

Ipswich Unitarian



Volume 4, Issue 1

February 2018

Into the New Year

As this is the first issue of 2018, we wish you a very happy, peaceful and fulfilling year. At the Meeting House we have many plans for our buildings, to preserve and protect the fabric where we meet. Just as importantly we also have several social events throughout the year and activities in our Upper Hall to bring our community together and to support one another.

For the buildings, we have huge projects which will involve applying for grants and much work for which the trustees have chosen a sub group tasked with the body of the grant work. We could not do any of this without the dedication of our Property Manager Phil Chatfield, who has used his considerable talent and experience of working with old buildings, to prepare a full report on the condition of every part of our Meeting House and the applications for funding will rely on this information. We will also be replacing some kitchen units in the Hall on the second weekend in February and repairing the back roof there later. Thank you to all the volunteer helpers.

There is more about our events and regular group meetings inside ...

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How other Unitarians live and worship ...

On a recent visit to family in California I took the opportunity to visit the Tapestry Unitarian Universalist congregation in Mission Viejo for a couple of services. From what I had read on their website some time before, I was expecting quite a different experience from what I was used to. The address given was in an industrial unit – not like our 300 year old building; the membership given was over 135 – many more than our core congregation; this was America, where Unitarianism was (I understood) more common than in the UK. I had started planning my article, thinking to mark the difference between our buildings and to raise the issue of the importance of the people in the congregations and what the meeting meant to the people, separately from the building. I should have been more careful about my assumptions.

We arrived for our first service to find a notice on the door to the unit informing us that the church had transferred temporarily to another venue. In fact Tapestry have been fundraising for the past ten years to buy a permanent home and have succeeded in buying a building which they are now converting and which they hope to move into in June 2018. So in fact the need to seek funds for a building is something we two congregations very much have in common. During the transition period, Tapestry has negotiated the use of the nearby St Georges Episcopal Church after they have finished their own service in the church. So along with the Tapestry congregation, we were in a very different environment, with the chalice and candles on a central table in front of the St

How other Unitarians live and worship – cont.

George's altar and mounted cross. It did feel different and somewhat odd – as acknowledged by the Unitarian Minister Kent Doss, but the atmosphere was very welcoming and open. The people make the key influence on the atmosphere, not merely the decorations.

All visitors are welcomed at the entrance to the church and optionally given a label with their name – and the regulars do not hold back from checking your label and welcoming you personally, which all makes for a very friendly approach. The children stay in church for the first part of the service before gathering to listen to a story and then leaving together for their own fun (a new year party on 31st and a session on sport the next week). We used to do this too years ago and hope to build the number of our younger attenders so that we need more than our children's box pew with toys and games to entertain them.

Various members of the congregation take part in the service – reading, offering their own reflections and playing music ... as happens for us. The two sermons ('Hope Changes' and 'Whose Law?') that I heard were thought provoking and non judgemental. There seems to be an active movement towards fighting for justice and a group who visit the immigration centres, support for protest marches (e.g. for Women's Rights), support for young Mums, reading groups and the mission statement on the home page of the website is –

'In this congregation we believe that Love is Love; Black Lives Matter; Climate Change is Real; No Human Being is Illegal; All Genders are Whole Holy and Good; Women have Agency over their Bodies.'

I felt at home. I hope that anyone visiting us from the Tapestry congregation would also feel at home, feel an affinity with our energy and our message as I did with them. So rather than find differences, I found links and similarities. That in itself is a message and a positive one.

Tessa Forsdike



The Tapestry Unitarian Universalist Chalice in front of the Sr Georges Episcopal Church altar – Mission Viejo California

As editor I would like to include an irregular series of articles written about visits to other Unitarian places of worship. Please consider sending a write up of your own experience at different Unitarian meetings.

In our Meeting House – We have a selection of activities –

Poetry Group – meets the last Thursday of every month in the Upper Hall at 2.30pm. Each month the group focuses on one poet. Everyone is invited to read some of his/her work, to choose one poem to bring and read and also to bring another poem of your choice by any poet. At the meeting in February (on 22nd) the group will be reading work by Elizabeth Bishop.

