



# THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

March 2021

## FROM THE MINISTER

### GIVE IT UP FOR LENT

It's Lent. Why does that matter? As Unitarians we are not shackled to the Christian tradition yet, as Rev. Bob Janis-Dillon compellingly argued in his Ash Wednesday talk to the Unitarian and Free Christian Bible Discussion Group, we can benefit from the practices we inherit from our liberal Christian ancestors even if our theology differs from theirs. (If you missed the talk and would like to know more, look out for my write-up in *The Inquirer*).

Just as our secular society can enjoy Christmas trees and gifts without espousing the doctrine of the virgin birth, and eat Easter eggs without believing in the resurrection, many choose to give up chocolate, alcohol or excess use of technology for 40 days in the run-up to Easter without necessarily connecting this practice to any particular religious belief. In a world of excess consumption, a little moderation is no bad thing, and the sacrifice may be worthwhile for the health benefits alone. Nonetheless, understanding something of the story behind Lent can help us to deepen the spiritual benefits we find from our practice of renunciation, for example

considering the concept of sufficiency as it relates to the provision of manna to the Israelites, or the temptations of modern life as compared to the temptations offered to Jesus in the wilderness.

In a similar spirit, during Lent I would like to offer the opportunity, for those who use zoom and have an interest in our Biblical heritage, the opportunity to meet online and explore Mark's gospel together over a period of four weeks. We hope that this series will be followed in due course by similar discussions on a range of subjects: Biblical, secular and interfaith. If you'd like to suggest a topic for a future course or session, or offer a reading for a Sunday service, do get in touch with me at [reverendstephaniebisby@gmail.com](mailto:reverendstephaniebisby@gmail.com).

### The Unitarian Flaming Chalice



from the Unitarian General Assembly's  
new website [unitarian.org.uk](http://unitarian.org.uk)

In the meantime, don't forget that for those who are interested in exploring beyond our Judeo-Christian heritage, York Interfaith meets monthly on the first Tuesday of the month (currently still online). One thing we should not give up in these challenging times is forming meaningful connections wherever we can. Lent should not be about limiting the joy in our already restricted lives, but

about giving ourselves the space to experience the simple joys that are still available to us.  
*Stephanie Bisby*

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

Sunday 7 March  
Dee Boyle

*Being inspired*

Music by Laura Jones  
Zoom host: Janet Eldred

Sunday 14 March  
The Revd. Stephanie Bisby  
*Mary, Mary*

Music by Helen Drewery  
Zoom host: David Zucker

Sunday 21 March  
Elizabeth Faiers  
*Community supporting friends*  
Music by David Hammond  
Zoom host: Claire Wilton

Sunday 28 March  
The Revd. Stephanie Bisby  
*The Miracle of Our Meeting*  
Music by Myrna Michell  
Zoom host: Janet Eldred  
11.45a.m York Unitarians CIO AGM

**OTHER EVENTS IN MARCH**

**CHAPEL MEDITATION GROUP**

11.00 on Thursdays details from Dee Boyle  
[deeboyle@gn.apc.org / phone 01904 621568]

**CHAPEL POETRY GROUP**

7.00p.m. Last Wednesday  
details from Dee Boyle as above

**YORK INTERFAITH GROUP**

7.30p.m. Tuesday 2 March  
'What people get wrong about my faith'  
details from Dee Boyle as above

**LENT BIBLE DISCUSSIONS**

6.30p.m. on Tuesdays  
9, 16, 23 March details on page 8

**UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION**

Chapel members will have received ballot papers for this election. York Unitarian *Jenny Jacobs* is a candidate and would appreciate your support.

**ABOUT PEOPLE**

*Betty Rumsby* thanks everyone in the York Unitarian family for their support and good wishes over the past year, which has meant a lot to her.

