



THE YORK UNITARIAN

St. Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York, YO1 8NQ

October 2019

FROM THE MINISTER

This month sees our Membership Service which is why I have chosen the theme of 'Belonging' for October. Many of us have had a sense that we don't belong. We don't belong in our family, in our place of work or at our religious gatherings. Perhaps more than most, many Unitarians have felt this sense of not belonging especially in our previous faith lives. And that is why it is so important that we welcome our new members; that we say, *"This is where you belong. We want you here in community with us. We welcome you and all your gifts and quirks and doubts."*

The Membership service also gives an opportunity for you to consider your own commitment to Unitarianism and the chapel community. What does it mean to you to belong? Are you ready to get more involved? Or maybe there is something that really gets up your nose? Can you bear to stay and work for change or will you just fade away from attendance?

Belonging was also at the heart of two of the issues we looked at at our Ministers Autumn Conference last month. How can we better provide a welcome for members of the LGBTQIA+ community? Some of you were there when Jane

Blackall and Fred Langridge taught the course at St Saviourgate last year. It is so easy to make a slip up when chatting to someone whose identity or lifestyle is unfamiliar to you. In many cases people who don't fit in to the heteronormative feel they don't belong and great care needs to be taken in making assumptions about someone's gender or sexuality in conversation and especially if you are leading worship. We want people to feel at home and in order to do that we need to pause and ask perhaps more open questions. Congregations need to be educating themselves so that we can be truly welcoming and not just well-intentioned.

Our congregations are often heterogeneous in colour. Ministers plan to have a conference next year on white privilege and how the whole structure of society favours the pink of skin. We need to understand how racism has affected our siblings in humanity in order for us to help people feel they belong in our churches and chapels. We need to understand the difficulties, the offence, the assumptions they have had to deal with. Only then can we get some inkling of what it is like and why we may

need to have some positive discrimination in order to redress the balance.

Nicky Jenkins



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

Sunday 6 October
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Membership service
Welcome of new members
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 13 October
Revd. Nicky Jenkins
Music by Helen Drewery
Sparklers Children's Programme

Sunday 20 October
Stephanie Bisby
Beyond Expectations
Music by David Hammond

Sunday 27 October (Clocks change)
Laura Cox
Sacred the body
Music by David Hammond

OTHER EVENTS IN OCTOBER

- Tuesday 1 October 7.30p.m. *York Interfaith Association: How can faiths work together* (Hudson Room, Council Offices)
- Thursday 3 October 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Thursday 3 October 7.30p.m. *Micklegate Singers rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Saturday 5 October 1.00p.m. *Late Music: Fairfax Ensemble* (Chapel)
- Saturday 5 October 7.30p.m. *Late Music: Steve Bingham (violin): Loops and lines* (Chapel)
- Monday 7 October 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 10 October 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group*(Upper Room)
- Friday 11 October 12.30p.m. *Occasional Friday: Antero Pellikka: The Bohemian Guitar* (Chapel)
- Saturday 12 October 10.30a.m.- 3.00p.m. *Chapterhouse Choir Development Day* (Chapel)
- Monday 14 October 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal*(Chapel)
- Thursday 17 October 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

- Saturday 19 October 7.30p.m. *The Arc Project: new music concert* (Chapel)
- Monday 21 October 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 24 October 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)
- Friday 25 October 12.30p.m. *Last Friday Music: Adam Heron* (Chapel)
- Saturday 26 October 11.00a.m. *Yorkshire Unitarian Union Annual General Meeting* (HullUnitarian Church, Park Street, Hull)
- Saturday 26 October 12.30p.m. *Southbank Singers concert for Edible York* (Chapel)
- Saturday 26 October 7.30p.m. *Matthew Palmer piano and Chris Roberts guitar* (Chapel)
- Monday 28 October 7.30p.m. *Soon Amore rehearsal* (Chapel)
- Thursday 31 October 10.30 for 11.00a.m *Meditation Group* (Upper Room)

ABOUT PEOPLE

Stephanie Bisby, taking our service on 20th October, is a student for the Unitarian ministry.

Sue and Ralph Catts have arrived safely in Melbourne.

Nicky Jenkins and *Andrew Hill* both attended the annual Ministerial Fellowship conference at Great Hucklow early in September.

The Chapel was well represented at the city centre Climate Change programme on Saturday 21 September. Present for all or for parts of the programme were *Nicky Jenkins, Barbara Barnes, Adrienne Wilson, Claire Wilton, Dee Boyle, John Issett, Andrew Hill, John Brogden* and others plus one young York Unitarian.

