



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

May 2019

FROM THE MINISTER

When I first returned from New Zealand to the UK, I sought out local Unitarian congregations and got involved in the District in the North-West of England. One of the mature Unitarian women I met told me that she had been the Rose Queen at her Unitarian Chapel growing up. This concept seemed somewhat alien to my idea of Unitarianism - that we would be celebrating something as superficial as looks! It seems it was a part of the tradition of the North-west where churches had Walking Sundays and the Rose Queen or May Queen headed the parade.

These were supposed to have started as Whit Sunday parades where those to be baptised paraded in their new white clothes and were given coins by onlookers to help with the clothing bills. More likely is the connection of 'wit' to wisdom poured out by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

However, it turns out that Rose Queens are picked for their beauty, their beauty of character. Usually an older primary school child who has done a lot for her local church or chapel is chosen; helping in the Sunday school, taking part in youth services and generally being a good chapel goer. They are dressed in long white gowns with velvet capes carried by little attendants and crowned in a special ceremony.

Rose queens were also representatives of their churches and expected to organise fundraising events such as cake sales and dances during their year's tenure.

My chosen theme for this month is beauty. In May our gardens and the natural world around us are thriving, with blossom and many shades of green entrancing our eyes.

Amongst many questions I asked myself as a child was "Do other people see the same thing as me?" I still am not sure. One clear difference is in the perception of the colour blind. A red /

green colour-blind friend explained that he could not see the red camellia blooms on the green bush. They did not pop out at all and the whole thing was a muddy grey. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

Studies of those who have suffered brain injuries or

surgery which separates one half of the brain from the other show that when one eye is covered, an item cannot be spoken of, even though the other eye can see it. Beauty, it seems, is not just in the eye, but also in the brain of the beholder.

Let's take the time to be a beholder of both outer and inner beauty.

Nicky Jenkins



Rose/May Queen Hyde Chapel archive circa 1920s

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

Sunday 5 May
Serendipity Service for May
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 12 May
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
Sparklers' Children's Programme
Music by Helen Drewery
12.30p.m. Organising meeting
about St. Crux fundraising day

Sunday 19 May
Chris Carr
The giant versus Hercules
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 26 May
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Beauty and religion
Music by Nick Morrice

OTHER EVENTS IN MAY

- Wednesday 1 May 10a.m. *Polling station equipment setting up* (Chapel)
- Thursday 2 May 7a.m. – 10p.m. *Polling station for local elections*(Chapel)
- Saturday 4 May 1.00p.m. *Late Music: Duncan Honeybourne (piano) – A hundred years of British Piano Miniatures* (Chapel)
- Saturday 4 May 7.30p.m. *Late Music: Dr K Ensemble – Oliver Knussen and his Ongoing Legacy* (Chapel)
- Sunday 5 May 12.30p.m. *Organising meeting about St. Crux fundraising day* (Upper Room)
- Monday 6 May 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Tuesday 7 May 10 a.m. *Polling station equipment collection* (Chapel vestibule)
- Tuesday 7 May 7.30p.m. *York Interfaith Association: Responding to hate crime* (Hudson Room, Council Offices)
- Thursday 9 May 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group*(Upper Room)
- Thursday 9 & Friday 10 May *Preparations for St. Crux Hall Sale*
- Saturday 11 May *Chapel Sale at St. Crux Hall*
- Monday 13 May 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal*(Chapel)
- Thursday 16 May 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

- Monday 20 May 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal*(Chapel)
- Thursday 23 May 7a.m. - 10p.m. polling station for European elections
- Thursday 30 May 10.30 for 11.00a.m. *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Friday 31 May 12.30p.m. *Last Friday concert: 'Desperate Mezzos Vocal Trio'* (Valerie Parker, Rebecca Smith & Victoria Manders-Wood) (Chapel)

N.B. There will be no Meditation Group meetings on Thursday 2 May and Thursday 23 May as the Chapel will be in use as a polling station for Local and European elections.

ST. CRUX FUNDRAISING DAY

Saturday 11th May

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This is our major fundraising event of the year.

Please bring items to sell into the Chapel.

We need as many volunteers

as we can possibly get on the day.

The sign-up sheet is on the vestry notice board.

St. Crux Hall is on Whippawhopmagate

at corner of the Shambles and Stonebow.