**FROM THE CHAPEL COMMITTEE**

- The Chapel Committee met after service on Sunday 28 February.
- The Chapel is now equipped for functioning WiFi.
- Decisions about returning from 'zoomed' worship services to worship services and other events in the Chapel were deferred until the next meeting.
- The minister had submitted a written report.
- The Chapel may be used as a polling station for local elections on 6 May. The Council should pay for the required extra cleaning costs.
- Provisional bookings for using the Chapel beyond 21 June are now being accepted. Late Music and Lunchtime concert series for the coming year are being organised.
- *Peter Exley* will be making additional improvements to Chapel heating and ventilation system costing about £1500.
- Decisions about technical options for live streaming worship from the Chapel were deferred to the forthcoming AGM.
- Chapel accounts: £43,763 CAF cash account.
- Bookings have been received for 2 Chapel weddings.
- Discussion suggested supporting both a local and an overseas charitable project. *Nick Morrice* suggested a project in Nepal as an overseas one.
- *Jenny Jacobs* and one other will be our delegates to the 'zoomed' Unitarian General Assembly AGM on 24 April.
- *Andrew Hill* is willing to stay on committee for one more year. He will also retire from editing 'The York Unitarian' magazine in 12 months time. He would like someone else to take over the outstanding issue of registering the Chapel land with the Land Registry. However the Borthwick Institute which cares for our archives and earliest deeds is presently closed. Also there are further Chapel archives to place on permanent loan at The Borthwick.
- We are still looking for a new Chapel cleaner. Meanwhile Chapel members will be asked to volunteer.
- The 2019 'preaching plan' is almost complete.

## UNITARIAN COLLEGE

### Growing our faith from the inside How you can support Unitarian College

*York Unitarians are privileged in that our new minister, Stephanie Bisby, is the first graduate of the recently formed Unitarian College. This invitation to support the College by becoming an associate is therefore commendable.*

The Board and staff team of Unitarian College invite you to become more closely involved in supporting and contributing to the development of this exciting new venture.

Unitarian College is already training future Ministers; it will soon take on the task of growing our faith from the inside by providing education and development to lay people, congregation members and young people.

We are so heartened by the interest and support that has been expressed by Unitarians up and down the UK for what we are doing to ensure that our denomination has a strong and purposeful education offer for all of us. We know that learning is at the heart of the Unitarian experience and that the experience of learning together will help our denomination grow and flourish into the future.

The College will only be successful if our mission and vision is rooted in the genuine development needs of our most important asset: our people.

We are inviting all Unitarians in the UK and elsewhere, who share our vision to develop a learning community that underpins the important values our faith offers all, to support us by becoming an Associate of Unitarian College.

#### BECOMING AN ASSOCIATE OF UNITARIAN COLLEGE

The College invites all groups – District Associations, Congregations, Affiliated Societies and International groupings – as well as all individuals to become an Associate of Unitarian College.

Your annual generous donation will enable Unitarian College to:

- Share with you detailed information about the activities of the College via a regular mailing.
- Ask for your feedback about the learning needs of the communities you represent.
- Collect your ideas for future courses, learning opportunities and how Unitarian

College can do more to grow our faith from the inside.

- Introduce you to the College team including the students who are currently benefitting from College training.
- Ask about your future leadership needs in Ministry, lay leadership, adult learning and work with young people, so we can plan educational provision to meet these.
- Introduce you to a cross section of our students to help your communities understand the true work of the College and how it has helped students develop their Unitarian faith and practice Celebrate your making a real difference to our ability to develop our people, create new learning opportunities and ensure our denomination is enriched with learning and energy at all levels.
- Invite you to our annual celebration event to meet our successful students and find out more about how Unitarian College plans to support our denomination in the future.

#### HOW DO I MAKE MY DONATION?

You can either send your donation direct to the College by bank transfer:

Account name: Unitarian College  
Account number:00032558  
Sort code: 40-52-40

Or you can send us a cheque, made payable to Unitarian College, to Unitarian Headquarters, Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY

Please enclose details of your name, address and email contact so we can acknowledge receipt of your donation and add you to our register of Associates. If you are paying by bank transfer, you can email this information to [HMason@unitarian-college.org.uk](mailto:HMason@unitarian-college.org.uk)

#### CHAPEL AGM 2021

**The second annual general meeting  
of York Unitarians CIO  
will take place  
at 11.45a.m. after the service  
on Sunday 28 March 2021.**

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

## FROM UNI-NEWS FEBRUARY 2021

### NEW UNITARIAN WEBSITE

If you're a regular visitor to our website, you will have noticed there have been a few changes! Our new look has been developed over the last year with the design agency [This Ain't Rock & Roll](#), the staff team, and a steering group of volunteers from across the movement. This is the first stage in helping to make our message reach out to and resonate with more people – it's aimed at those who are not-yet-Unitarian. [Read more.](#)

