



## Restoration Fund



Throughout the year members of our congregation have kept a collection tin at home to fill with loose change, with donations from family and friends and contributions of any sort which go towards our Restoration Fund. On 24<sup>th</sup> March Linda King collected the money which totalled £444.26 (more than last year!). Maybe there are a few more tins out there waiting to be emptied ...? It would be great if we could reach £500 from tins for this last year. If you still have a heavy tin, please pass the contents to Linda for adding to our total. Thank you to all who donated in this easy way.

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## Restoration Project

A lot of work has been going on behind the scenes since our Property Manager Phil Chatfield first produced his report on the state of our beautiful building. In it he revealed that a considerable amount of work needed to be done to maintain our Meeting House for future generations, both of congregations and Ipswich citizens. A sub-committee of the Trustees has been working on applying for grants, members have been organising fundraising events and collecting money.

As Andrew Gibbs reported in the last issue of this newsletter, Historic England have granted us some funds to make repairs to the roof and we hope to see some building/repair work start this summer, so look out for the scaffolding coming soon!

Laura Emmins from Historic England will kindly be coming to the service on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April and will be giving a talk immediately afterwards to explain what other ways we can use to raise money. Laura is full of enthusiasm and great ideas, so please try to join us to learn more about what we can do to help attract more grant funding.



View across the hipped roof of the meeting House which is awaiting repair

## **Open Day at the Ipswich Mosque**

After the service at the Meeting House on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, four members of the congregation, Ann, Linda, Malcolm and Sandra, went to visit the Mosque in Bond Street. Ann and Linda had a guided tour, Malcolm and Sandra stayed for about two and three-quarters hours. It was stressed that the Mosque is open to anyone every day not just on special occasions such as this national Open Day.

What we participated in during our stay started with being part of a small group with a Muslim volunteer explaining what they believe and the five pillars of Islam. The aim was to educate non Muslims about their faith. We then observed a prayer session as it was 1 o'clock.

The pillars of Islam are first to declare their faith, to believe in one God and to follow the guidelines of Mohammed, the other prophets. Jesus and Abraham for example, are important, but Mohammed is the most recent one.

The second is obligatory prayer, which take place five times a day, before dawn, at one o'clock, about three o'clock, at dusk and about two hours later every day. Muslims should join in as many times as practical.

The third is compulsory giving to charity, Each Muslim adult has to donate two and a half percent of their annual income after living expenses. The UN has agreed that if every wage earner in the world did this, including large corporations, there would be no poverty anywhere. Food for thought! The fourth pillar is fasting for Ramadan. Muslims believe fasting is good for your own body and it also reminds you of the plight of people with no food. Small children in families are encouraged to join in but in a limited way. By the time they are pubescent they are able to be fully engaged. The fifth pillar is a pilgrimage to Mecca. This is not compulsory but advisable if you can afford the journey without pushing yourself into poverty when you return.

The second part of our stay was an open meeting which included a welcome from several members of the Muslim community and the chairman of the interfaith group. There were short speeches by the Mayor Jane Riley, the Member of Parliament for

Ipswich, Sandy Martin, and the Minister of Christchurch, Tacket Street the Revd Neil Coulson. As we left we were thanked for attending and given a bag of finger food and bottles of water for our journey.

We believe that all four of us would agree that we were given a warm welcome. Maybe others might think about going along the next time we are invited to an Open Day.

By Malcolm and Sandra Hawes

## **Events in April**

3<sup>rd</sup> – Trustees Meeting – 6.15pm

7<sup>th</sup> 10am to 2pm – Farmers Market on Cornhill and regular markets on the first Sunday of the month from then on.

14<sup>th</sup> - Laura Emmins' talk following the service

16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> – GA Meeting in Birmingham

21<sup>st</sup> – 7.20am – BBC Radio Suffolk newspaper review with Tessa Forsdike

23<sup>rd</sup> – Ipswich MBS monthly event – at Tower Hall, Broadlands Way IP4 5SU from 6pm – 1-2-1

readings and guest medium – or a chat and cuppa with like minded people (also 28<sup>th</sup> May)

25<sup>th</sup> 7pm – Conversation in the Upper Hall with Rev. Lewis Connolly

## **Services in April**

All services led by Minister Lewis Connolly – all start at 10.45 and all are welcome.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> – Palm Sunday

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> - Good Friday communion service

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> - Easter Day – bring your bonnet!