AUTUMN

**A haze on the far horizon,
An infinite tender sky,
The ripe rich tints of the cornfield
And the wild geese sailing high;
And all over upland and lowland
The charm of the golden rod;
Some of us call it Autumn,
And others call it God.**

[W.H.Carruth]

A WEEK IN THE PEAK:

Summer School 2019



My summer school experience... Well, where to start? Now I'm home, it feels almost like a dream. Did I really spend a whole week in the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, with sixty or so people I barely knew? Did I really learn to swing dance, weave through disgruntled cows on country walks, and sing at the top of my voice in a yurt covered in bunting? How could I have shared so much with so many people in such a short space of time?

I could write in detail about what we did each day, what activities there were and which talks I sleepily attended in the mornings... But really, that doesn't matter. What matters is that I went, and I left feeling I'd been part of an experience that has changed my life in so many ways.

The most important thing about Summer School is that you can be you. Wholly, entirely, unapologetically you. You're accepted for who you are, warts and all. And while you're there, you come to realise that our struggles and our differences are often what brings us closer together. This year, Summer School focused on 'Theology In The Flesh' – our embodied spiritual experience. This, for me, was a particularly poignant topic. I laughed, I cried, but most importantly I learnt that behind every body is a complex story. Summer School is a place to openly tell and listen to these stories.

Back in York, I feel slightly lost. I keep expecting the old dinner gong to reverberate through the walls, to hear the shuffle of feet, the scrape of chairs, and the half broken conversations as people drift in and out of activities and workshops. What I miss most, other than the people, is the nightly lantern-lit walk down to the local Unitarian chapel. Established in 1696, the chapel is a humble but beautiful little building where Summer Schoolers are invited to meet each evening to round off the day. I'd like to thank those who made it possible for me to attend this year's Summer School. I'd also like to thank the organisers behind the programme, and the many people I met while I was there. I know that if I return to the Nightingale Centre – and I hope I do – I'll be going home. *Laura Cox*

FROM UNI NEWS FOR SEPTEMBER

- At least 10 British Unitarian congregations are known to have shown support for *Extinction Rebellion* events either by providing meeting space or with more active involvement. Here in York several members participated in the people's assembly held at York Explore.
- *The Unitarian* magazine, published by the Manchester District Association, now has a new on-line existence at unitariansmda.org.uk. In its July/August issue Professor Geoff Levermore asks 'Are Unitarians happier than the average people in the UK?'
- *Doncaster Unitarians* recently hosted the first same-sex church wedding in the town.
- American Unitarian Ralph Waldo Emerson was honoured by *The Catholic Herald* of 29 August as 'heretic of the week'.
- Young people of Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith traditions formed a quiet reflective space during the central London Climate Strike on 20th September.
- If you are interested in ministry training there is an application form on the Unitarian General Assembly website. Deadline for applications is 1 October with interviews at Oxford 7/8 January 2020.

PRAYER FOR LIFE

Spirit of life
Which is within us all,
Let us honour and respect you.
May all know your power
and respect your way,
creating heaven on earth.
May we appreciate all we are given.
Let us bear no ill will,
even as you forgive us.
And keep giving us opportunities
to choose life.
For with you is the truth
the strength
and the joy
for all time.
So may it be

Nicky Jenkins

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM A CHAPEL SERVICE?

Nicky Jenkins reports on the votes for her stickynotes survey in chapel 21/7/19

I know you have all been waiting on tenterhooks for the results of our sticky notes survey. I have to be the first to admit that I am not by any means a professional survey designer so I maybe didn't ask the right questions. However, here they are:

Music Choir: 3; Rounds and chants: 4 + Taize; Other: 3 Taize style dance music. Music from other cultures and religions; Recorded Music: 3; Live music: 10 ½ Piano and organ and choral music; Contemporary Music: 5; Folk Music: 6 ½; 2 stickers for All!

Readings Poetry 2; Prose 5; Both 6; All 1; Bible KJV- none; Bible (other) 5; Other Faiths- 10

Collection During service 11; As you leave 6; Standing order 3; Standing order and during 1

Silence 2minutes 9; 5 minutes 9; 5-10 minutes (visitor)

Words More words 8; Fewer words 1 visitor; Like current balance 1; More music 7; Less Music 1;

Address 13

Story For children only on second Sundays – none; For All 16

Prayer 16 Prayer and silence 1;

Notices 12

Length of service 45 minutes - none; 1 hour - 21; No longer! 1

Social Time ½ hour before church- none; ½ hour after church- 10; 1hour before service – none 1 hour after church- 12; Also at other times e.g. midweek; How about starting the service at 10.30?