### ACTIVE HOPE

London, Lewisham Unity are offering three interlinked workshops that offer space to talk, listen, acknowledge our feelings together, and move through them into action. [Find out more.](#)

### BIBLE TALKS

The [Unitarian & Free Christian Bible Discussion Group](#) is holding a series of four Bible Talks that take place between Lent and Pentecost, led by Rev Bob Janis-Dillon, Rev Mária Pap, Rev Stephen Lingwood, and Rev Sheena Gabriel. [Find out more.](#)

### FOSSIL FUEL FINANCE

Unitarians have joined 16 other representatives of faith bodies to call on the UK government to immediately ban the use of public money to fund fossil fuel projects overseas. [Read more.](#)

### EC ELECTIONS

Elections for our Executive Committee are now taking place. Ballot papers have been sent out to congregational secretaries, who will in turn send them out to members. Ballots are due to be returned to Popularis Ltd by noon on 23 March. [Find out more about the candidates here.](#) Thank you to all who are standing!

## UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY AGM 2021

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches will be holding its Annual General Meeting online by Zoom on Saturday 24 April 2021. [Find out more.](#)

Inside the York Chapel roof space:



beneath the Tower

### THIS YEAR'S AGM WILL INVOLVE

4 hours of 'business'. The AGM will begin at 11am and finish by 5pm. Voting on motions will take place online. Delegates will receive instructions in advance.

### CHOOSING YOUR DELEGATES

Congregations will need to choose their delegates soon.

### YOU WILL NEED TO REGISTER BY 3 APRIL 2021

[You can register here.](#) . It will be free to attend.

### WHAT ELSE WILL BE HAPPENING?

We will be gathering for worship (also by Zoom) the night before, Friday 23 April 2021. Some Affiliated Societies will run their own events online in the summer.

### GET INVOLVED

We are recruiting a small volunteer team for the AGM - to help with everything from Zoom hosting and video editing, to organising and preparing a Worship service and helping people with their technology questions. We'd love you to join us if you have the skills and energy to help out - [get in touch with Rory Castle Jones, our Communications Officer to volunteer!](#)

### OTHER INFORMATION

You can find here the [2021 general information sheet](#) and [Formal Notice of Meeting](#). 2020 Annual Report, motions and background papers and up-dated standing orders will be sent out in mid-March. Any questions about the AGM? [please get in touch with us.](#)

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

*A sermon by David Zucker  
on Sunday 24 January 2021*

### RACISM

Whilst of course we must remember and never forget, the atrocities committed in addition to the Nazi genocide, frankly I am sick to death of hearing shallow words such as “this must never happen again” followed by inaction.

The Nazi genocide captured the imagination of the western world because it was committed by people whom people in the western world considered “civilised”. After all what could one expect of people who live elsewhere, those uncivilised barbaric uncouth people. Those *untersmenschen*.

The holocaust memorial, which I welcome, has, in part, its foundation in racism because as I have said it was made worse in the minds of western governments by having been committed by people of a country, like ours, with what was, at that time, a perceived culture second to none. The country of Beethoven, Wagner, Holbein, Lieberman, Brecht, Kastner, Bach, Schuman, Brahms. The list goes on.

### THE COMMEMORATION IS PERSONAL

For me, a Jew, this commemoration is personal. I don't need to tell you more about the concentration camps, or the atrocities committed in them, or the degradations committed outside them. You know all about that.

In reality you are not the people I need to speak to, but then, the people I need to speak to don't want to listen.

This commemoration is personal to me, not because so much of my father's family and friends were taken to Auschwitz, or made to dig their own graves before being shot along with their children, but because of what is happening now, here, not somewhere else, but here with us now.

### BEING A JEW AND JUDASIM

I need to make the distinction between being a Jew and Judaism. Being a Jew means no more than a common heritage which traces back to Judea. On the other hand Judaism is the religion. Not all Jews are Jewish. Not all adherents to Judaism are Jews. Many are secular and it may surprise you to know that many Jews are Christian, and many convert to Judaism.

A foreigner may come and settle in Britain. He may choose to renounce his nationality. He may

choose to adopt British nationality. He may identify as British. For some reason not so ‘the Jew’. When, in 1944 the 825,000 Jews of Prague were deported 100,000 were Christian, no one made that distinction. When Jews converted to Christianity in large numbers in Spain, still they were persecuted, just less.

