



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

March 2020

FROM THE EDITOR

Making cohesive sense regarding the size of the York Chapel congregation in past years is a near impossible task. Where numbers are available - are they accurate? Are they reasonable estimates or simply guesswork? Are they numbers of members, numbers of attenders or a mixture of both? Are they for morning or evening, both or 'either /or'? Who knows? But, acknowledging the vagueness of the figures here is an impression of what the 20th century Chapel attendances looked like.

The statistics begin with an 1899 figure of 100 plus members and/or subscribers and an evening attendance of 125 to 140 persons. Was this reality, a flash in the pan or generous optimism? One suspects the latter. Then comes a 5 year gap but from 1905 through to 1922, there is a string of continuous figures. Again, however, 'are they for members or for subscribers?' The lowest figure (1912) was 32 and the highest (1906) 91 averaging out at 52. Starting high at 63 (1905), the string climbed to 91, before falling to 83 in 1907 and to 50 in 1908 when the minister (R.H.Greaves) left. The figures continued to fall 42, 39, 36, 32 (1909-1912) picking up again in 1913 with the arrival, as minister, of the pacifist/Buddhist Welshman J. Tyssul Davies 34, 35, 43, 49, 48. (1913-1917). Next there were two disastrous years with Marshall B. Skelland (1919-1920) who moved on to Doncaster and left the ministry.

In 1921 George Savile Woods was appointed minister. Within a year the membership figure rose to 71 until 1935 when he was elected as an MP. Since he was a York native, lived beside the Chapel at 33 St. Saviourgate, and was home

at weekends he offered to continue as minister. By 1948 the 71 members of 1935 had fallen to 12. George Savile Woods died, still as minister, in 1951. For 34 years the Chapel had no minister and attendance figures fell from 14 in 1962 to 7 in 1986.

In 1984 the Hill family (then in Edinburgh) spent a week's holiday in York. I played Sunday morning hookie and came along to find a tiny congregation - no more than 10 people - gathered around a card table at which sat an anonymous service leader. Someone asked me "are you a Unitarian because you seemed to know the hymn tunes?!"

Some years later two leading Unitarians from elsewhere moved to York - Sydney Knight (1987), a retired minister whose wife, Margaret, came from Elvington and Alfred Fletcher, (1991) a retired headteacher from Sheffield formerly in lay charge at Great Hucklow. Also joining the congregation at this time were chapel stalwarts Simon and Marta Hardy. From this point onwards the congregation began very slowly to turn around.

In 1989 it was reported that the congregation was "small but growing". In 1995 there were 6 new members; in 1996 when Margaret Kirk became minister there were 11 new members. In 2003 there were 39 members and 14 friends; and from 2010 to 2019 the membership figure was around 40. In 2019 membership was 44 with an average Sunday attendance of 27.

Our congregation is in good health compared with the recent past. But, we are again without a minister. Our finances are healthy. Maybe it is time we gave up seeking a new part time minister and instead seek a full-time one.



**Bright Lights
multi-flaming chalice**

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

Sunday 1 March
Alan Pennington
From Newton to Berners-Lee
Music by Myrna Michell
12.30p.m. Chapel Committee

Sunday 8 March
Jenny Jacobs
The food on our plates
Music by Helen Drewery

Sunday 15 March
Claire Wilton
Migration
Music by Laura Jones

Sunday 22 March [Mothering Sunday]
Laura Cox
Mother's Day
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 29 March
David Zucker
Freedom
Music by Myrna Michell
12.30p.m. Chapel AGM
British Summer Time

OTHER EVENTS IN MARCH

- Monday 2 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 5 March 10.30a.m. for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Friday 6 March 7.30p.m. *Late Music: Delta Saxophone Quartet* (Chapel)
- Saturday 7 March 10.30a.m.-3.30p.m. *Yorkshire Unitarian Union Spring Gathering* (Bradford Unitarians)
- Saturday 7 March 1.00p.m. *Late Music: Murphy McCaleb – trombone* (Chapel)
- Saturday 7 March 7.30p.m. *Late Music: Merit Ariane Stephanos* (Chapel)
- Monday 9 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore: rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 12 March 10.30a.m. for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

- Friday 13 March 12.30p.m. *Occasional Friday concert: Alistair Donaghue, baritone* (Chapel)
- Monday 16 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore: rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 19 March 10.30a.m. for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Saturday 21 March 3.30p.m. (access 2.30p.m.) *Early Music: recorder quartet* (Chapel)
- Monday 23 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore: rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 26 March 10.30a.m. for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Friday 27 March 12.30p.m. *Last Friday concert: Adrian Lord piano* (Chapel)
- Monday 30 March 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore: rehearsal* (Chapel)

**U3A CHOIR CONCERT
2.30 p.m. Wednesday 1 April**

This is scheduled for 2:30 on Wednesday 1 April at the chapel (time to be confirmed). Proceeds will be for the York Rescue Boat which is our nominated Charity for this year.

