space of silence and contemplation. We have at our fingertips the means to distract ourselves from emptiness, loneliness, boredom. So we never learn how to cope with these. We don't learn that we can survive the discomfort and pain. We need to learn to be. We need our Sabbaths.

## BEGINNING

A poem by York Unitarian Brinley Price

New year, bright blue, a letting go  
Then fresh beginning, life in flow  
As winter's chains corrode;  
We feel their lessening load  
Though liberation's growth is slow.

Now let our resolution be,  
From shackles of the dark set free,  
To care for self and others  
As God or Nature mothers  
The seed that grows towards the tree.

Still it is cold, though yesterday  
Was colder far. The twigs obey  
The birthing of the year  
And little buds appear.  
Yet warmth in winter may not stay.

A robin's high and brilliant song,  
That tells there is, this day, no wrong,  
Across a field's green sash  
From a yet naked ash  
Floats with the breeze, now faint,  
now strong.

And as the shreds of cloud turn pink  
With night's approach, I watch and think  
Tomorrow will be longer  
And the sun shine stronger  
Today's last dregs of light I drink.

## 'DEATH AND DYING' GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

This four-part series continues this month with our third discussion on Sunday, 17 March, 12.30-1.45pm: "Making decisions about life-prolonging treatment for others". We have a growing collection of books and articles to borrow so have a look to see what attracts your interest, and then come ready to discuss what you've read... or viewed on telly or heard on the radio. You're very welcome to join in, even if you haven't been to a session already.

Our final discussion will be on Friday, 5 April, 11.00am-12.15pm: "Advance directives: when you can no longer state your wishes". Both sessions take place at the chapel; feel free to bring your lunch and/or make a hot drink.

Questions to Janet Eldred at [jbe100@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jbe100@yahoo.co.uk) or 07951 600907.

## LAURA DOBSON

Laura Dobson, who is leading our worship on Sunday 3 March, is in lay charge of Chorlton Unitarian Church in Manchester where our minister Nicky Jenkins was previously minister. Laura, who has recently been accepted for training for the Unitarian ministry, will be talking about the medieval mystic and writer Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) who among other things wrote:

God says:

I am the day not myself,  
not formed by the sun,  
but rather, forming the  
sun, igniting it.

I am the understanding not  
understood, but rather,  
a l l o w i n g     a l l  
u n d e r s t a n d i n g ,  
illuminating it.

I am the one whose praise  
echoes on high.

I adorn all the earth.

I am the breeze that nurtures all things  
green.

I encourage blossoms to flourish with  
ripening fruits.

I am led by the spirit to feed the purest  
streams.

I am the rain coming from the dew that  
causes the grasses to laugh with joy of  
life.

I call forth tears, the aroma of holy work.

I am the yearning for good.



## UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION

Chapel members for whom a quota payment was made to the Unitarian General Assembly in 2018 are about to receive voting papers for 5 places on the General Assembly's Executive Committee.

Each voting paper will be accompanied by:

- a booklet providing biographical information about the 6 candidates
- their election statements
- a voting form and
- a pre-paid postage envelope in which to return the form.

These will be distributed by the Chapel secretary.

Those Chapel members who are associate members of the Assembly or who are full members in their own right may only vote once and must choose in which capacity they wish to vote.

Margaret Hill, Secretary

## CHAPEL MUSIC SEASON RESTARTS

### Friday lunchtime concerts

The first of the 2019 series of Lunchtime Concerts: York Unitarians are delighted to open their 2019 season of lunchtime concerts on Friday 8 March at 12.30p.m. with a performance by two rising stars. Adam Heron was born in Honk Kong, and is of Nigerian-Filipino descent. He began his English musical training as a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral. In 2018 he was a finalist in the keyboard section of the BBC Young Musician. Currently studying at the Royal Academy, he also composes and conducts. Aïda Lahlou was born in Casablanca, and won her first international piano competition aged 8. At 15 she won a scholarship to the Yehudi Menuhin School. She currently studies for a BA in Music at St John's Cambridge, while maintaining a busy concert schedule. This duo concert is one of six that Adam and Aïda will be presenting on a tour of the UK and Morocco.

Regular Last Friday concerts are monthly at 12.30p.m. through until October. Occasional Friday concerts, also at 12.30p.m. are as announced. Tickets at the door £5

For more information contact Adie Wilson <[adie@adiewilson.co.uk](mailto:adie@adiewilson.co.uk)> who keeps an e-mailing list for those interested.

### Late Music concerts

#### First Saturday lunchtimes and evenings

These Chapel concerts start again on Saturday 2 March at 7.30p.m. with Ensemble Bash playing pieces written entirely for miniature instruments such as toy pianos and music boxes.

These concerts, on first Saturdays from March through to October concentrate on music written mostly by living composers often with York connections thanks to the thriving music departments of the local universities. However, sometimes the organisers have been caught out!

Leaflets about the 2018 season are available at the Chapel. Late Music's website is <[www.latemusic.org](http://www.latemusic.org)>. Tickets are available either on line or at the door £5 lunchtime concerts £10/£12 evening concerts.

**Our two concert series are sustained  
by our central York location,  
by our musically generous acoustics and  
by our concert quality grand piano.  
For all of these we are grateful.**

## USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



York Unitarians,  
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*Treasurer:* Simon Hardy  
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*Chapel Committee Members:*,  
Barbara Barnes, Dee Boyle, Sue Catts,  
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, Nick Morrice and Claire Wilton.

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## YORK RESIDENTS' FESTIVAL 2019

The Chapel had 110 visitors over the weekend. Many thanks to all who helped - Adrienne Wilson, Simon Hardy, Dee Boyle, Marta Hardy, Michael Archer, Elizabeth Faiers, Brinley Price, Barbara Barnes, Susan Leadley, Sue Elliot, Elizabeth Cloughton, Laura Cox, Nick Morrice, Margaret Hill, Andrew Hill and Nicky Jenkins. Also thanks to Margaret Kirk for the Charles Darwin exhibition.