



## Christmas catch up

Fundraising for the St Elizabeth Hospice – thank you to all who brought mince pies; thank you to the maker of the cake for the raffle; thank you for the preparers of the mulled wine; thank you to all who brought gifts for the Bits & Bobs stall. And a BIG thank you to all who ate, drank, bought raffle tickets and gifts, raising a grand total of £167.86. A happy new year to all our scoffers, imbibers, gamblers (the raffle for the Dundee cake) and purchasers!

Linda King – you have a way with words – thank you too for organising the Bits and Bobs all year!

All together at the end of the Christmas Day service (below)



## Thoughts on the Start of Unitarianism

In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Christians throughout Europe began to want to read the Bible in their own language. In Germany in 1522, Luther (a Roman Catholic priest) translated the New Testament into German. The first translation into Dutch was in 1526 and in England, by Tyndale, in 1526, with revisions in 1534/35.

When a wider number of Christians could read the Bible (as opposed to only the priests), they raised the question *'why and/or where does the doctrine of the Trinity come from?'* It is included in the Bible, but is it part of the teaching of Jesus? In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in Transylvania the 'Nontrinitarians' became established. They were not originally known as 'Unitarians'. The first use of the word 'Unitarian' came in the Edict of Torda in January 1568, which referred to 'The Unitarian Church in Transylvania'. In England in 1534, Henry VIII declared himself the Head of the Church and broke with the Roman Catholic Church. I have often wondered whether his action was partly the result of Christians beginning to have some doubts about the 'official' beliefs of the Church, once they were able for the first time to read the Bible in their own language.

Unitarians regard the Bible as coming not only from God, but also from humans. They therefore do not believe in the infallibility of the Bible. Unitarians believe Jesus did not claim to be God and that his teachings did not suggest the existence of a triune (3 in 1) God. To me the whole story of the crucifixion would lose its

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**Unitarian Gardens** – a response with more details following the article by Veronica Andrews in our last issue.

I was fascinated by Veronica's account of her childhood in one of the houses next to the Meeting House. I remember them well for, as a boy, I would pass them frequently en route to Ipswich Station or Portman Road football ground. Veronica is correct in saying the houses are Georgian in style, probably dating from the reign of George III. Their original name was Priory Place, a name derived from the wealthy Augustine Priory established in the area during Henry II's reign but eventually dissolved by his namesake Henry VIII in 1526. Looking at the photograph, the eagle-eyed would have spotted the nameplate on the top right-hand corner of the wall of the first house! This photo would have been taken some time after 1964, evidence being provided by the parked Cortina and 1100 cars and the mini-skirted lady passing by!

On the other side of the green was the Unitarian Yard which housed Bolenda Engineering Ltd. This was founded in 1946 by my next-door neighbour, Bobby Rofix. Bolenda were specialist precision engineers who still operate today at their works in Great Whip Street. A stamp shop for all budding young philatelists, such as myself, was next door.

Veronica might be interested to know that in 1941, my Kelly's directory reveals only the first two houses were being utilised as private dwellings. Thomas Hopson, whom she mentioned was living in the first house with a Mrs Howard next door. Numbers 3 to 8 were in the hands of a lady named Emily Weavers and was described as a 'boarding house'. This would have included what became Veronica's own home.

These houses were solid-looking and built to last. With four bedrooms they were obviously spacious and must have made excellent family homes. In this era of chronic housing shortage, it seems a tragedy they were ever demolished – another piece of Ipswich's history gone! By Rod Cross

## Tim and Tony's wedding



Tim Cooper and Tony Squirrel were married at the Meeting House on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. We wish them every happiness together.



They send a 'big thank you' to Lewis and all the members of the Unitarian Meeting House. They said *'We had a wonderful memorable day. So many people have told us the service led by Lewis was brilliant, how much they enjoyed it and it was truly perfect.'*

### Thoughts on the Start of Unitarianism – cont.

significance if Jesus was ‘God’ and could avoid pain! As Unitarians we can make the point that our movement is very nearly as old as the Church of England.

The movement gained popularity in England in the wake of the Enlightenment and began to become a formal denomination in 1774 when Theophilus Lindsey organised meetings with Joseph Priestley, founding the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in the country at Essex Street Church in London.

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was raised by his Unitarian statesman father, Joseph Chamberlain. I can remember very clearly standing in our front room at home with my parents and hearing Mr Chamberlain on the radio at 11 o’clock on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 saying ‘... and so we are at war with Germany’.