It would be helpful to have some chapel support for front of house reception and for serving refreshments - offers of help, please, to Adrienne Wilson.

**YORK UNITARIANS CIO
1181531
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting of Members of York Unitarians Charitable Incorporated Organisation will take place on Sunday, 29th March, at 12.30 p.m. following the morning service.

The AGM will receive the Annual Report and appoint officers and trustees for 2020/21.

Nomination forms for officers and trustees are available on the Chapel table or from the Secretary. Nominations close on 22nd March.

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

BECOMING A CIO

More recent Chapel members may appreciate a brief explanation about St. Saviourgate Chapel becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (i.e. York Unitarian CIO).

Mid 20th century York Unitarians went through a very low patch. One aspect of this was that the last appointed Chapel trustees - first appointed in 1689 but most recently in 1931 - had failed to appoint their successors. In addition there was no custodian trustee (such as the British and Foreign Unitarian Association) to which the assets would have passed in such a situation. This left the Chapel legally vulnerable.

We presented the problem to Roderick Ramage, a Unitarian lawyer, with experience in this area. Roderick was able to convince the Charity Commission that in the York Chapel's case it was not reasonable to try and trace any legal successors of the last (1931) appointed trustees. With his help, in 2016, new trustees - all current members of the Chapel congregation - were appointed.

However, it also happened that a new solution to this old problem had only recently become available. This solution - the Charitable Incorporated Organisation - gives the currently elected members of the Chapel committee for the time of their service the status of trustees. It also provides the Chapel trusts with legal (i.e. corporate) recognition in perpetuity.

St. Saviourgate Chapel is now in the final stages of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). It has been a long and arduous process requiring much patience but it is almost complete. Presently, we are in the process of 'vesting' the assets and trusts (i.e. the Chapel [i.e. its building and congregation] and the Chapel Charity [i.e. its permanent endowment] in York Unitarian CIO and when that is complete we will have made it!

THE CHAPEL FUNDRAISING CHARITY FOR 2020 THE YORK RESCUE BOAT



York Rescue Boat is an independent lifeboat and search and rescue team based in York. Its work centres around the Rivers Ouse and Foss.

Uniquely the charity works to make the city safer by carrying out combined patrols by boat and on foot at high-risk times every weekend throughout the year as opposed to just responding to emergency calls. The team is on call 24 hours a day to provide assistance and specialist equipment to both the police and fire service.

As a charity, it relies on the generosity of members of the public. Every member of the team is a volunteer. There are no paid staff. This ensures that all money donated to York Rescue Boat goes straight into equipping its team, continuing its work and funding its youth education program.

The first Chapel fundraising event for this charity will be a concert in the Chapel by the U3A choir on Wednesday 1st April.

For more information see:
<https://www.yorkrescueboat.com>

THE GREATEST ORGANISATION ON EARTH

You can't go tramping around from church to church and fulfil your obligation. You've got to settle on one church and throw your life into it, and build it up. Who would want to go to a picnic all the time and eat out of other people's baskets? It's our obligation as members of one church to give ourselves to it. You've got to feel that you are part of the greatest organisation on Earth that is going to outlast all the rest of them. You've got to feel the importance of your own individual participation in its life. The church is the only hope of peace and good will to all that exists among us. It's the last hope of the Earth, and yours is a high and holy opportunity to support it with undeviating loyalty.

Carl Sandburg, who was a Unitarian at one time and taken from The Savannah, Georgia Unitarian Universalist Church Newsletter which had it from other UU church newsletters

IF YOU WOULD ONLY LISTEN!

by Claire Wilton

On 2nd February, I led a Bright Lights Sunday morning worship for Youth Sunday. The focus was to think about how we, as York Unitarians, can welcome, nurture and empower children and young people. Our opening chalice lighting words were written by one of our own young people. Our readings took the form of powerful young voices: speeches by Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai; beautiful writing from the teenage naturalist Dara McAnulty; and a moving letter written by the journalist Lyra McKee. Our musician, David, even played for us a polonaise composed by Chopin when he was just seven years old!