Please note I am not suggesting for one moment that those who converted should have been treated more favourably but I am making the point that somehow, for the Jew, there is no redemption. The hatred of Jews by some is so ingrained, so deep-rooted; so indelible that simply “being” of Jewish stock, whatever the views held by that Jew, whatever the religion of that Jew, whatever the philanthropy of that Jew, whatever the vocation, it matters not. A Jew is Jew and they are all the same!

We go out of our way to impress the importance of allowing people to self-identify except, for some reason Jews. Being a Jew causes so many assumptions to be made by others about what is eaten, what is believed and even where first loyalties lie.

Assumptions equal prejudices, and a prejudice is a prejudice whether antagonistic or favourable. Someone once said to me that they had always admired the Jews because they are so hard working. No they're not. Some are! Some are not! For the avoidance of doubt, I self-identify as a Free Christian Unitarian Jew but a Jew nonetheless.

### AS A JEW I AM IN MORTAL DANGER

Where am I going with this? The point is that unless we are all vigilant, history *does* repeat itself and for me, as a Jew, history tells me that however I self-identify, I am in mortal danger and if not me, my children and if not them my grandchildren and so on.

Only a few weeks ago in the United States we saw how fragile democracy can be. The orchestrated march on the Capital by Trump supporters was, make no mistake, fascist. Fascism has certain essential ingredients: a big lie; racism; violence; and a lack of respect for democracy.

The big lie was that there had been significant voter fraud. The racism was that the voter fraud was committed by Democrats, by which was meant African Americans; the violence we saw and the lack of respect for democracy underpinned what happened. Angela Merkle and Arnold Schwarzenegger condemned what occurred and compared the events to Kristallnacht. I can tell you that as a Jew, even

before that comparison was made, I watched in horror as I made the same comparison to my son and became intensely afraid as I saw the American far right white supremacist 'Proud Boys' waving confederate flags wearing antisemitic T-Shirts making light of Auschwitz.

Still further, and it was for me only a matter of time before someone said it, "It was all the fault of the Jews". If any of you watched the ITV programme about the march on the capital, you would have heard one of the leaders of one of the militia groups say, with the same conviction that there had been voter fraud, that in getting his country back he wanted to disassociate the USA from the Middle East. At this point you might have expected him to make some sweeping generalised prejudiced remark about Islam and Islamic countries. After all Trump had made such observations, but no it was Israel because, he went on to say, his country had "sold out to Israel" (by which of course he meant the Jews) and wait for it, in case you had any doubts, he referred also to the Rothschilds. And in that, is the same old antisemitic trope about Jews using money to buy influence and corrupt western civilisation.

The telling of lies about Jews, of course, was not invented by the Nazis.

#### THE JEWS KILLED CHRIST?

Let me grasp a nettle. The Jews killed Christ!

What does that even mean? Did the Americans kill Martin Luther King or Abraham Lincoln? As to the killing of Christ, I know that I have an alibi, I wasn't there! But are we talking about the Pharisees, or the Sadducees or the Essenes or the Nazirites or the Samaritans or maybe even the Ebionites? And within those groups do we mean all of them or just the Sanhedrin? Was the whole population of those distinct groups present?

Whilst the Bible, both testaments, provide a moral compass, and as it happens on that I personally lean towards the New, the Bible is not to be taken literally and it is not a history book.

No verse has caused more suffering for the Jews than the verse which reads:

And all the people answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'

the blood curse. How did they all know to shout that out? Well I did not ask those people to speak for me and I don't know any Jews who feel otherwise.

It was not until 1962 in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council, that the Roman Catholic Church under Pope Paul VI repudiated belief in collective Jewish guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus. It declared that the accusation could not be made "against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today".

#### JESUS BARABBAS

Let me give you something to think about. The person whom the crowd called to be released was Jesus Barabbas. Barabbas in Aramaic means 'son of the father'!

Whatever the historical truth, the idea that all Jews for nearly two thousand years should pay the price for what some of their ancestors may have contributed to has meant that for all that time Jews have lived and continue to live in fear.