Taizé Singing Group - Our first meeting of the New Year will take place the Upper Hall at 10.00 on Tuesday 6th February. You don't need to be a great singer – just to want to enjoy being part of a group of voices joining together in a meditative way! Our leaders, Liz and Jan, are delightful and their introductions to the chants are friendly and relaxed. If you haven't been before, why not come and try it?

Subud

Subud is a spiritual development group which meets on Wednesday evenings in the Upper Hall. The core of the meeting is a spontaneous experience of connection with ... insert your preferred word here - perhaps – *Source; God; The Divine; The Great Life Force; Authentic Self*. The understanding is that years of emotional identification with our daily lives, struggles and roles make it hard to attune to our own essential nature, and this exercise is an invitation to release our conditioning, to connect strongly with that which is greater than our everyday personality. The aim is to let our natural humanity, intuition, creativity and energy unfold, with the loving guidance of what might be called the Universal Life Force.

The exercise began in Java and from the 1950s on has spread worldwide. The Subud international association is not publicity-seeking and has disseminated by word of mouth and through a few books. It is not a 'quick results' approach to spirituality and most agree that the exercise deepens over time and the benefit is long term. The association has a cultural wing, and Subud has initiated and supports a number of charitable projects, with the aim of empowering and resourcing people to help themselves.

In down-to-earth terms, participants sit quietly for 5 – 10 minutes, then stand relaxed and open to whatever inner guidance may arise. This sometimes takes the form of sound (such as spontaneous prayer or song) or movement, arising from a person's unique human essence. There is no fee for participating and donations cover hall hire. As a preparation for possible deep changes inwardly and outwardly people interested are asked to attend several meetings with experienced facilitators (known as 'helpers') before deciding definitely to join in, which is known as 'the opening'.

More info on www.subudbritain.org

For Subud educational and humanitarian work: www.susiladharm.org

For an initial chat or meeting with Subud helpers, contact Elizabeth lizaandpeter@hotmail.com or Crawford dr.crawford.jamieson@outlook.com

AIR

Monthly on a Monday evening in the Upper Hall there is a session of A.I.R – *Active Inner Response*. This is described as an intuitive form of meditation and was founded four and a half years ago by a number of Subud practitioners. The core exercise and practice is no different from the Subud one which we experience as a boon and the founders of AIR continue to participate in. With *Active Inner Response* each session begins with a circle in which people may share briefly what's coming up for them in their feelings or spiritual life – things we may not find easy to say in day to day conversations.

The stewardship of AIR is minimalist; an easy access group where people can begin as soon as they feel ready (straight away, if they choose). With great respect for the groundwork and roots Subud has put down, this is a 'what-if' pilot scheme. We have no official facilitators or helpers on the understanding that each person comes with a wealth of valuable personal experience and nobody can be sure what will or won't be useful for someone else. This peer-group, accessible approach has fostered a respectful, sharing atmosphere with a growing community of practitioners.

We are in the process of arranging a daytime AIR option for those who prefer daylight hours, and for others who would like an additional session.

Further info and dates on www.air.eu.com

Questions or more info wanted? Contact me on stefanandbethan@gmail.com

Both AIR and Subud meetings are free of charge.

Modest donations cover hall hire which is an affordable rate, thanks to the Unitarians.

Evening meal –

Join us for a meal together at the Indian restaurant – The Maharani at 46 Norwich Road, Ipswich IP1 2NJ – on Thursday 8th February at 7pm. Please let Lewis know you are going to come so he can book the right number for the table. We will split the bill equally at the end of the evening. All welcome so do come for a good chat and good food.

Recycling for Charity

Various members of the congregation collect items to recycle for specific charities. Please leave any donations on the bench by the hymn books – thank you!

Tiffers Bus for the Homeless

Ann invites you to bring in small toiletries (such as those acquired in hotels etc.) for onward transmission to the Tiffers shop in Upper Orwell Street. Morag Blue did a personal delivery to the shop recently and they were over the moon. They also particularly need small talcum powder packs and usable backpacks. If you wish to find out more about the Tiffers project, you can go to their Facebook page – look for “Tiffersbus”! There are also a few leaflets near the collection bag.

