



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

March 2022

From the Minister

'The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.'

Theodore Roosevelt's words are very much of their time. They refer to 'men' meaning, presumably, 'people', and frame life in terms of a competitive sport, where many of us now would prefer to live more cooperatively. Nevertheless, they make an important point: life is better when you have what's often referred to nowadays as 'skin in the game'. You may also be familiar with the wonderful book by Brené Brown to which Roosevelt's words gave a title: *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way we Live, Love, Parent and Lead*. Brown is famous for her research into vulnerability (and her wonderful [TED talk](#)). We are fortunate at York Unitarians to

have a fantastic team of skilled and caring individuals who get involved in all sorts of ways to make things happen. We are blessed with excellent officers, committee members and worship leaders, as well as people who, for example, read in chapel, play music, sing, look after our building and tech, greet visitors, make tea, coffee and incredible cakes, bring lovely flowers, support people who are struggling. All are valuable. And all of these things take some measure of courage as we put ourselves out there for people to judge. More so when doing them for the first time. With our AGM coming up on 27 March, perhaps it's a good time to consider how you might try something new, be it joining the committee, coming to the AGM, leading worship, contributing a reading to a service, being a Sunday greeter or just saying hello to someone you haven't spoken with before. And if yours is always the first hand up when the call goes out for volunteers, perhaps your 'something new' which takes courage might instead be to take a day off for rest and reflection, or to offer to mentor someone else who's doing something new for the first time. Either way, bring your enthusiasms and your devotions, because everything we do is done in a worthy cause.



A MONTH OF SUNDAYS at 11am

Sunday 6 March

Reverend Stephanie Bisby
Life on Mars
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 13 March

John Issitt
Origins and Creation
Music by Laura Jones

Sunday 20 March

Jenny Jacobs
The Sparks Fly Upward
Music by David Hammond

*Service followed by a rice & dahl lunch
postponed from January*

Sunday 27 March

Reverend Stephanie Bisby
True Simplicity
Music by David Hammond
Service followed by AGM

Sounds and Stories of Faith

The City of York Council are planning a whole festival about 'Our City' in March so look out for further information on their website as and when it becomes available.

In the meantime, these are the details we have from York Interfaith Group so far:

SAVE THE DATE

Sounds and Stories of Faith

Wednesday 23 March

7 for 7.15pm till 8.30pm

York Minster

York Minster and York Interfaith Group invite you to an evening of sounds and stories from various faith groups within the city as part of the City of York Council 'Our City Festival'.

The evening will be interactive and we encourage the audience to join in with reciting of poems, chanting and singing, where applicable.

The aim is to bring together communities within York through mutual understanding, shared learning, dialogue, tolerance and respect.

The event is free and open to all.

No booking required.

There will be more information and the final details given out in the Chapel notices as soon as we know them. These will also be sent out via email when Jenny circulates the notices.

We have submitted a Unitarian hymn and hope that it will be included and that some of you will be there to sing along.



Meike's flowers in our 20 February service
Photo by Joan Sinanan



DIARY DATES

Thursdays at 11am: Meditation in Chapel and on Zoom. Details from Dee Boyle.

Thursday 3 March: Yorkshire Unitarian Union social time, on the theme of Spring. Via Zoom. The link is in the YUU notices and on the YUU website - <https://www.unitariansinyorkshire.org.uk/events/yuu-social-time-3-march-2022/>

Saturday 5 March, 1pm-2pm: Late Music Concert: Jonathan Sage, Clarinet. Tickets £5 online (www.latemusic.org) or on the door.

Saturday 5 March, 7.30pm-9.30pm: Late Music Concert: Anna Snow (soprano) and Kate Ledger (piano), 100 Second Songs. Tickets £12/£10 online (www.latemusic.org) or on the door.

Tuesday 8 March at 6.30pm: Inspiration Art Café, on Zoom. Details from Stephanie Bisby.

Wednesday 9 & 23 March: Self-Realisation Fellowship. Details from Nick Morrice.

Friday 11 March, 12.30-1.30pm: Lunchtime concert: Sax Forte, York-based saxophone quartet. Tickets £6 on the door. Cash only.

Saturday 12 March at 10.30am for 11am start: Yorkshire Unitarian Union spring meeting at Hull Unitarians. Speaker Richard Lane on Green Energy. Details from Stephanie Bisby.

Sunday 20 March: Rice and dahl lunch after the service.