In summary there was a strong preference for live music with some interest in folk music. When it came to readings, both poetry and prose were liked. No votes were given to the King James version of the Bible which people prefer in other versions. Overwhelmingly however the votes went to readings from other faiths. As for the collection, the majority favoured having it during the service rather than as you leave and there were fewer votes for

standing orders. Interestingly there were equal votes for a 2 minute silence and a 5 minute silence. As this is a less traditional element of our service it does show an increased sense of the value of this time. As to the balance between words and music, almost equal numbers felt there should be more words and more music. Thus proving you can't please all of the people all of the time! There was a large vote was for the address as a desired element of the service.



Highest ranking were the votes for a story every week with no votes for restricting it to the children's Sparklers week and for prayer to form an element of the service. Equally people were keen to hear the notices read out in the service.

How long should the service be? No votes for 45minutes and 21 for an hour long service. I always aim for 45 minutes! What about the social time? No-one wanted to meet before chapel. Numbers were split fairly evenly between an hour and half an hour after chapel. Of course there's nothing to stop people leaving after a half hour! There were other suggestions too such as meeting midweek and changing the start time of the service to 10.30am.

Interesting also to hear that Aberdeen Unitarians were holding a similar service about the structure of their services and asked me for a copy of the results to help inform their deliberations.

I think on the whole you are a congregation who can adapt to different formats although some like the predictability of a set order, but this survey gives a little more leeway into what might speak to you and how new elements might be tried out. Thank you all for your considered input!

As a rider, I will add that our Committee Members are interested in hearing from you about what other activities you might like outside the services- social action, events, classes, groups e.g. Men's group or study group. There is a limit on the times available due to the concert schedule and obviously you will need volunteers to organise and run any groups. Don't forget we have a poetry group and meditation on Thursdays at 10.30 for 11.

LAMMAS

A sermon by Claire Lee
on Sunday 28th July 2019

Lammas July 31st to 1st of August. It's the Celtic pagan festival of the Goddess and the Green Man. It's a celebration of the *first* grain harvest in both Pagan and Christian religions. It's a time of thankfulness and for abundance. Mabon or the Autumn equinox is the *second* harvest of fruit and Samhain (Sowain) or Hallowe'en is the *third* and final harvest of nuts and berries. The word Lammas is derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'Hlaeff – mass – or loaf mass. A time for reaping what you have sown both physically and metaphorically. A time for abundance.

A HUNDRED HARVESTS LEFT

I have to admit that I listen to *The Archers*. It is my one weakness! Adam, in the Archers, shocked me recently by saying that unless we do something drastic and quickly about the state of our earth, our land, our soil, our farming practices here in the UK and probably globally, then we only have 100 harvests left. *We only have a hundred harvest left.*

This information doesn't just come from The Archers but from a real life study by Professor Nigel Dunnett of Sheffield University who says that on average, urban land has far more nutrients in it now than farmland due to the intensive farming systems used since the second world war. His solution to the 'agri crisis' is to utilise urban waste ground to form eco-parks to grow food. A solution of sorts but one that can only work if we change our farming methods – dramatically.

We are all also aware that the continued use of toxic pesticides is killing pollinators as well as the insects that harm crops. In fact, we are all aware that the intensive farming methods used since the second world war are simply not sustainable. In fact, basically the way we live our lives globally is completely and utterly unsustainable.

GAIA CRISIS

We know that, and with considerable prompting – a great deal of which came from young people - our government declared a Climate Emergency on 1st May of this year for us only to be told earlier this month in a report by the Committee on Climate Change that the UK's preparations for climate crisis are being run like, 'Dad's Army'. Emissions targets are not being met and funding has been cut from programmes to tackle global heating. Private Frazer's words spring to mind 'We're doomed!'.

Anyway, it's not just a climate change emergency that we are all facing – especially our grandchildren's generation, but with plastic pollution and unsustainable farming methods, deforestation and water shortages imminent due to mass overpopulation of the human race, what we are facing is a Gaia Crisis.

