



## Our Meeting House in the Evening Light

We celebrate the removal of the scaffolding and the revealing of the outside restoration work on our building. If you look closely you will see the pile of sand and wheelbarrow – signs of the imminent beginning of work on lowering the access and installation of the toilet – (see R) for the latest update. We are on the home straight!

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## Restoration Update

A quick update on the Meeting House Contract. Work is progressing well although hampered by the weather now that most of the work is in the open on the car parking area and paths. We also uncovered a problem with the door openings on the front elevation when we discovered rot damage to two main posts and studs around the door frames. We have put in place a new foundation below the doorstep, wide enough to allow some new small brick piers to be built to pick up the posts after the rotten areas were cut away. The bricks will not show as the door surrounds and plinths will hide them. The toilet facility is progressing well and the fire alarm system near completion. This area of the foyer is a bit busy right now with many hands in this space. Practical completion of the main building is very near but the car park area is behind because of wet weather and some difficulty with insurers re the damaged railings. We hope to resolve this soon.

Kind regards, Phil Chatfield.

Building Consultant/ Clerk of Works



## **A Tale of Three Organs**

After a recent Zoom service there was some discussion about the Meeting House organ and its origins. I've since had the chance to consult two of the sources I used myself when writing *A Suffolk Tabernacle: The Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House*, which was published in 1997. They are: *Reflections on an old Meeting House: An Appreciation of the Achievement of the Ipswich Dissenters of 1699*, published in 1976, and *The Story of an Old Meeting House: A Short History of St. Nicholas Old Meeting House, now called the Unitarian Meeting House*. Although undated, the latter was written by A. Phillip Hewett, presumably when he was our minister from 1954 to 1956. What his sources were regarding the three Meeting House organs he doesn't say but he may well have had access to documents that are no longer extant.

So what of the organs that have been played in the Meeting House? It should be said that for the first hundred years there was no organ. This was because the Presbyterians who built the Meeting House in 1699, standing as they did in a Puritan tradition, did not approve of organs or music of any sort in worship, other than unaccompanied singing of the Psalms. But their views on music, as on theology, mellowed during the course of the 18th century and so the first organ was duly installed in the north gallery. It was first played on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1799.

This first organ was replaced in 1865. The second organ was also situated in the gallery and remained there until it was brought down to the ground floor "twenty years later", as Hewett puts it. But, he tells us, it "promptly suffered in a disastrous flood". It was not immediately replaced so a mystery remains concerning the next fifteen years. Was that organ still functional, though damaged? Was it patched up enough to be useable? Or did the congregation use something else, such as a piano or a harmonium? We don't know.

Finally a third organ – the present one - was installed in 1900, an event coinciding with the extensive bi-centennial restoration of the Meeting House. The organ was not new, though. Originally

built in 1878 by Bishops & Sons (who still maintain it), the organ had two previous locations before it came to the Meeting House. And for the past one hundred and twenty-one years it has done us sterling service, with Robert Waller at the keyboard for something like forty-six of them. Hopefully it will not be long before we are able to hear it again after a year of silence.

By CLIFF REED

## **Meeting House Scratchings!**

If you look carefully around the Meeting House you'll find graffiti; our forebears and some, not so long ago, were determined to leave their mark, maybe just to say, "I was here" or "I did this". Little did 'N Stephens' (a contemporary of mine in the 1960's) know that the time he spent scratching his name in an upstairs pew would be recorded in the newsletter over forty years later: and what would 'C. Pretlove March 19<sup>th</sup> 1961' have said to his then teacher, June Teape if she had caught him scratching in March & again, along with 'MC' on 8 Oct 1961'? Who was Ian Martin 31/1/97' & what event or service was he witnessing as he sat in the front row of the gallery next to the south wall? We can guess what 'F.C.P.HAL..T Decorator' was doing on the '19 June 1966' as he wanted us to know his occupation! The same goes for 'William Holland Did this glazing April the 6<sup>th</sup> 1752', etched in a pane of leaded glass overlooking the forecourt. Glass may not always be in its original place and if the graffiti is done from the outside, it is difficult to read! It would be fascinating to know if 'age 16..170.' inserted the original glass in the newly built meeting house, and is the last number of the year covered by the leading or was the glass cut down to fit the little space in the oval window overlooking the courtyard? Arthur Haward Oct 8<sup>th</sup> 1900' did a repair job on an upstairs window, just behind the pew where 'W. Doole', 'D Foulger' & 'F Scopes' carved their names in 1879 – wonder who was preaching on that day! Beautifully carved sideways initials 'IR' had me

### **Meeting House Scratchings – cont.**

wondering whether the scribe was resting his (*I think it more likely male than female!*) head on the hymnbook shelf as he carved away in '1799'. In the vestry we have a framed piece of original glass presented by Frank Woolnough to the congregation in 1908: it is scratched 'Elizabeth Simons 1699'. Now, there's a puzzler; well formed writing at a time when many people were unable to read & write; could be, but unlikely she was a glazier; and the date, 1699, four months before the building was opened, would the glass have been in, did contributors to the glass have the honour of inscribing their names? We will probably never know the answers, but we do know she had a connection to this meeting house. These are just a few of the ones I know of & I'm sure there are many yet to be discovered. My favourite; nothing elaborate & not really graffiti, it's the word 'Coke' written in chalk on the inside of the cupboard door underneath the stairs!