SERENDIPITY FOR MAY

Sunday 5 May 11.00a.m.

Our Serendipity service will be a service of



seasonal readings, poems, pictures and objects which you are invited to bring along to Chapel and recite, read, show or talk about for, at most two minutes each. We will sit in the round in the chancel.

**Serendipity:
the discovery of something
by chance, fluke or good fortune**



**YORK UNITARIANS
AT THE UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
BIRMINGHAM 16 - 18 APRIL 2019**

Seven York Unitarians attended the the annual meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Elizabeth Faiers and Jenny Jacobs were the congregation's official voting delegates; Margaret Hill and Dee Boyle went as visitors and Laura Cox under the special first-timers' scheme. Our minister Nicky Jenkins and chapel member Andrew Hill attended in their own right as ministers on the Assembly's role.

**UNITARIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
BIRMINGHAM 2019**

- The annual meetings were again held at the Hilton Hotel close by Birmingham airport the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham International railway station.
- The General Assembly President for 2018-2019, Joan Cook who visited us twice in York, conducted the business meeting. In the last session the Revd. Celia Cartwright, the recently retired minister from Kendal, was installed as the new President for 2019-20. The presidency alternates between a layperson and a minister.
- The meetings marked the retirement of Derek McAuley after 10 years as the denomination's chief officer. His tenure had been marked by significant public representation of Unitarians on interfaith and inter church bodies but especially those where with Quakers and Liberal Jews he was able to successfully advocate for equal marriage legislation.
- The meetings also welcomed Liz Slade the Assembly's new chief officer. Liz is a member of Newington Green (New Unity) Unitarians, London and has previously worked with the Sunday Assembly. Some of us had met her recently in Leeds on her pre-Assembly

whistle tour of districts. There were 11 applicants for the post.

- Altrincham Unitarian Martin West who has served as treasurer of several Unitarian bodies including *The Inquirer*, *The Ministers' Pension Fund* and the *General Assembly* was made an honorary member of the Assembly.
- A motion about knife crime, proposed by the Foy Society was passed overwhelmingly.
- There were many opportunities for worship during the meetings starting with pre-breakfast devotional or meditational opportunities; devotions at the start of each morning business session; late evening peace vespers and worship at the meetings' end led by the new President. Hymns were projected on the screen.
- The anniversary service led by Rev. Andy Phillips (Upper Chapel, Sheffield) and for which

the Revd. Maria Curtis (Horsham, Sussex) was the preacher centred on the health and well being of the Planet Earth. Since these were shortened meetings (from 4 days to 3) there was no choir but instead a splendid ad hoc band of musicians led by Cody and Catharine Coyne. During the service three new ministers were recognised including Revd. Claire McDonald – now minister at Lewisham



Retiring General Assembly Chief Officer,
Derek McAuley
with Joan Cook, President 2018-2019

in greater London but who began her journey

towards ministry with us in York; and Rev. Maria Pap an Hungarian Unitarian minister now settled at Mansfield.

• The Lindsey Press launched two new books this year: a meditation manual Catharine Robinson's *Fragments of Holiness* and Ann Peart's *Unitarian Women*. The latter briefly features York Unitarian Catharine Cappe. Both books were purchased for the Chapel library thanks to a £50 grant from the Yorkshire Unitarian Union. We also stocked up on Unitarian publicity pamphlets.

• At The Unitarian Historical Society's AGM the speaker about dissenting academy libraries in the north of England was York based Dr. Rachel Eckersley.

• The keynote speaker this year was Lord Mark Price, former head of John Lewis stores, whose theme was *Workplace happiness: why should we care?*

• There were useful meetings about (i) making good use of social media – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram - led by Rory Castle Jones (GA communications officer) and Lizzie Harley; but see also Laura Cox's plan "to make St Saviourgate a social media phenomenon"; and (ii) about congregational governance with Simon Bland regarding the forthcoming change from numberless 'excepted charity' status for our congregations to numbered 'registered charity status'. However, some congregations – including York – are transitioning to Charitable Incorporated Organisations. There was a helpful conversation about accounts with Roderick Ramage our legal advisor in these matters.