Nick Morrice lent me his copy of

Animate Earth – Science, Intuition and Gaia by Stephan Harding in which Harding says this:

For millenia, traditional peoples all over the world have believed in an earth mother who bestows life and receives the dead into her rich soil. The Ancient Greeks called her *Gaia*, the earthly presence of *anima mundi* – the vast and mysterious primordial intelligence that steadily gives birth to all that exists – at once both spiritual and material – that sustains all that is.

And then came along different religions and science and the Age of Reason that looked upon the earth, not as a living being, but as a dead thing - a *something* that we could use for our benefit alone. Dig up, cut down, contaminate – there's always more where that came from – use up and choke.

But, gradually, certainly, not nearly fast enough, but certainly things are beginning to change. And why? Because the young people, the people who are going to inherit this earth, our mess, our excess and our greed, these young people are angry and scared – and quite rightly are demanding action.



THERE IS HOPE

There is hope out there if we seek it.

Nicolas Denieul, a French farmer who farms near Le Mans, drastically changed the way he grew wheat, corn and rapeseed ten years ago because he found that his earth was totally devoid of worms, insects or any other organisms commonly found in a healthy soil.

We probably all know soil captures carbon through decomposing vegetable matter which, instead of being released in the form of greenhouse gases, nourishes the soil and plants. The French National Institute for Agricultural Research believe that an increase of 0.4% a year of carbon stored in soil could possibly stop the current growth of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

So, Nicolas Denieul, along with 5000 of his fellow farmers and supported by Base, a network that supports farming based on soil conservation, stopped ploughing their land. They found seed drills that disturbed the soil as little as possible by covering seeds with a thin layer of soil. Also, they never leave a field bare, planting alfalfa and beans after a harvest of grain crops. After 10 years, his fields are teeming with worms and other organic matter. He is now, after a period of lower yields as his land regenerated, getting the same level of yields as he did with his intensive farming methods. But although his yields did initially go down, they have risen back up whereas with continued intensive farming, yields will drop and drop with no hope of anything better except complete ruination of the soil. And he saves money. He uses his tractor far less and uses less weedkiller and no synthetic fertilizer – only pig manure - and his top soil no longer washes away in a rain storm because the rain can filter down through the worm holes and tunnels.

It's a 'win win' situation. Working with nature rather than constantly thrashing it works well and is sustainable - not to mention the great persuader for many in that it's economically more viable. It's just a matter of having the courage to take the plunge and change; and cope with a few lesser yields for a short period.

Looking online, world wide farmers are beginning to turn to more sustainable, less harsh methods of farming. They are having to.

There is hope out there if we seek it

GRETA THUNBERG

You will all have heard of and read about the remarkable Swedish 16 year old schoolgirl, Greta Thunberg, - this month featured on the front of our newsletter - who started the school children's strikes telling politicians, business people, everyone to stop pretending there is no crisis – there really is.

—This has led to a global movement of angry, frightened school children going on school strike every Friday. I believe there is one due on Friday 20th September after they return to school. They are demanding that the grown ups now listen to their concerns and act! This led to parliament declaring a climate change emergency on 1st May 2019.

DEMAND A FUTURE

There is change out there if we seek it .

I know we all do our bit. Recycling, turning lights off, turning the heating down, using water butts to collect water for the garden, making sure the washing machine has a full load. We all do these things everyday. But it's not enough.

Laura read the mandate given to York City Council which was put together by a large group of concerned people – many of us were amongst them – led by Extinction Rebellion, York on the most potent evening of the year, the summer solstice. The evening event was fittingly called *Demand a Future*. The mandate was delivered to York City Council the following Thursday – so watch this space.....and hope.

It is scary, frightening, frustrating and upsetting – and yes, there is now a term General Practitioners are using called *eco-anxiety*. And these same GPs are writing what are known as *Green Prescriptions* in the growing awareness that being with nature, working with nature is a healing thing, an incredibly healthy thing. So doctors are sending people to do just that rather than giving drugs. And the results are remarkable and holistic.

So things are changing. I am not saying don't do your bit, I am just saying don't despair. You are not alone in this. You are within a caring community of like minded, determined people. Do not despair.

EXTINCTION REBELLION

Extinction Rebellion in their summer uprising in the UK arranged for 5 big different coloured boats to block transport in Leeds, Glasgow, Bristol, Cardiff and London – each boat named after an environmental activist or lawyer, each

of whom have been either killed or had their life threatened doing their work.

The demonstrations are global, peaceful and non-violent with a ban on both alcohol and drugs – that's their creed and they leave no mess behind when they have finished.