Certainly in the UK, Unitarianism, the religion of only a small minority of the country’s population, had an enormous impact on Victorian politics, not only in the larger cities (Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool), but in smaller communities like Leicester where there were so many Unitarian mayors that the Unitarian Chapel was known as the ‘Mayor’s Nest’.

Notable Unitarians include Sir Tim Berners-Lee (inventor of the World Wide Web), Lancelot Ware (founder of MENSA), Sir Adrian Boult (conductor), Ray Kurzweil (inventor and futurist) and C. Killick Millard (founder of the Dignity in Dying Society).

By John Ellis (with acknowledgment to Wikipedia)

### Gender-free God?

Wycliffe Hall, where Church of England clergy are trained, has recently issued a document with an ‘inclusive language policy’. This suggests clergy and students need to think carefully about how they describe God and to use gender neutral terms, such as ‘the one who’ instead of ‘he’ and ‘child’ instead of ‘son’. They write – *‘The patriarchal masculine has become a form of alienation for many women and indeed many men’*. Also in Duke University, North Carolina US, it has been suggested that words such as God and Godself be used instead of male or female pronouns.

Article in the Sunday Times 22/1/17

### The Findhorn Experience ~

In the 1960s, communes sprung up left, right, and centre - free love, flower power - that sort of thing. Pretty much all of them ceased to exist, apart from the Findhorn Community, which was founded in 1962. From humble beginnings, the Community grew and today it has about 250 people living in the core community in the Caravan Park, with another 200 in their own homes in an eco-village – living sustainably, existing in harmony with Nature and with others. They are all drawn to Findhorn because of the spirituality of the place, its spiritual heritage, which the founders described as ‘New Age’. To quote a founder, Eileen Caddy, *‘The spring of the New Age is here, bursting forth in perfect harmony, beauty and abundance; and nothing can stop it from coming about.’*

I went to visit as part of a group of 16 Unitarians who went to do the ‘experience week’, which is the introductory course to the Community, the gate-way course one must do to have access to all the other courses on offer. The idea behind the week was for the Findhorn Foundation to learn something of us Unitarians, and we to learn something of them – something which may inform us as a movement. The most powerful thing about the week spiritually speaking was ‘attunement’, which is Findhorn jargon for standing in a circle and holding hands, taking the time to bless one another and to bless the task ahead. It was a subtle, and yet an effective means of reaffirming our team spirit, as we prepared to undertake whichever task was before us.

Like we Unitarians – Findhorn affirms that each person is entitled to their own views, but all members have respect for the ethos, the spiritual and ecological basis of the community. Grounded in an open-hearted spirituality, lived out in practical ways. All the members serve the community by doing work in the community - gardening, cleaning, preparing food and so on. We as visitors helped right alongside them. I was in the kitchens scrubbing pots and pans and helping to prepare the vegetarian meal which we all sat down to each evening.

Findhorn was a valuable experience, a good week with good people. I would recommend going there to anyone. But of course, as always, don’t forget to pack a bit of that Unitarian incredulity – you wouldn’t want to be without it up there.

by Lewis Connolly

## UFOS

Unitarian Focus on Seeing is a way a group of our members choose to hone their attention by taking photos on a given topic each month. The topic for January was 'Light' and here is Riena Jackson's contribution, the sun rising over Findhorn Bay –



The topic for February is 'Hands'. All contributions are welcome. Please print off your photo and either bring or send it to the Meeting House. Contributions for this newsletter should be emailed to the editor.

Below is another photo taken at Findhorn with



our intrepid minister Lewis Connolly in the red hat. (See also his article about the trip to Findhorn on page 3).

## Your Six Word Faith Story

This is an idea from one of the US Unitarian newsletters I receive as editor and it seems like a good one to get us thinking at the start of the year. In writers' groups a commonly used exercise is to make up six words stories as a challenge to brevity and succinct thinking.

This exercise is to describe your personal religious journey/story or your view of our Unitarian Community in only six words. Here are some from the US newsletter to get you started –

- Born Jewish. Discovered bacon ... still Jewish
- No more Sunday school. Sleeping in.
- Fairytales. Thought. Deliberation. Reason. Awakening. Atheist.
- Filled the Emptiness; emptied the fullness.

This is a personal expression. If any of you are happy to share your thoughts for publication next month, I welcome contributions.

My own (of our Meeting House) is –

- Wood; Heartwarming; Community; Reassuring; Strong; Songs

## Newcastle Unitarian Meeting House

Sadly (in one way), the Meeting House in Newcastle has been sold, mainly because as a huge building it was uneconomic to try to continue to use it. There was a unanimous vote by the members to sell the building to Harrison Group for £400,000. The terms will give the congregation one year to continue to use the building while they find alternative premises. Happily the Meeting continues.