Ipswich Opportunity Group – please bring in your used stamps – cut them from the envelope with a small margin. Linda is collecting these for this charity which offers support to families with pre-school children with additional needs.

<http://www.ipswichopportunitygroup.org.uk>

Children’s Hospice - please bring your CLEAN plastic milk bottle tops which Tessa will deliver to someone who stores them until there are enough to raise money for the hospice.

www.shootingstarchase.org.uk

Miranda’s Bike Ride

Miranda McIntosh’s recovery has involved a ride/walk from Needham Market, Suffolk to Wainfleet, All Saints Lincolnshire, a distance of 110 miles, which is a long ride on a static bike and walk by foot!

Miranda is now home and it is time for the reckoning! If you haven’t yet paid your sponsorship money, please do. If you didn’t sign up to sponsor Miranda it is not too late to add your name to the list. Linda King is collecting the sponsorship money for Miranda.

All money raised will be going towards the Meeting House Restoration Fund.

Collection Tins

We plan to organise a special ceremony in March to open the Meeting House collection tins which are collecting money for our Renovation Fund.

A Catchpole’s Love: Based on the true story of Margaret Catchpole.

by Lewis A. Connolly

“Really Margaret, it is quite unbecoming for you to be gallivanting around with such a man. If Mr Cobbold sees you both together again, I fear he will insist upon your dismissal, and then not even I shall be able to prevent it” Elizabeth said, smiling at me in her characteristically sickly-sweet way. Her manner infuriated me no end, all high and mighty. Not a bad word could be said against the illustrious Elizabeth Cobbold. What she didn’t know is I had planned on meeting my dear William Laud this very evening. He was most likely in the Neptune Tavern at this very moment. You see, we had a secret and not even Elizabeth knew about it. Whenever William was in town, he would hang a piece of rope upon the gate of the chicken coop, and then at night, once all the Cobbolds were tucked up in their beds, I would go out and meet him. Usually this arrangement worked out perfectly well. On this particular evening, however, Elizabeth just wouldn’t retire for the evening. It was the first month of the New Year, and that meant one thing - night after night was preoccupied by paper cutting! Every year Elizabeth held her famous Valentine’s Day parties, in which all the unmarried men and women of Suffolk would gather to dance and romance one another. Each one would be given a Cliff Valentine, a paper design with one of Elizabeth’s poems written in it. Paper cuttings of birds, or cupids, or a tableau from the Orient, mostly all cut by me, though no credit given. It is a cruel world. Here am I, helping to match-make high society’s sweethearts, but little me, I mustn’t be seen with my dear William, for that would be a scandal. *“Margaret, Margaret!”* Elizabeth’s voice rose a little, as I realised she was looking right at me. *“Where do you go to in your head dear?”* she said. *“Nowhere ma’am, just focusing”* I lied. I was tremendously worried about the time. There’d be Flemish laced mutton praying on the sailors of the port by this hour, and without me there, unable to meet my dear William, shall he think I don’t care? Elizabeth knew I’d gone for a turn through the park with William a few times, but she had no idea I met him with such frequency. *“Dear, the necks on these two swans are far too thin, you’ll need to redo them”* Elizabeth said, waving some paper at me. I had barely begun to say, *“Yes ma’am”* when suddenly Elizabeth gave out a shriek, and sprang to her feet. There was a face pressed up against the glass of the small window by the door. At that moment I heard some thuds coming from upstairs. Heart racing, I looked towards the window. It was William, drunk most likely. Then spinning around I looked at Elizabeth. At first, I thought she might call out for Mr Cobbold, but she just glared at me, and then glanced up at the ceiling. Was she giving me a chance? I moved towards the door, lifted the latch quietly, and stepped out. I grabbed William’s sleeve and pulled him down towards the river Orwell’s shore. I think my face must have said it all. I only said *“leave”* to him, and he vanished into the night. Less than a few minutes had passed, and I was back in the

house. Elizabeth had gone upstairs; she never brought up that night or William Laud again.