They are grabbing news headlines – and they are not terrorists despite the rhetoric being hurled at them and despite different factions trying to muscle in on their act. They are peaceful and non-violent – inconvenient to many and tragically in Bristol preventing someone getting to their father's deathbed in time – a situation that caused immense sorrow amongst the protestors. But the protests are imaginative, sometimes silent as in 'die – ins' and plenty would say, necessary, and are bringing attention to the global problem of climate change and unsustainability.

There is change out there if we seek it.

BETTY , THE GREYHOUND

Let me finish with a happier story. Most of you know that we live with retired greyhounds. Our lovely, newest little girl, *Betty*, was 8 years a slave in the cruel and brutal greyhound racing world first running for her life, then being bred from.

Not long after she came to live with us, after spending 8 years in a concrete kennel, she startled a cat which had been sunbathing in the long grass of the wildlife area in the local allotments.

Betty had a good sniff of the nest the cat had made in the grass and then she decided to try it. She lay down in the long grass – possibly for the first time ever in her life – and she loved it. She loved it so much that every day we have to factor at least 10 – 15 extra minutes into a walk to give her time to lie in the long grass, to listen to the birds, to listen to the wind in the trees, sniff insects around and about and generally, quietly commune, in a very spiritual, healing way, with nature.

And this is her great gift to us. Because we have to stop and spend 10 – 15 minutes every day just quietly listening to the birds, listening to the wind in the trees and just being with nature.

That's Betty's gift of healing for each of us. Spend time in the long grass, listen to birds and the wind in the trees. Sit in nature, work with nature and be healed by nature.

There is hope and change out there if we seek it.

MY SIGHT YORK 2019 Chapel Charity



The annual York Unitarian sponsored walk took place on the day of the autumn equinox but the balance was more towards summer heat than the season of mists. Nine of us met in the village of Husthwaite, from where we proceeded to walk across bony dry furrowed fields under the leadership of Alan and Liz Pennington. Ploughing activity was in evidence, and on this baking hot day clouds of dust were being thrown up in the tractors' wake.

We stopped for coffee by a ruined stone building in the middle of a field under the full glare of the sun. Simon announced, "I wish I'd brought a hat," and fortunately I had a spare so was able to answer his need. The heat of the midday sun was surprisingly intense.

Climbing a hill we encountered stampeding cows. "Stick together," called Liz, so our straggly line re-grouped, and with Keith Barnes bravely out-facing them, we passed safely by, descending into the hamlet of Oulston where we sat on the village green for our picnic lunch. Those with fitbit watches compared notes, agreeing that we had already covered four miles so there were only two to go.

I was glad of some shade for the final stretch and felt more able to enjoy the panoramic views of distant Yorkshire hills and dales. We finally came to rest at the Tomahawk Steak House for drinks on the terrace. Brin recalled the previous year's walk for its frost and ice - this year's would surely go down in the annals as the hottest. What will you plan for us next year, Alan? Many thanks for another great outing.

Nick Morrice

FLOWERGATE OLD CHAPEL, WHITBY has set up a crowdfunding page



Margaret Kirk writes: Flowergate Old Chapel, first built in 1720, is one of Whitby's hidden gems. Tucked away amongst the shops and bustling crowds, you get the feeling that this was to be a secret place to be kept safe. However, due to age and decay we are at risk of losing this wonderful and unique piece of history. Major restoration work is desperately needed. We are a small group of volunteers trying to save this important, atmospheric building and to transform it into a place that can be used by everyone. Please can you help us? We are looking to raise £3000 to help create a learning and engagement centre. This centre will allow a variety of groups to use our space and explore the Chapel's architecture and rich heritage at the same time. Here's some more detail about the chapel and why it needs saving:
SECRECY

This is a very special place. It was first built around 1720 when the law changed and allowed rational dissenters to gather in worship. Before that they could only meet secretly in each others' homes in groups of no more than 5 or 6 otherwise they faced imprisonment.

SOCIAL ACTIVISM

We want to tell the story of its dissenting history especially its famous Minister, Francis Haydn Williams who was a social activist in the town between 1888 - 1910 who went to prison on numerous occasions for upsetting the local gentry in order to reclaim common land and open footpaths. He was passionate in his defence of the rights of ordinary people.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We think his story needs to be better known and we want to set up a Permanent Exhibition to celebrate his activism. We can't do that until the building is in better shape so any money we raise will go towards the £300,000 needed for its restoration. Above all we are working to build community involvement and community use of our space.

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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Sue Catts and Claire Wilton.

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