Instead of listening to a sermon, together we created a chalice fire of ideas for supporting children and young people. The congregation came up with some wonderful concrete ideas for engaging better with young people. Here are some of them:

- An after-school youth club where children's voices can be heard and action taken;
- A youth page in the newsletter to share poems, songs and artwork;
- Join the school climate strikers;
- Support existing local groups.

Our young people themselves say that they are keen to do more things outside – with nature – with food – and less things that involve sitting still and listening to other people.

A strong message was expressed that we need to demonstrate our ears are open, summed up wonderfully by this comment: "Children, please come and talk to us – sing your songs, read your poems, tell us what you have seen, tell us what you think about the world around us, about yourself."

Finally, several people thought that there needs to be more made

of our ongoing warm welcome of families at services, and our enjoyment of the presence of children, their play and the noises they make.

One immediate step we can take is to develop a congregational commitment to be posted on the webpage, on the outside noticeboard and in all outward-facing communication. Something like this, perhaps:

"York Unitarians welcome children and young people to all our events and activities. Bring your voices, loud and soft. Bring your toys and your ideas. Share your passions and concerns. Our community is full of listeners, thinkers and joiners-in of all ages."

Please keep in touch with your ideas as we take this important area of work forward.

Claire Wilton.



Yorkshire Unitarian Union
SPRING GATHERING
Saturday 7th March 2020
at Bradford Unitarians

10.30 : Welcome – coffee/tea...
11.00: Opening Devotions led by Stephanie Bisby
11.15: Issues in the YUU
Motions for the GA Annual Meetings

12.15: Lunch (provided by Bradford Unitarians)

13.00 Afternoon session led by Helen Mason – Director of Unitarian College

- How the College is progressing
- Report on pilot project for training administrators and treasurers
- Mini-exercise in ministry training
- Discussion... with your thoughts and ideas



15.00: Short closing devotions
15.15: Departuressafe journey.

Come for all or any part of the day's programme – all are welcome.

Bradford Unitarians, Russell Street, Bradford BD5 0JB Good parking and a twenty minute walk from Bradford Interchange (Bus and Rail)

BEING KNOWN

*the sermon by Claire Lee
on Sunday 26 January 2020*

The title of today's service, *Being Known*, was taken from Sally Magnusson's remarkable book – *The Sealwoman's Gift*. This is a book about a Turkish pirate raid in 1627 on a small group of Icelandic islands which I am not going to attempt to pronounce. 400 people were taken as slaves and many others were killed. Sally Magnusson found a written account of this raid by the Reverend Olafur Egilsson in which he mentions his children and a wife called Asta.

Sally Magnusson has written this book from the wife, Asta's, viewpoint. It's her story. And towards the end Asta becomes extremely unhappy because she is in a situation where she feels that she really isn't known by those around her. Her adventures, her imagination, her experiences separate her from her remaining family. Someone in the book steps forwards and tells her that she is known.

I am saying that you are known, Asta. You are deeply and at every age and for all time known.

And he also tells her that he loves her and always has. What a wonderful thing to say to someone! You are known and you are loved!

INVISIBILITY

As an older, retired woman, I know that I am not unique in being quite invisible – a useful trait sometimes but very, very annoying at others. An example of this was when my husband, Mark, was sent an email asking him to come for an appointment at the bank. The email was sent to Mark and so I didn't go – I wasn't invited. However, I was supposed to be at the meeting to sign some papers. So another meeting was arranged – through Mark – and worse, so much worse than this, is that I ended up apologising for not having been at the first meeting that I wasn't expressly invited to! This was me being worried about my place in the order of things – and, yes, even apologising for it. I can happily say, though, that now I do receive an email addressed to me – inviting me along too.

ONCE WE ARE RETIRED

Once we are retired and can no longer say, I am a Reflexologist, a Doctor, a Nurse, a Midwife, a Teacher, a Minister and so on.

How do we introduce ourselves?
How do people place us in their world order?
So very often the first question will be –
'What do you do?'
Not

'What do you think',
'How do you feel?',
What do you read?,
What music do you listen to?

no – it's -

'and what do you do.

It's the socio/economic definition of our lives. It puts us in a convenient, safe category in which assumptions are made about who we are, what we stand for. Threat or friend.

NOOUDS

Someone I went to college with had a mother who would describe a whole category of people as NOOUDs – Not one of us, darling! But how do you know? What facile criteria was used for that assumption?

Another friend of ours once said that he knew he was making significant progress in his career when he met up with people and they would look enviously at his car. That's so sad.

The car's the thing,
the address is the thing,
the school's the thing.

These are the things, the trapping by which we 'know' people – by which we judge people. But none of this is the truth. All of this is just pure, neurotic window dressing.