What we do know from historical records is that the outrage of Jews generally to Marcus Pontius Pilate was such that he was recalled to Rome to stand trial for cruelty and oppression, particularly on the charge that he had executed men without proper trial. Further, at that time, the Jewish form of capital punishment was stoning not crucifixion. The Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, could deal with religious matters but not civil. Only the Roman authorities could legally impose the death penalty. We should not be surprised that Rome imposed such a penalty on a man who was seen as a political threat going around saying that there was a kingdom more powerful than Rome, a message, which to Rome amounted to sedition but which then resonated with many Jews because it fed into the idea of Jewish nationalism as well as a purer form of Judaism.

This all happened at a time when the Romans were generally despised by the Jews leading to the Great Jewish revolt of 66 -135 AD, their expulsion and the diaspora which exists even today.

#### THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

Let me return to my main theme. When I say the Jews live in fear, I am not only talking about somewhere else but also right here in the United Kingdom. I know that my experience as a child is not so different to many other Jews who grew up in the shadow of the holocaust. You would be mistaken however if you were to think that it was the holocaust that made us afraid. The holocaust, simply served to remind us that we had not been afraid enough.

For over 2000 years, we Jews as a people have suffered persecution. It matters not how long we settle in a country, how assimilated we become, how integrated we are, at some point we are always made to move on.

It did not matter that the Jews had been in Iraq for 1000 years when in 1969 there were mass hangings or that Jews had been in Russia and Poland for 600 years before the pogroms or about 1350 years in Spain before the inquisition. We grow up knowing that we are other. They even have word for it, derived from Noah's third son Shem, antisemitism.

Last year Jeremy Corbyn said of Jews that

"they clearly have two problems. One is they don't want to study history, and secondly, having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives, they don't understand English irony either ... So I think they need two lessons, which we can perhaps help them with."

The Jews don't want to study history! All of us! "They" the collective – After all they are all the same! Of course we are.

We are ALL communists running an international conspiracy, except so far as the conspiracy is concerned I should personally be very offended that no one has included me in the planning or in fact ever told me anything about what the conspiracy is, and I have not met a fellow Jew yet who knows, so it must be a secret.

Perhaps Freemasons run entirely by Jews are running it, except that by far most Freemasons aren't Jews. The natural enemy of the right, you may think is the left. So to legitimise strong antagonism towards the Jews they need to be characterised as communists except, of course, if you are from the left.

Then the Jews are all capitalists running the banking system, you know those fine British institutions like Barclays, Nat West, Lloyds or HSBC, or perhaps BNP Paribas or even Deutsche Bank except that is nonsense.

For Marxists there is the need to identify a struggle, and an oppressed. So the term Zionism is given a pejorative meaning. Zionism to Jews means no more than the fulfilment of a religious promise of self-determination in a Jewish homeland. It does not mean, as the word has been redefined by others, as Israeli occupation or expansionism in respect of which legitimate criticism and even outrage at the Israeli government can be made.

## 10 YEAR PERIODS

Earlier this week I asked you to provide me with 10 year periods of your choosing. Now let me explain why. Jeremy Corbyn suggested that Jews need to learn history. Thank you to those who sent me these windows and apologies to any omitted.

- 365-375 Intermarriage between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire was made a capital offence
- 1066-1076 4000 Jews massacred in Granada, Spain
- 1090-1100 5000 Jews killed in Central Europe as the first crusade passes through
- 1307-1317 Frederick II of Aragon required Jews to mark their clothes and shops with a Yellow badge. Jews were forbidden from mixing with Christians
- 1550-1560 In Papal Bull: *Cum nimis absurdum*, Pope Paul IV wrote: "It appears utterly absurd and impermissible that the Jews, whom God has condemned to eternal slavery for their guilt, should enjoy our Christian love." The Bull also forced Jewish men to wear a yellow hat, and women – a yellow kerchief.
- 1615-1625 Jews expelled from France
- 1780-1790 Sultan of Morocco orders the massacre of Jews in the north of the country
- 1811-1821 Jews burnt at the stake in Algiers
- 1835-1845 Conscription for Jews introduced in Russia from age 12, though in practice age 8 and for 25 years.
- 1860-1869 Jews in Persia forced to convert to Islam. 18 Jews killed – 2 burned alive.
- 2010 – date A number of bomb attacks on synagogues in Sweden; Six Jewish institutions attacked in Montreal Canada; Shootings Toulouse and Paris leaving a number of Jews dead including 3 children

In his official 2013 Nowruz address, Supreme Leader of Iran Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei questioned the veracity of the Holocaust, remarking that "The Holocaust is an event whose reality is uncertain"

Amidst an ongoing controversy in the Labour Party about antisemitism,

- Naz Shah was discovered in April 2016 to have reposted a Facebook meme supporting the relocation of Israel to the USA. Shah also commented on the post, suggesting the plan might "save them some pocket money".