Wednesday 23 March, 7pm-8.30pm: York Minster interfaith event, 'Sounds & Stories of Faith'. Details from Dee Boyle.

Friday 25 March, 12.30-1.30pm: Lunchtime concert: Imogen Brewer, RAM violin graduation recital. Tickets £6 on the door. Cash only.

Sunday 27 March: AGM after the service.

Wednesday 30 March, 7pm: Poetry evening. Details from Dee Boyle.

Thursday 31 March, 2pm: Share your Good Reads, in Chapel. Details from Meike Dux-Harrap.

Art Inspiration Café

Following a small and select, but wonderful, evening of sharing our favourite comfort reads (the Comfort Book Café, inspired by Matt Haig's *The Comfort Book*), on Tuesday 8 March at 6.30pm we plan to meet on Zoom to share some of our favourite artistic inspirations.

Pick around 4-6 pictures with meaning to you, and be prepared to tell us about what they mean to you. If you have links to art online, or can email images, please send them in advance to reverendstephaniebisby@gmail.com. If you don't, bring a picture on the day if you can. If you can't, just tell us about the picture and we'll use our imaginations.

Here's a great example of some people talking about what art means to them, but please don't feel you have to be an art critic to join in - 'because I like it' is all the reason we need for you to share your favourite pictures!

<https://smarthistory.org/what-work-of-art-inspired-you/>

The link for our event will be coming out in the notices nearer the time.

Stephanie

Thank you Marta and Simon!

At the Coltons Cottages Trustee meeting on 14 February Marta and Simon Hardy were thanked for their long service and dedication as Trustees of our local Unitarian charity of Coltons Almshouses.

Marta recalled being asked to become a Trustee by Rev Sidney Knight. They have both supported the charity in many ways and Marta will be particularly remembered for her cookie baking!

Get Dancing!

Longstanding friends of the Chapel Zoe and Paul Bojelian are taking part in a sponsored 'Get Dancing' event in memory of their son Adam. Read more at <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/19900624.couple-set-get-dancing-memory-son-adam-bojelian/> or donate at <https://bit.ly/3s2FYKK>.



Laura Cox's 30 January Address:

'Faith in Climate Justice'

This isn't my first service about the environment and it won't be the last. When planning this service, I was reminded to 'make sure I link the service to faith'. At first, I thought, ah gosh, I'm going to have to be careful here, because it would be very easy for me to stand up and rattle on about the climate problem and forget that I'm in a Unitarian chapel. So I wondered, for a moment, how can I speak about climate justice here? How does faith fit into climate justice?

And then I realised... When we meet here, we come from different belief systems to find spiritual enlightenment and connection. We might not even have defined beliefs. But something I hope we all believe is that there is something beyond US, and we have a responsibility to look after the world and everything in it. We have to have faith in climate justice.

When I think about Unitarianism and its ethos of connection, growth and nurturing, it seems to me like the most natural setting to speak about climate justice, or, as the case may be, climate injustice. Because we all know that, whether you think the world came from God or from a massive explosion, things aren't as they should be.

[The video we watched earlier](#) puts the question of climate justice into context. If we're all about freedom and reason here (which is what Wikipedia says Unitarianism is about) then we've got to think about those piles of rice. We've got to recognise that environmental awareness goes hand-in-hand with global awareness and 'one-ness', which is what Unitarianism stands for... Unity. The point I'm trying to make is that climate justice is fundamentally linked to our Unitarian faith, and to all other faiths too.

In most formal religions, we come up against the whole stewardship versus dominion debate. Are we here to look after life on earth, or rule over it?

Generally we'd opt for stewardship, I think. We certainly don't have dominion and I challenge anyone who says we do to stand in front of a tsunami.

Even in 'hard line' faiths, it's recognised that natural preservation is fundamental to faith because it is about preserving life. Take our opening words. I didn't realise that *Laudato Si* was a papal letter by Pope Francis. I thought *Laudato Si* was some ancient Italian guy, which was kind of close I guess. Anyway, you can't argue with the Pope in this case: *'A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice.'*

In Hinduism and Dharmic faiths, there is clear scriptural basis for protecting the environment because Dharma, which refers to the principles that govern the universe, is about sustaining the welfare of all living beings. Reflecting this, the Hindu Declaration on Climate Change says: *'A transition towards using 100-percent clean energy is desperately needed. Doing so provides the only basis for sustainable, continued human development. It is the best hope for the billions of people without electricity or clean cooking facilities to live better lives and reduce poverty.'*

If the planet is damaged from pollution and resource wastage, then we're scuppering ourselves and everyone else too. But some people come off worse than others... And it isn't you or me.