THE REAL THING

The real thing is the thing we all have to sleep with at night or the thing that keeps us awake! The real thing is the essence or soul or centre or heart whatever your terminology might be.

And, of course, none of us can go out into the world every day and be everything to everyone. We all have very different groups of friends who see certain facets of you and you see certain facets of them and you know there are parts of you that this group wouldn't agree with or that group wouldn't necessarily understand or accept – and we know that some of our friends really wouldn't get on with other of our friends. We have to keep a part of us behind our facades.

FAMILY TREES

My brother-in-law and my husband have both been following different strands of our family tree – in a totally non-competitive way – and incredibly interesting facts have come up. I know there is a great trend to do this at the moment, especially through the route of DNA matching sites as Elizabeth Faiers spoke about recently.

Back in the 1881 census, a couple of my ancestors were Joseph and Eliza Smith. He was an agricultural worker and she, poor woman, was the mother of 15 children! 15 children! But all we have from this history is their names. We don't know what they thought, even how they managed but as a farm labourer they weren't going to be well off. However, he was 94 when he died and she was well into her 60's. But unknown to my generation.

VICTORIAN PHOTOS

It's like those very posed Victorian photos of past family we often have. Stern looking father standing and mother sitting with well behaved children all around. What I would always like to see when I look at those is the few minutes after the picture is taken. When everyone breathes again, perhaps laughs. When the children get up and run around. Basically, it would be lovely to see a more real picture of this family.

What aspirations did they have?
What made them laugh?

One thing is certain, they wouldn't have had family holidays like we do today. That is a relatively modern activity.

LAST YEAR ON HOLIDAY

Last year, while we were on holiday, we met up with a couple of Canadian sisters and they gave me one of the greatest gifts possible. We would talk over dinner about books we had read. We swapped names of favourite authors and they insisted that we should read Louise Penny's series of books about *Chief Inspector Gamache*. They are detective fiction but they are so much more than that.

The sisters were very insistent that you should start reading from book one. And I did and have been transported into a deeply spiritual world inhabited by characters that grow and become known and loved by each other and by the reader.

This is a short passage which describes Chief Inspector Gamache's dog, *Henri*. Henri is a German shepherd dog, but is described throughout this book as 'a shepherd' because his presence prevents his owner from falling down into a deep, painful, personal crevasse.

Though Gamache would never say it to Henri's face, they both knew he wasn't the most courageous of dogs. Nor, it must be said, was Henri very bright. But he was loyal beyond measure and knew what mattered. Din dins, walks balls. But most of all his family. His heart filled his chest and ran to the end of his tail and the very tips of his considerable ears. It filled his head, squeezing out his brain. But, Henri, the foundling, was a humanist, and while not particularly clever was the smartest creature Gamache knew. Everything he knew, he knew by heart.

That is to be really known and really loved.

TRANSGENDER PERSONS

But unfortunately, so many people struggle deeply to be known not only to others but truly to themselves. I cannot imagine the confusion and turmoil that transgender people must experience until they realise their true gender – and then have to face hurt and rejections by people who thought they knew them as another identity.

It's possibly the same when a gay or lesbian person 'comes out' – although as I have never made a public statement about my heterosexuality I do fail to see why people are expected to declare that they are gay or lesbian. Again, people feel hurt, taken in, perhaps.

But in reality these are powerful examples of when people stand up with courage and insight and are really being known. Being known for their true selves, their true identity. Their true gender.

Fortunately, these days there is more general acceptance of the LBGT+ community, although I believe there is still a long way to go for them. Happily, ours is a [Chapel] community that not only accepts but celebrates diversity in gender, in race, in faith, in life.

So, on a Sunday morning, leave your armour at the door. Take your various masks off and leave them on the table in the lobby. You can pick them up on the way out. Come into our safe, nurturing community and be known. And as you are known, know that you are loved.

ABOUT PEOPLE

- Our best wishes to former Chapel minister, *Margaret Kirk*, who has been 'out of action' recently.
- Our best wishes to *Claire Lee* and to *Marta Hardy* who both have shingles, and to *Jen Atkinson* who has been unwell lately.
- Our special thanks to *Nick Morrice* who stepped in at the last moment to take the place of the *Revd. Celia Midgley* on Sunday 18 February. Celia, who lives in Skipton, was kept at home by the extremely wet weather. She hopes to visit York later in the year.
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OUR UNITARIAN FAITH

**Our congregations freely gather
to live out a democratic faith.**

**Every human being is holy
and is called to the tasks and joys of love.**

**We do not limit the truth of God
(even to the word "God")
but live in openness and belief
in human freedom and dignity.**

Our creed is kindness.