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> - Anniversary service, followed by a shared lunch

## **Birthdays in April**

Happy birthday this month to –

Miranda McIntosh on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Kate Grey on 5<sup>th</sup>, Morag Blue special congratulations on your 80<sup>th</sup> on 6<sup>th</sup>, Rev Cliff Reed on 12<sup>th</sup>, David Forsdike on 19<sup>th</sup>, Sheila Seal on 21<sup>st</sup> and Rosemary Hamilton on 26<sup>th</sup>.

## **Spring Concert**

Our next Fundraiser for the Restoration Fund is our Concert on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May at 6pm. It will be a mix of readings, poems, songs, music and shared entertainment. Please let our organist Robert Waller have the details of your contribution.

## **Background to our Congregation**

Restoration of Charles II 1660

During the Commonwealth period Puritan ministers firmly became installed in the parish churches. But after the Restoration of Charles II a party in the Church of England sought to enforce a common form of worship through the use of the Book of Common Prayer.

In May 1662 the anti-puritan Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity which requires that all clergymen should give their full assent to everything in the Book of Common Prayer. Anyone who refused would be forbidden to continue in office. Some 2000 ministers, including a great many of the ablest, most learned and most honoured men in the Church refused to comply. On St. Bartholomew's Day 1662 they were ejected and forbidden to preach.

In 1664 the Coventicle Act was passed by Parliament which enacted that any person who should be present at a religious service other '*than is allowed by the liturgy and practice of the Church of England*' is liable to fine and imprisonment and, on third conviction, transportation.

The Five Mile Act of 1665 completed the work by forbidding anyone within 5 miles of the city or town in which he a formerly ministered to hold services. In spite of this persecution many did so in secretly gathered congregations. Some 8000 nonconformists are said to have died in prison during this period. A secret congregation was formed in Ipswich some time after the ejection of 1662. The founder was the Rev. Owen Stockton of St. Andrews Church Colchester who had been ejected. He served two secret congregations – Colchester and Ipswich. In 1672 when The Declaration of Indulgence required all nonconformist ministers to be registered, we find he was licensed as a Presbyterian and Independent teacher in Greyfriars House in St. Nicholas Parish. These were evidently two groups meeting together:

- The Independents – ancestors of the Congregationalists, considered a more radical group
- The Presbyterians, ancestors of the Unitarians, the more conservative group

Stockton served this joint congregation until his death in 1680. He was under constant watch and at one time a warrant was out for his arrest but he was never actually imprisoned.

His successor, Rev. John Fairfax who had been ejected from the parish of Barking near Needham Market, was not so fortunate. He served a term in jail in Bury St Edmunds. He ministered to Ipswich joint congregations until 1686 when the two groups parted company. During this early period services were held in a mansion which was later called The Old Monastery and stood in Turret Lane. It was demolished in 1913.

The Independents withdrew and appointed their own Minister John Langston. The Presbyterians then hired a room in Silent Street and met there with John Fairfax as their Minister until they built the Meeting House in Friars Street, which opened on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1700. Miss Marianne Prime discovered and gave the copy of the first sermon by John Fairfax in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Independents built their House in Tacket Street, which later became the Congregational Church.

It should be understood that the Presbyterians at that time were not Unitarians but they opened a dissenting place of worship which was not bound by creeds to which all who approved of the free principle may belong, as is the case with all Unitarian congregations. There is no doctrinal test for membership imposed either upon minister or members.

By June Teape

NB - We celebrate this year's anniversary of the opening of our Meeting House with a service on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April and a shared lunch in the hall afterwards. All are welcome to join us.

## **European Unitarians Conference**

Unitarians from across Europe will be gathering for a conference under the title "Variety – Spice of Life? European Unitarians Together 2019" in Berlin on 7-10 June 2019. Celebrate our common heritage and delight in our different ways of pursuing truth and meaning. Bookings are due to open this week. Visit their [website](#) for more information.