According to a report by the Climate Vulnerable Forum, nearly 700,000 climate-related deaths already happen today. 80% of those deaths are children in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. By 2030 the report estimated that the carbon economy could cause 6 million deaths a year, with 98% of those deaths in developing countries.

In 2020 EcoWatch reported that flooding in China as a result of climate change caused \$32bn in damages. The Hindustan Times noted that extreme weather in India affected 75% of the country. According to Climate Home



News, for indigenous people in eastern Canada, rising sea levels mean salinisation of fresh water, making it unsuitable to drink.

Climate injustice isn't just geographical. At this year's UN Conference on Climate Change AKA COP26, 45% of the UK's team were women. That's more than it has ever been, granted, but according to Forbes magazine these roles tended to relate to event organisation, or advisors (not core team members).

All of the above highlights wider systemic issues and shows how marginalised groups, especially indigenous populations, black minority ethnic people, women and those with added accessibility needs are exploited. Why does this exploitation happen? Because the system is set up that way. Our capitalist system is set up for climate injustice.

While we might not experience climate injustice to the same extent as those on the forefront of climate change, the impacts are clear closer to home. You might remember the devastating 2015 floods in York. In three weeks two huge storms (Storm Desmond and Storm Eva) brought unprecedented rainfall across the north. Many houses across the city were entirely ruined, contributing to local housing insecurity. Do you know what causes extreme weather conditions? Climate change. Climate change unavoidably creates social injustice....

Climate injustice.

Clearly humans have not been particularly good stewards of planet earth. So if we aren't stewards and we don't have dominion, what are we? Are we just really bad tenants?

If we're tenants, let's look at climate justice like this. The world is a house, and we're living in that house with lots of different people. There is a limited supply of water. One of the people in the house keeps having very long baths, so there is very little water left for anyone else. The person has always had long baths and they don't see the impact it has on the other people, who only have access to a weak shower. What is the solution?

Option one – the person should keep using the water and ignore the impact on anyone else.

Option two – the person should stop having long baths so there is water for others.

Option three – the water company should regulate the water usage fairly, so everyone has access to the same water.

Option four – the water company should regulate the water usage so the people who lacked water now get more than the person who was having long baths, to compensate.

This very simple example shows how difficult it is to talk about climate justice in practical terms. How do you work out and measure compensation? Where does responsibility lie? At what point is it the water company's job to regulate the baths? Is the person a bad person or just an ignorant one? Do they know any better?

What option would Unitarianism lean towards? We know it isn't option one. Unitarianism sees reason, rational thought, science, and philosophy as coexisting with faith. For Unitarians, faith helps us exercise free will in a responsible and ethical way. So, I'd like to think we would pick a combination of other options. Recognising personal actions make a difference, trying to reverse the damage done, and urging businesses and decision makers to do the same.

It shouldn't be down to the people without water to make demands. It's important to consider how to educate the others in the house. Maybe the water company should work with the tenants to explain equitable supply and responsible water use. Maybe there should be a rota. You could get really tied up in trying to find a workaround. The fundamental thing to realise is that we all live in the same house. And we should all have equal rights within that house. It's that simple.

Climate justice relies on people from all over the world working together to understand and overcome shared

challenges. We can't just think about this in a present-day sense, either, because the more we consume the harder it will be for future generations. We have to think about how what we do now will change what happens tomorrow, in a few years' time, and all the way up to the hallowed date of 2030, which is supposedly the year when organisations across the world get their climate act together.

So, what are we going to do about it? We're going to keep acting ethically and fairly, and we're going to collaborate where we can, to find solutions. We've got to hear those unheard voices, some of which are right on our doorstep. We need to get talking. But most importantly we need to listen.

This year, Extinction Rebellion York will hold an event which will spotlight these unheard voices, not just in York but across the world. On May 7, we're going to bring these issues to the fore in an afternoon that's all about listening, understanding, and really feeling the impact of climate breakdown on the people who have been routinely exploited.

We know that awareness is the first step, and from awareness you can start to make and influence decisions, which is why XR will stand outside of the council's budgetary planning meeting on 17 February to remind councillors we're still here. And so are all of the issues surrounding climate justice.