It was still dark when I trotted through town, down through Corn Hill, past the Dissenting Meeting House, across Stoke Bridge and away. The horse beneath me had no name. She was a workhorse, a sixteen-hand crop horse with a strawberry coat. Here I was finally riding towards my love. It had been two years since I last saw William Laud down by the Orwell on that fateful night. How many times since had I stood on that very spot and pictured his face retreat into the dark. Even after I helped the Cobbolds move up from the Orwell to St. Margaret's Green, I would still go back there to think on what could have been. But that night had become a noose around my neck. With every chore, every drudgery heaped upon drudgery, the beloved Mrs Cobbold would look at me knowingly, her eyes exacting a tyrannical obedience from me that only I could know. All those around saw only the woman with the most charming disposition, full of curiosity, and a poetic flare to be admired. I endured it for a year, but the stress of it ground me down. I became terribly sick and consigned to bed rest. For a short time, the Doctor's orders trumped Mrs Cobbold's, but in the end my use had run its course and I was dismissed from their service.

A cockerel crowed as I passed by a large homestead on the outskirts of Colchester. I was making good time along London road, now riding at a full gallop. I had only passed a few people by a guard post – I worried I might have to explain myself, but they paid me little attention, dressed up as I am in men's clothing, just like any ordinary chap on important business to London. It was William who had proposed this plan. Though we had not seen each other in all this time, we'd kept in constant correspondence. He'd gotten into some trouble in Suffolk and so was compelled to avoid Ipswich, but we nevertheless worked hard for one another, saving enough that we might leave England for good, and find a new life together in France or the Dutch Republic. This last year had been gruelling, as I had been unable to find steady work. I worked everywhere: an Inn down by the dock, a haberdashery on the edge of town and in almost every Ipswich tavern. So often I walked through town in a tatty dress, and would see a Cobbold. They would always look at me and smile. I can't imagine they felt any pity. I seldom had bread, and they had all the beer and banking money of Suffolk, but no kindness ever came my way. That's why, when William suggested this plan, it made so much sense. I would take what was rightfully mine, a Cobbold horse that would fetch one-hundred guineas, and I would feel no more resentment towards them. I would forgive them, for all I had ever wanted was to be with William. I would ride the horse to Lambeth, I would meet my dear William Laud, we would sell the horse and we would leave for good. Exhausted, having completed the seventy-mile, ten-hour ride, I stepped from the horse outside the Dog and Bone tavern in Lambeth in the early afternoon to meet my William. But he was nowhere to be found. I read over my letters, checking the date we had arranged. It was today! Perhaps he had been waylaid, I thought. Tying the horse to a watering post, I laid to rest upon a bench outside the tavern, knowing he would be

along shortly. I awoke at dusk, bleary eyed, to see a man in a large dark coat standing over me. Looking up I spoke, "William?" A gruff, unfamiliar voice responded, "Miss Margaret Catchpole, you are under arrest for horse theft. My dear, you will hang for this."

"Catchpole!" a slurred voice called beyond the cell. "Another letter Catchpole!" I jumped up and put my hands through the bars to take it. His hands brushed across mine; I seized upon the envelope and fell back to my cot. It was a letter from Mrs Cobbold. She wrote me often, sending me her poems, trying to extol in me all Christian virtue. As things had transpired, I had avoided the death penalty. Elizabeth Cobbold herself had come to my defence. She had never said before that I was good, warm, or caring, but that was the character statement she gave to the judge, those were the words she used. She said I had been led astray, that I had been corrupted by one William Laud, a vagabond and Suffolk smuggler. Her words brought light to this dark place. She may not have always had my best interests at heart, but perhaps age had softened her, for now her letters were filled with kindness and care. Of course, she was wrong though. William Laud was no bad man. He was like so many, a man of desperate circumstance. The country had dealt William and me a bad hand, something that Elizabeth could never understand. As news of tonight reaches her, I am sure she will feel aghast, and think me most foolish. Perhaps she will even see it as a betrayal, and think that I have turned my back on her most precious second chance. In time though, she will see, I will write her and thank her, and let her know that all is well. I cannot stand to be here anymore, for here I have languished in the Ipswich gaol for nearly half of my seven-year sentence. Communication with William has been near impossible, but through an acquaintance we have gotten the odd message to one another, none more important than the note concerning tonight. It simply read that on the 25th March 1800 he would await me, at the very spot I saw him last. I knew exactly what I had to do. Tonight I would need to escape, I would need to go to the bank of the Orwell near Cliff Cottage, and there my dear William would be awaiting me. Finally, after such a long and painful wait, we would escape this place together. On this very night we would cross the channel, and never return. As the hour approached all things were set in motion. I pulled on the modest outfit I had been able to put together. For the second time I would dress as a man to avoid detection. I jimmed open the cell door, gathered up the tied linen I had prepared and moved down the corridor past the guard's station where I could hear some men laughing and drinking. I entered the courtyard, and up-ended a wooden vegetable box as I had imagined doing. I climbed up upon it, and taking the linen line, with its metal hinge tied at one end, threw it across the wall. The first, second, and third attempt all failed, but with the fourth throw the line tightened in my hand. I leaned back, putting my whole weight upon it, and it held! It was going to work! Carefully I put one foot over the