- In April 2016 Ken Livingstone, stated that Adolf Hitler had supported Zionism.
- Patrick Little (who had called for the USA to be free of Jews) together with Arthur Jones and John Fitzgerald also neo-nazis were adopted by the Republican Party to stand for Congress.
- In 2017 Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary, made a speech in which he called Miklós Horthy, who was complicit in the murder of the country's Jewish population during the Holocaust an "exceptional statesman" and gave him the credit for the survival of Hungary.
- That same year 'Chicago Dyke March' organisers singled out and approached a group of women carrying Jewish pride flags and asked them to leave the event.
- On 27 October 2018, 11 people were murdered in an attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- 4 April 2019 Bet Israel Synagogue of Izmir, Turkey was attacked with a Molotov cocktail.
- On 10 December 2019, a shooting occurred at a kosher grocery store located in New Jersey United States. Five people were killed at the store, including the two attackers and three civilians. A civilian and two police officers were wounded.
- That same month in 2019 a Jewish elder was killed and four others were injured in a mass stabbing at the home of a Hasidic rabbi, which was hosting Hanukkah celebrations, in Monsey, New York.
- November 2020 Six Igbo synagogues in Nigeria were razed by soldiers. At least 50 people were killed during the siege.
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And then only a few weeks ago with the events in Washington we saw "Camp Auschwitz" emblazoned on a lead protestor's t-shirt.

It never stops.....Jews do know their history!

### BIG LIES

The root cause of anti-Semitism can be found in big lies.

The Jews, as a collective, did not kill Christ. The Jews did not cause the great plague or poison the wells. The Jews did not drink the blood of Christian children. The Jews do not control the world's finances. The Jews did not cause the first world war. The Jews were not responsible for 9/11. The Jews are not

responsible for Covid-19. The Jews are just people – no more no less.

It is incumbent upon all of us to be vigilant, challenge lies, and speak out. We know from very, very recent history that lies cost lives.

### LENT BIBLE DISCUSSIONS

During March, you are invited to join in a discussion on the Gospel of Mark, taking place on zoom over 4 consecutive Tuesday evenings. Sessions will as far as possible be self-contained, so attend as many or as few as is convenient. Though there will inevitably be some overlap, each week will be broadly focused on one section of the text and a few themes. If you have a chance to read the week's text in advance and would like to contribute a question (preferably related, however loosely, to one of the week's themes), please email your question to [reverendstephaniebisby@gmail.com](mailto:reverendstephaniebisby@gmail.com) at least 24 hours before the session.

- March 9th 6:30pm: Chapters 1-4 - Baptism, storms and miracles
- March 16th 6:30pm: Chapters 5-8 - Demons, healing and faith
- March 23rd 6:30pm: Chapters 9-12 - Teaching, commandments and authority
- March 30th 6:30pm: Chapters 13-16 - Denial, death and resurrection

These are informal sessions, but you may like to have a pen and paper with you in case there's anything you want to note down and follow up later. You will find it helpful to have your preferred Bible translation to hand, whether in book form or online (the text is available in multiple versions at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>). These sessions are offered in a non-dogmatic spirit of inquiry – bring your beliefs, your questions and your challenges, and be prepared to respect others' different understandings of our texts and traditions.

*Stephanie Bisby*



## RESIDENTS' WEEKEND

*Sunday 31 January would have been day 2 of York's annual Residents' Weekend with the Chapel open to the wider public. In the present circumstances this popular annual event was cancelled. However, in the service on Sunday morning, Stephanie invited two chapel members to each read a poem reflecting York's heritage*

## YORK IS . . .

by Laura Cox

York is  
Old walls quirky pubs  
drunken buildings leaning  
(you know the ones)  
Cobbled streets ghost walks  
lamplight reflected in the Ouse  
Chips at 4am in the morning with  
the apricot glow of dawn  
Summer picnics in the shade of  
stone ruins  
cool to the touch  
Cupping mulled wine at the  
Christmas market  
earthy scent  
of roasted chestnuts  
samples of velvety fudge  
  
Call of street performers and chink  
(chink)  
of coins on paving stones  
York is home.