## Tom Gondris

Tom Gondris recently died and a ceremony to celebrate his life was held on 21<sup>st</sup> February, led by Humanist Funeral celebrant Adèle Chaplin and attended by Cliff and Paulette Reed. Here are some excerpts from the address given by Adèle and from a tribute by John Norman, Chair of the Ipswich Society.

Adèle Chaplin said -

*Thomas, Tom, Gondris was born on the 24th May, 1930 in the Czechoslovakian town of Teplice, the only child of Eugen and Else. The family were Jewish and in October 1938, Eugen and Else worried that they would no longer be safe and so they decided to move to Prague with a view to the family leaving Czechoslovakia. While living in Prague, Tom's family heard of a series of trains that were organised by a British man, Nicholas Winton, that were taking children from Czechoslovakia to the relative safety of the UK.*

*On the 1st September, 1939, Tom boarded a train from Prague main railway station bound for Harwich. His parents had told him he was going for a holiday. They waved him off from the platform, with the intention of following Tom through mainland Europe to meet him in the UK. Sadly, that wasn't to be, and Tom's parents didn't survive the war.*

*Even though Tom had built a new life in England, he worried that his parents, killed in the Holocaust had no known resting place. Local sculptor Bernard Reynolds designed a work which is now displayed behind Christchurch Mansion with the inscription - "This sculpture is dedicated by Tom Gondris in memory of his parents, Eugen and Else who died in World War II"*

John Norman said -

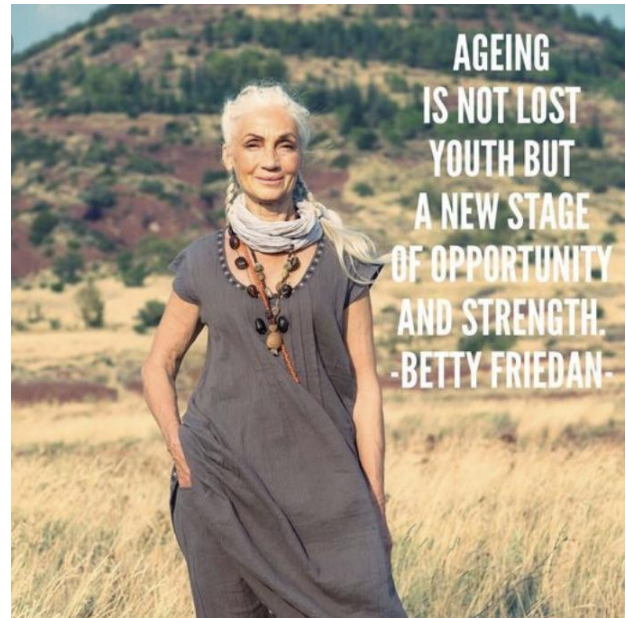
*Tom was an amazing man who from such difficult beginnings contributed so much, a gentle giant, not in stature but with tenacity, persistence and determination in all that he did.*

*Ipswich is a richer place, the Ipswich Society is a stronger organisation and the Suffolk Architectural Heritage Trust owes its very existence to Tom's love of ancient buildings.*

Paulette adds – Tom Gondris was very much a part of this town. He was interested in the built and natural environment. Over many years he organised several fund raising events in aid of the Meeting House.

## Women and Ageing – Conference at Nightingale Centre 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October

Booking: Stella Burney info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk or 01298 871218 and send Registration form to: Margaret margaretrobinson81@gmail.com



## Disclaimer –

We welcome contributions from all members and friends of our congregation. Views expressed in the articles are those of the individual and not necessarily those of our congregation or of our Unitarian community

**Contacts** Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa before the deadline of Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April – to [ipswichunitarian@gmail.com](mailto:ipswichunitarian@gmail.com) or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS

To contact our Secretary, Riena Jackson, ring 01473 210064/email [mjack76748@aol.com](mailto:mjack76748@aol.com)

To contact our Minister, Lewis Connolly, ring 01473 422528/email [revdlewisconnolly@gmail.com](mailto:revdlewisconnolly@gmail.com)

## Thought for the month

To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment. Ralph Waldo Emerson