## Update on our congregation

Several members of our congregation have been unwell over the last month so we wish them all a speedy recovery.

Christine Hyde was admitted to hospital after a fall and had a hip replacement operation. She is still in hospital and welcomes visitors. Both Jenny Pile and Miranda McInnes have been in hospital but are now out and doing well. Morag Blue is doing well and has further treatment over the next few weeks. Beryl Beech is awaiting a hip operation.

Welcome back too to Jean Odell who has been away visiting family 'down under'!

## **Violet Rose Barnard Remembered**

(26.4.1920 – 20.11.3016)

On the 22 December at Three Counties Crematorium, Braintree, family and friends gathered to say farewell to Vi, a member of the Ipswich Meeting for about 40 years. No doubt Vi also had membership of other Unitarian meeting places as her life's journey through London, Essex & Suffolk led to attendance at four Unitarian churches and a fellowship.

Born in Hackney, Vi moved with her parents and younger sister & brother to Bethnal Green when her father took on a drapery store. Vi left school at 14 and trained as a seamstress, a skill which she put in to practice throughout her life. At ten years old, Mansford Street Unitarian Church in Bethnal Green became the centre of Vi's social and religious life and it is here that she met Bert at the cycling club. Violet Rose Russell and Herbert John Barnard were married there in 1942. Daughters Valerie & Jacqueline were born in 1945 & 1949 respectively and in 1954 the family moved to Ilford where they started to attend Ilford Unitarian Church.

In 1975 Vi & Bert moved to Lawford near Manningtree, where they ran a shop and sub post office and they started attending the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House. Vi was a much loved member of the congregation. Warm, friendly and very smartly dressed, she enjoyed conversation and was good at putting people at their ease. Family and friendship were very important to her. After Bert died in 1979 Vi moved to Halstead, joining there her old friends from Mansford Street, Harry & Peggy Baker and Alan Caldwell. In 1997 it was no longer possible for Vi to attend Ipswich and her attendance switched to the Chelmsford Fellowship and latterly the Bury Unitarians.

Vi's coffin was borne in on the shoulders of her grandchildren and the reading by granddaughter Joanne from a bedtime story she read to her son ('*Grandad's Island*' by Benji Davies) created pictures in my mind as to how much Vi was loved and would be missed. The funeral service was conducted by Rev Matthew Smith, Minister to the Bury & Framlingham congregations.

Paulette Reed & Linda King represented the Ipswich Unitarians.

Thank you to Linda King for this tribute to Vi Barnard.

## **Events in February**

5<sup>th</sup> - Visit my Mosque Day – national open day – [www.mcb.org.uk/visitmymosque](http://www.mcb.org.uk/visitmymosque) no very local mosques open that I can find.

Exact date TBA – Soul to Soul – study group run by Matthew Smith in Framlingham – contact him for details – 01728 621409

17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> – FUSE (Festival of Unitarians in the South East), Horsley Park Hotel, Nr Guildford Surrey – [www.fusefest.org.uk](http://www.fusefest.org.uk)

2<sup>nd</sup> MARCH 7.30pm – Lewis is leading a discussion with Suffolk Humanists in the Darwin Room at the Arlington.

### **Birthdays in February-**

1<sup>st</sup> – Jean Odell; 2<sup>nd</sup> Robert Waller; 3<sup>rd</sup> Ali Mercer; 5<sup>th</sup> Rachel Hamilton and Kate Dickinson; 11<sup>th</sup> Tracy Sakals; 14<sup>th</sup> Linda King; 16<sup>th</sup> Beryl Beech; 19<sup>th</sup> Ralph Spence; 20<sup>th</sup> Tessa Forsdike; 29<sup>th</sup> John Ellis. Happy birthday to you all. There are more birthdays in February from our congregation than in any other month. Does that mean anything?

**Services in February** – all services start at 10.45 on Sundays and all are welcome. If you arrive late, please just come in quietly (the door has a habit of slamming shut!). There is also a children's corner with books and toys. After the service on 5<sup>th</sup> there will be a discussion on the topic of the address led by Lewis Connolly. After the service on 12<sup>th</sup> an optional communion service will be held.

### **Thought for the month -**

"Life is a shipwreck but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats." Voltaire

### **Ipswich Unitarian Newsletter –**

For contributions to future newsletters, please email them to Tessa at - [ipswichunitarian@gmail.com](mailto:ipswichunitarian@gmail.com) or post them to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS before the copy deadline for the next issue of Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017 If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive this regularly by email, please just ask.

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