• The new Unitarian College [successor to Unitarian College, Manchester] for the training of ministers was officially launched with presentations by the newly appointed director Helen Mason and its principal tutor Ant Howe. The College's 6 first students each made contributions.

• The Unitarian Peace Fellowship, The Findhorn Unitarian Network, the Women's League (who presented a cheque for £8470 to the UK Sepsis Trust), the Psychical Society, the Women's Group, the National Unitarian Fellowship (NUF) for isolated Unitarians, Earth Sprit Network all held their own meetings. There were also

s p e c i a l receptions for newcomers and for associate members.

• The GA Executive Committee held a useful open session at which its members seemed to be recognizing that the balance between confidentiality and openness required some adjustment in favour of openness.

• Andrew and Margaret Hill joined with present and former Edinburgh Unitarians for what has become an annual General Assembly photograph. This years there were 13 of us.



**Unitarian General Assembly Presidents
Joan Cook 2018-19; Revd Celia Cartwright 2019-20
and Ann Mills 2020-21**

A NON-STOP WHIRL OF MEETINGS AND TALKS

York Chapel delegate Jenny Jacobs reports on her GA meetings highlight

The two days of the General Assembly Annual Meetings passed in a non-stop whirl of meetings and talks. It was intense and with hindsight I think I might have done better to miss one of the sessions. I even know which one – the Psychical Society – but I had to go along just to see what on earth (or wherever) was going on. I'm not much the wiser.

The stand-out session for me was the talk organised by the Penal and Social Affairs Panel (and I'm not just saying that because I'm a member!) on social care. This was delivered by Patrick Hall, a research fellow at the University of Birmingham.

He quoted a recent newspaper headline – "Everyone agrees there is a crisis but no-one knows what to do!"

He explained the fundamental shifts in society which have led to the current crisis. There are far more older people and they are living longer, but fewer young people to support them. It is now the norm for women to work outside the home. Young people move away; families no longer continue to live near each other.

There has been a dismantling of the old state institutions (care and children's homes) and a marketization of services but care is seen as lower class work and is largely performed by migrant workers. Nevertheless, most care is still unpaid and delivered in families, largely by women.

This issue is not limited to the UK but is being experienced internationally. Patrick has been looking at what works in other countries. He told us there is no magic bullet but that, for example, in both Germany and Japan there is a strong social insurance policy, with generous pay and leave so that workers can undertake care of relatives. In Australia, care is market driven but prices are controlled.

He told us that the largest impact on social care has been the Government's austerity programme. Spending per adult fell by 13.5% between 2010 and 2016. Paradoxically, cuts (through the reduction in central government grants to local authorities) have been most swingeing where need is most acute. Whilst the average cut has been 11%, it was 18% in the North East. Interestingly, there is a correlation between the areas where more than 50% of care is delivered unpaid and areas which voted "Leave" in 2016.

Patrick reminded us that the Government's forthcoming Green Paper on social care, due in 2017, has now been delayed five times in the past two years.

He suggests that above all else, we need a cross-party consensus. We need to look at what works elsewhere and act on it. The solution needs to be cross-departmental (work, pensions, health, third sector). He reminded us that how we deliver care is underpinned by our values as a society and shaped by our economic and political frameworks. Currently, our Government is just not facing up to the challenge. But it is an issue which simply must be addressed.

The talk provoked a lively discussion with lots of interesting points made from the floor. Most significantly, a recently-retired head teacher told us how very many more child carers she had seen in recent years than when she started out teaching decades ago.

Altogether this was a stimulating and timely talk on an issue which concerns us all.



LIZ SLADE
The Unitarian General Assembly's
new chief officer

THE MEETINGS ARE VERY IMPORTANT

York Chapel delegate, Elizabeth Faiers tells all

WHAT HAPPENED?

The GA meetings are very important in the Unitarian calendar, they are when motions are discussed and voted on, affiliated societies such as the Penal and Social Affairs and Women's Groups arrange speakers who give short talks and answer questions; and people talk and talk. Unitarianism is a small denomination but at the recent meetings there were over 300 people present; a very important chance to meet up with old friends and make new ones. The meetings were held at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in Birmingham so we were fed well and there was social space and a bar where people could continue conversation until the late hours if they wished.

WHAT WAS GOOD?