**We celebrate the gift of life,
and join in taking on the sufferings
of this fragile world.**

**We are this generation's bearers
of an eternal message
that truth must grow, enlarge,
and move in creative freedom.**

**Revelation is not sealed
but is lived anew in every heart.**

***Stephen Kendrick in John Bueherens
and F. Forrester Church 'Our Chosen Faith'***

***Kendrick asks
"You want it simpler?
Try this:***

***We join in celebrating
one world,
one people,
one love
which is Truth***

FROM UNI-NEWS FEBRUARY 2020

From Unitarian General Assembly Executive Committee (EC) 20 January

- Youth programme: for under-12s Unifest (Great Hucklow in June and October); for 12-17 year olds) as before. See [website](#).
- An improved safeguarding model for children and vulnerable adults was adopted.
- 3 new students start ministry training in September. Revds Claire MacDonald, Shammy Webster, and Rob Whiteman are now on GA Roll of Ministers with full status.
- Matthew Smith is leaving the EC. Applications are welcome for co-option to the EC ahead of April 2021 election.
- Approved GA and Nightingale Centre 2019 accounts.

Enthusiastic, friendly and helpful volunteers are needed for Welcome Team at GA Annual Meetings 7-9 April 2020. Check out website for more info and email [Rory Castle Jones](#).

Events

- *Unitarian Christian Association AGM* (Liverpool) - 14 March 2020
- *Inter/Senior Youth Weekend* (Ages 12-17) (Great Hucklow) 20-23 March 2020
- *One Body One Faith Conference - Trans and Non Binary Theology by Trans and Non Binary People'* (Bristol) - 28 March 2020
- *Christian Climate Action - Diversity Training Day* (London) - 28 March 2020
- *Unitarian General Assembly Annual Meetings* (Birmingham) - 7-9 April 2020
- *Unitarian Music Society Annual Conference* (Peak District) - 14-17 August 2020
- *Findhorn Unitarian Experience Week*. 16-23 May 2020.
- *Summer School* (Great Hucklow) 22-29 August 2020
- *Unitarian Societies Weekend* (Great Hucklow) 20-22 November 2020

In the News...

- Unitarians among few offering same-sex marriage in Wales (*BBC Wales*)
- Obituary - The Very Rev William McMillan MBE (*Belfast Telegraph*)
- Sidmouth Unitarian's Food Bank in the news (*Sidmouth Herald*)
- 'No More Deaths' Unitarian Universalist volunteers helping refugees found guilty in US court (*CNN*)

CHAPEL CHARITY

- The trustees of the Chapel Charity (the Chapel's permanent endowment) held their annual meeting after the service on Sunday 2 February.
- The value of the fund's investments - held in a CCLA Coif ethical investment fund - had risen over the past financial year by more than £82,000 to £527,244.06. The dividend income of £16,366.77 has been passed to the congregation.
- The fund is to be 'vested' with York Unitarian CIO on condition that its capital fund is never spent! while its interest continues as a source of regular income for the Chapel.
- Thanks were expressed to Elizabeth Faiers who is the Fund's treasurer.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Dee Boyle writes: We are very rarely let down by our Worship Leaders whether they are from our own congregation or visiting us from another congregation. However it does occasionally happen. When the person has to postpone or cancel taking a chapel service it can be for a variety of reasons but usually ones that are out of their control. Last month Celia Midgley had to postpone her service with us due to travel the adverse weather conditions. Nick Morrice kindly stepped in as he had one that he had used elsewhere. It may not always be as easy as having advance notice of someone not being able to make it.

Just in case anything similar happens again and there is not time for someone to prepare a service we wanted members to know that in the filing drawers in the Vestry there are 4 Emergency Services all prepared and ready for members to be able to lead.

The titles for these 4 services are *Animals, Trees, The Elements* and *Expect the Unexpected*. All service packs include leaders' notes, readings, a story and 30 service sheets for the congregation. (We used to only need 15 or 20 sheets but as our numbers have increased there are now 30 in each pack ready to use.) It does require someone to offer to be the leader and others to volunteer to be readers but knowing our congregation and how good people are at helping out generally there should be no real problems. Please do have a look at the packs if you think you may be interested in stepping forward in an emergency but please do not remove them from the Chapel in case that happens to be the week! Many thanks.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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Secretary: Margaret Hill
☎ 01904 693427
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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,
Nicky Jenkins (Chair), Carol Lawson,
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