Just to remind you . . .



## THE BALLAD OF RALPH WARD (1631-1691)

[Ralph Ward was the Chapel's first minister]

by Andrew Hill

My name's Ralph Ward from Denby township in Penistone;  
my father was the schoolman and very widely known.  
I went from school to Cambridge: a college, Puritan <sup>1</sup>;  
and to become a preacher my studies I began.

Sam Hammond <sup>2</sup> was my mentor. How fervently he prayed!  
He prayed for my conversion and so a sinner saved.  
He moved to County Durham<sup>3</sup>. I called upon him there.  
He got me made a chaplain to lead the soldiers' prayer.

The army went to Scotland where Cromwell won Dunbar<sup>4</sup>.  
Then next he took Old Reekie <sup>5</sup> which is from Leith not far.  
At Leith I stayed for some time 'til Yorkshire called me back;  
heard folks who lived in Weardale <sup>6</sup> a minister did lack.

Six ministers at Newcastle gathered and me ordained <sup>7</sup>.  
I moved from Wear to Hartburn <sup>8</sup> although I was less paid.  
But when King Charles-he came back; he brought his vicar  
too <sup>9</sup>;  
so I retired Newcastle and taught a child or two.

The Act of Uniformity was sixteen sixty two.  
I wouldn't sign the charter so quietly withdrew.  
My wife's from nearby Selby and knew the Hewley pair <sup>10</sup>.  
So I became their chaplain and led their family prayer.

The Hewleys had a mansion in Saviourgate in York  
where I and Peter Williams <sup>11</sup> gave many a holy talk.  
I ended in the Kidcote <sup>12</sup> which made my asthma worse;  
and not so long thereafter finished my earthly course.

But one thing please remember my friends a Chapel raised.  
So unto God about you a joyful psalm be praised.<sup>13</sup>  
My people still continue, share now a liberal faith;  
as seeking, caring people they celebrate life's worth.

- 1 Sydney Sussex College
- 2 Samuel Hammond - Fellow of Magdalen College, preacher at St. Giles
- 3 Rector of Bishopwearmouth
- 4 Battle of Dunbar 1650
- 5 Edinburgh
- 6 1653 Rector of Wolsingham, Co. Durham
- 7 Ordained by presbyters not by a bishop
- 8 1655 Vicar of Hartburn, Northumberland
- 9 Former royalist vicar wanted his job back
- 10 The Hewleys owned Wistow manor, Cawood
- 11 Ejected York city preacher d. 1680
- 12 Kidcote was the York city prison on the old Ouse Bridge
- 13 1692 St. Saviourgate Chapel

## BOOKSHELF

My bookshelf has been expanded somewhat this month thanks to a book grant from the Herbert Barnes Memorial Foundation, commemorating Herbert Barnes' ministry at the Church of the Divine Unity, Newcastle. The first book to make an appearance (and be quoted in the service on Valentine's Day) was *My Sour-Sweet Days: George Herbert and the Journey of the Soul* by Mark Oakley, Dean of St John's College Cambridge. I heard Mark Oakley speak at Leeds Minster while I was on placement with Mill Hill Chapel, and he's fantastically thoughtful about poetry and its place in devotional practice (his first book, *A Splash of Words* is also brilliant). Another recommendation from the 14<sup>th</sup> February service is Rob Bell's *What We Talk About When we Talk About God*, well worth a look if, like me, you're slightly ambivalent about much of the language traditionally used to refer to the divine. And, going further back to 31<sup>st</sup> January, *The Remarkable Ordinary: How to Stop, Look and Listen to Life* by Fredrick Buechner is a great reminder to appreciate the world we live in, as well as a tribute to the power of our stories.

Stephanie Bisby



**THE CHAPEL FROM THE SOUTH-WEST  
an unusual view from  
the neighbouring solicitor's garden.**

**The occasion was the unveiling  
of the York Civic Trust's blue plaque  
commemorating Lady Sarah Hewley  
who lived in a house neighbouring the  
Chapel on the same site  
as the solicitor's.**

**Note how the boundary wall  
meets the Chapel wall.**

## USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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