My daughter Kathy was one of the Youth leaders so it was lovely meeting up with her and my two grandchildren. Of the meetings I particularly found the Peace Fellowship, Youth, and Penal and Social Affairs interesting. In the Peace Fellowship we heard how the UK is in the top 6 countries for arms sales in the world but next we learnt that 87 UK Mayors have signed up as Mayors for Peace. (I have since looked on-

line at the list and York's Lord Mayor does not appear to be one of them! Should we write to the next Lord Mayor in May?)

We were also warned to be very careful what we believe in the News, as the Media can cause problems particularly in the way Anti-Semitism has been reported.....Quakers have even been called Anti-Semitic. It was advised that Israeli Jews and Palestinians need to meet and talk over coffee! We were also told to talk with our congregations about the young British Muslim girl who became an Isis bride but now wants to return and stay in the UK. We as Unitarians need to say YES, it is important.

In his lecture the Keynote Speaker Lord Mark Price talked about Workplace Happiness, he told us that if the workforce is happy and engaged then profits and productivity will be up 20%, waste will be down 43%, staff turnover will be lower and absence due to sickness will be lower; but in many UK companies now, 37% of workers are unhappy and 70% would change their job for only a small increase in salary! He went on to describe the six steps to employee engagement which included reward and recognition and giving people a sense of pride in their work. He finished by reminding us that people in church communities also need to be recognised, given information and need a sense of pride in their role. We need to make our home, workplace and church communities' happier places.

In the Penal and Social Affairs talk we learnt about the Social Care Problem and learnt that good care costs and more volunteers need to be involved!

WHAT WAS AWFUL?

I have chosen the women's group talk; not because it was poor but because its content was upsetting. We heard about Period Poverty, which is a serious problem in the UK now. I grew up in Elland in the West Riding, a town with more chimneys per head of population than any town in Europe. I was never aware that girls missed school because of being unable to afford sanitary wear. I suppose because employment was excellent in the town parents could buy what was needed. It depresses me to think that the country has gone backwards so much in 50 years! There is still stigma attached to menstruation and girls and women are often bullied at school and in the workplace. Re-usable menstrual products are available and are environmentally friendly but women will need education to want to use them.

WHAT WAS MOST IMPORTANT FOR ME?

My grandson Struan who is 8 years old was the Oak King in the short play performed by the children during the anniversary service. He performed sensibly and correctly and he gained so much from all the people who talked to him and complemented him afterwards. Helping our Unitarian young to grow in self confidence is so important.

MAKING ST. SAVIOURGATE

'A SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENON'

Laura Cox, a Unitarian General Assembly first-timer sets out her quest.

As a relatively new Unitarian and first-time attendee at the Unitarian General Assembly, I was daunted by the prospect of spending three days in an unfamiliar location with unfamiliar people. Nevertheless, armed with a name tag and a reporter's notebook, I was determined not to spend the duration of the conference hiding in my room.

Any apprehensions I had were obliterated by the opening worship session, which featured the music, reflection, and thoughtful sermons that I love about our St Saviourgate services. I'd never been in a room with so many Unitarians! That alone made it worthwhile, and helped me to see Unitarianism as a national and international community.

My favourite session was run by the Earth Spirit Network – the reason it was so engaging was because we were invited to work in groups, sharing our personal feelings on the pagan festivals of the year. I was grouped with Dee, who turned out to be an authority on the subject, a lady I had met at the train station earlier that day, and a person dressed as a character from the much loved fantasy series *Game Of Thrones*. One of the main themes that ran through the conference, and particularly the anniversary service, was sustainability. Placing the sheer desperation of the situation in the spotlight was a bold but admirable move, and left me wondering what more I could do to 'touch the earth lightly', as one of our regular hymns advises. The emphasis on sustainable living reinforced my belief that one of the many functions of Unitarianism should be to encourage a world view that honours and preserves the natural environment.

Of course, it was the people themselves who made the conference such a brilliant experience. Over the course of the three days I was struck, though not surprised, by the kindness and openness of those that I met. I was able to talk passionately with like minded people about subjects that one often keeps to oneself (like veganism!). While the talks – especially Lord Mark Price's discussion of workplace happiness – were brilliant, the best thing about the conference was learning about how different people from all walks of life had found their faith.