next upon the yellowing wall, until I reached the top. I slowly hoisted myself over the spikes, and eased myself down the other side, until I stood on Bond Street in the quiet night air. I wasted no time. I gathered the linen up and stashed it under a bush, before moving briskly down familiar streets towards the dock. Cutting through some buildings, I came upon the quay side bustling with revellers. I moved down past the docked ships, and that's when I saw his figure in the shadows. Moving closer, he stepped into the moonlight. His smile was exactly as I had remembered it. This was it! The moment I had dreamt of was finally here. Together we would cross on a small wooden boat to Europe, we would start a new life, a new beginning for us both. With every step towards him, my heart lifted with all the possibility before us. A freedom I had never known! A love I had never known! I was barely fifty feet from him when a shout pierced the night sky. *"There they are!"* Time slowed as the musket shot rang out and white smoke filled the air. Shouts and cries could be heard all around. *"It's Catchpole, seize her!"* The scene before me narrowed and the sounds became dull and distant, as William Laud's body slumped forward, his face landing down in the brackish Orwell. The End.

News Flash

Saturday 10th March 2018. (date to be confirmed) at the Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds. The East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group (EAUWG) are organising a day to look at **'Nurturing Volunteers'** and to provide the opportunity for East Anglian congregations to meet together in an informal setting. Please note, this is not to be thought of as an attempt to resurrect the Eastern Union, due to be finally wound up in April 2018. Please book the date. Further details will be given later. Linda King on behalf of EAUWG

Birthdays

Happy birthday in February to- Jean Odell on 1st; Robert Waller on 2nd; Ali Mercer on 3rd; Rachel Hamilton and Kate Dickinson on 5th; Tracy Sakals on 11th; Linda King on 14th; Beryl Beech on 16th; Ralph Spence on 19th; Tessa Forsdike on 20th; John Ellis on 29th (which means John misses out again this year!)

Services – every Sunday at 10.45

Membership service and shared lunch on Sunday 28th January – all welcome for food too.

Minister Lewis Connolly will lead all February's services except on 18th when Ali Mercer will lead us.

Thought for the Month

When life shuts a door, open it again. It's a door.
That's how they work. Anon

The Importance of Place

The feel of the wooden seat against your back,
The softness of the cushion under your hand,
The sound of feet on wooden floors,
The way light falls through the high windows
To illuminate the darkness.

Memories of words and deeds,
Of laughter and tears,
Of joys and sorrows,
Burn bright in the mind then melt away
Like the candle smoke in the air.

Shared experiences and private moments,
Stories told and retold,
Sacred space entered and held,
Shaped by hands and minds long gone,
Still shaping all who encounter it.

By Ali Mercer



Lighting the candles for our Carol Service in December

Ipswich Unitarian Newsletter –

For contributions to future newsletters, please email them to Tessa at - ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or post them to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS before the copy deadline for the next issue of Sunday 25th February 2018

If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive this regularly by email, please just ask.

To contact our secretary Riena Jackson, ring 01473 210064/email - mjack76748@aol.com

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