I wonder what could be achieved if all the faith groups in York got together and mobilised to address climate justice issues locally. I wonder how that could spread out and have a ripple effect. Let's think critically about what we can do. Because there is so much. We can start small, but let's take the first step. In the last meeting of the Yorkshire Unitarian Union, we discussed the amazing idea of having green spaces for ecological burials which could be opened up to the community to provide thriving natural environments. And Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds are working on an 'Apothecary Garden'. Herbs and food plants will be grown to share with the

community and contribute to food banks. The plan is to install a vertical farm on the chapel walls, and planters on the outer fences. Passers-by will be encouraged to harvest plants for free. There's even talk of beehives on the roof. According to the chapel's press release (and the wording is important here), the aim is to provide 'spiritual wellbeing and community cohesion.' These concepts merge together. Faith and community, faith and wellbeing, faith and justice.

These tiny seedlings of ideas can have a huge impact. We can use our actions and our voices to drive change. Because isn't that what we're all about, as a faith group with a history of dissenting? We're uniquely placed to recognise that acting to curb climate change will build a more just, fair world. Let's challenge the way things are. Let's leave them in a better state than we found them. As we next sing together, let's think about how we can keep faith in climate justice, and push for fairness wherever we can.

Let's share your good read



Would you like to chat about a book (factual or fiction), article or blog post you have read?

Would you like to listen to others recommend their good read?

If so, join us in Chapel on Thursday

31 March

30 June

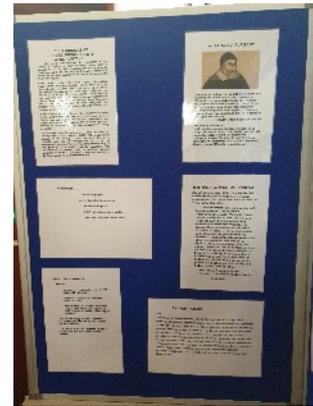
29 September

from 2 till 4pm.

Details from Meike Dux-Harrap.



Thanks to everyone who helped out with Residents' Festival Weekend in January. Despite all the challenges of Covid and the weather, more than 100 people set foot in the Chapel over the two days. Here are some photos from our displays:



Older Citizens Advocacy - York

The Pastoral Team will occasionally feature one of the local organisations listed in our brochure that offers useful support services. This month it's OCAY: Older Citizens Advocacy – York.

'OCAY has been an independent charity in York since 2002. We believe that older people have a right to a voice in decisions which affect them, and we aim to help people have their voices heard, through advocacy. Advocates are skilled staff and volunteers trained to assist with everyday issues. They will not tell you what to do.'

Our free and independent advocacy service is available for residents of York over the age of 50 who may need help with:

- *choosing a way forward;*
- *finding out information and whom to contact;*
- *writing letters and filling in forms;*
- *making a complaint;*
- *going to meetings and appointments;*
- *challenging decisions that you don't agree with;*
- *and more.'*

To contact OCAY or to find out more about what they do:

Older Citizens Advocacy York
The Priory Street Centre
15 Priory Street, York YO1 6ET
Tel: 01904 676200

Email: info@ocay.org.uk

Or use the online form on their website:
<https://oldercitizensadvocacyyork.org.uk/>

Walk of Light

Four members of Chapel are taking part in a National Event called 'The Walk of Light' taking place on Saturday 26 March to raise funds for Blood Cancer UK. They will be walking in memory of someone who had blood cancer or to help someone who is currently having treatment for it.

If you would like to sponsor any of these people please contact Dee Boyle, Joan Sinanan, Claire Lee or Richard Thompson, who would welcome any donations you are able to make.

More information here:

<https://bloodcancer.org.uk/get-involved/fundraising-events-and-challenges/sports-challenges/walk-of-light/>



'Send A Child To Hucklow'

A Unitarian social action project, SACH ('Send A Child to Hucklow') is a charity that provides and arranges holidays for disadvantaged children at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, with no regard to religious, political, racial or other connections.



Currently we have no children from Yorkshire who enjoy these holidays. Are you prepared to step forward and contact a school or community group which might be interested? Would you then go on to be the liaison person with SACH? For more information contact the Secretary, Christine Hayhurst: secretary@sendachildtohucklow.org.uk
Phone: 01483 419577

If you would like to make a one-off donation to York Unitarians CIO by BACS, the details are:

York Unitarians CIO
Sort Code: 40-52-40
Account number: 00032702

A Monthly Standing Order is particularly welcome. Please also consider Gift Aid if you are a taxpayer. More information from the Treasurer
Richard Brown

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