For me, the central motivation behind attending the conference was to meet Unitarians my own age. Although the demographic certainly favoured a particular age range, I did make some new friends who I hope to visit at their home chapels. It was also refreshing to meet such a wide range of people, from an ex-private school teacher with a delightfully posh accent, to an eccentric London reverend with a penchant for Indian food.

During the meetings I also met one of the organisers of the Hucklow summer school programme: a week long 'retreat' in the Peak District. Before attending the General Assembly, I would have passed up the opportunity. However, after meeting so many fascinating people who had connected with their own purpose and spirituality, I signed up.

Attending GA 2019 was an important step in my personal spiritual journey, re-enforcing the reasons why I identify as a Unitarian and hope to promote Unitarianism in whatever way I can. The three days were moving, inspiring, and also educational. Following the example of the GA's new head of social media, I'm now embarking on a quest to make St Saviourgate a social media phenomenon...

Watch this space!

MY SIGHT YORK

formerly *York Blind and Partially Sighted Society* is our Chapel chosen charity for 2019. The charity's aim is to support people in York with sight loss to live well.

A chapel concert on 3 April by the U3A Choir and Guitar group has already raised £209.65. Fundraising - using our two pink elephants which are out every Sunday - has so far reached over £50.

Please remember to support *My Sight York* each Sunday. Later in the year a specially sponsored walk will be organised.



YORKSHIRE UNITARIAN UNION **SUMMER GATHERING INVITATION** 

SATURDAY 22ND JUNE 2019

TO BE HELD AT PEPPER HILL UNITARIAN CHAPEL, SHELF, HALIFAX, HX3 7TH

Come along and enjoy the Gathering set high on the Pennines this is one of our treasures, with art deco windows and much more.




Programme for the Day on the theme 'Summer'

- † 10-30 till 11-30: Gather at Pepper Hill to meet and chat.
- † 11-30 Sharing our own Readings – Poems – Music – Song –and other contributions on the theme Summer.
- † 12-30 Enjoy your own picnic lunch (tea - coffee provided)
- † 1-15 For those who wish, we will set off to Shibden Park the home of Ann Lister or remain at the church for chat and perhaps a short walk.
- † 3-45 Return to Pepper Hill and re Gather for a short epilogue before our journeys home.

For further details follow the Yorkshire Unitarian Union Website on <https://unitariansinyorkshire.wordpress.com/>

Pepper Hill Unitarian Chapel HX3 7TH Web Site: <http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/shelf>

Please consider car sharing and offering people lifts.

PASTORAL CARE GROUP

As we have several new members and new attenders among our congregation, we thought that some of you may not realise that there is a Pastoral Care group within chapel.

Rev Nicky Jenkins
Dee Boyle
Janet Eldred
Peter Exley
Simon Hardy
Marta Hardy
Claire Lee
Nick Morrice

We are all available for a chat within chapel or to go for a more private talk over a coffee somewhere else. Our names and contact details are available on the main notice board in the Vestry.

Our chapel community is a very caring and safe place and you may feel more comfortable just turning to and talking through any problems with the person sitting next to you on the pew. Just please be aware that there are people available if you need a bit of privacy. Anything said to us will be said in absolute confidence.

Hopefully your lives will be joyous and carefree, but for those moments when you really need to be listened to, we are there.

Claire Lee

ABOUT PEOPLE

John Issitt gave a paper at a recent Dr. Williams's Library, London seminar 'A step too far: The 1808 Unitarian version of the most important book in Christendom'. About this John writes:

"The 1808 Unitarian New Testament confronted orthodoxy head on. Its editors presented the first two chapters of the Gospels of Mathew and Luke entirely in italics on grounds of "dubious historical authority" – meaning they were not true. It immediately provoked charges of blasphemy, ignorance, wilful misrepresentation and anarchy."

Right now, you're wondering if you'll ever be 'normal'. You are normal. There is nothing wrong with you. You are not going to hell. You did nothing to deserve their hate.

[Lyra McKee 'Letter to her 14 year old self.' Lyra's name was added to the complete list of those who died in the Irish 'troubles' read every Good Friday at the Dublin Unitarian Church. The reading takes about 7 hours.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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Officers

*St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel Charity
(registered charity: 230167) Trustees:*
Elizabeth Faiers (Treasurer), Simon
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