*Linda King.*

*This article was originally written over 17 years ago and published in the (then) Suffolk Unitarian newsletter. We think it bears reprinting – and Linda is keen to research other markings found during the present restoration.*

### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

The theme this year was '*Light a candle in the darkness*' - it encourages everyone to reflect on the depths humanity can sink to, but also the ways individuals and communities resisted that darkness to 'be the light' before, during and after genocide.



### **Reflections from America**

The start of 2021 seems to be picking up where 2020 left off and then some. Yesterday's mob attack on the Congress was disturbing, frightening, surreal and overwhelming, to name a few of the adjectives that come to mind. Like many of you I imagine, I was glued to the news all afternoon and into the night.

But it is important to keep in mind what else happened. Yesterday a Black man and Jewish man were elected as the Senators from the state of Georgia. And very early this morning, finally, the Congress certified the election of the first Black and Southeast Asian American woman as Vice President of the United States.

We are in a liminal time and by definition, liminal times are anxiety-provoking and chaotic. They are also times of possibility and creativity. It is more important than ever that we stay grounded in the values and ethics of our Unitarian Universalist faith: affirming and promoting human worth and dignity, responsible searches for truth and meaning; justice, equity and compassion in human relations, the use of the democratic process; and awareness of the interdependence of all life. We cannot choose the times and circumstances under which we live but we can choose how we will live into them. I am grateful for all of you and as I hold all of you in my thoughts and prayers, I am comforted in knowing that you are there, that we are here, working together to bring these practices of beloved community to life as best we can.

So, if you can, take time to step away from the TV, computer or phone and all the noise of immediate analysis going on around us. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Go for a walk. Play with your children. Write a note to a friend. Read a poem. We will be in this liminal season for a while and need to care for our souls.

I leave you with these well-known and well-worn words from Unitarian minister and Abolitionist Theodore Parker, from a sermon text he published in 1853: *"I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight, I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice."*

Take care and stay safe.

Rev. Ellen

Ellen is the Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Chelmsford Massachusetts USA

### **After the Inauguration ...**

At last I feel able to write a short report for the Ipswich Unitarian Newsletter giving my perspective on recent world events. Although most of the problems from 2020 are still with us, it is my opinion that the situation in the US has improved greatly with the election of Biden and Harris. No longer is our President a ranting, misanthropic bully. The exhausting compulsion to monitor news for ever-worsening developments has ended. Life feels much calmer and more stable.

"American Exceptionalism" has been dealt a heavy blow. While I was hardly conscious of this assumption of inherent difference before, it has become clear that our country is not immune from incompetent leadership, insurrection, and needing soldiers to maintain order. After our embarrassment and plummeting reputation among other nations caused by Trump's actions and policies, I'm hopeful that under new leadership the US will be able to engage fully and productively with the rest of the world again.

One of the most upsetting aspects of the Trump presidency was the realization of how inaccurate my expectations were. In both the 2016 and 2020 elections, I misread my fellow citizens and the extent of the pro-Trump support. The closeness of the vote counts shocked me both times. The folly of communicating chiefly with like-minded people

must be overcome if we are to work together to resolve differences and make progress. Uncomfortable but honest conversations seem to be a necessary first step. I'm resolved to make that effort.

In addition to the widely shared challenges of the Covid pandemic and climate change, social justice issues, especially economic and racial inequalities, are of particular concern here in Virginia. Richmond was the capital of the Confederate States of America in the 1860s. That legacy of systemic racism still lingers, evident in many ways: housing patterns, education, economic disparities, policing, gun violence, and most noticeably the numerous statues memorializing Confederate military officers throughout the city. After the riots of the past summer, only one, to Robert E. Lee, remains in place. However, racism is still strong and evident, as it is nation-wide. I hope to be able to report in a future newsletter on efforts to increase awareness of white privilege and end racism. The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation is leading this campaign in Richmond.

Thank you for welcoming me back to Ipswich Sunday Services via Zoom. It's been comforting and helpful to be reminded of the broader perspective of the larger world.

Dee de Roche

writing from Virginia, US

*Dee was previously a member at our Meeting House when she and the family lived locally.*

### **Services in February**

7<sup>th</sup> - Ali Mercer - Ipswich member living in Devon.

14<sup>th</sup> - Gerrie Hawes - Ipswich attender living in Brighton.

21<sup>st</sup> - Rev Cliff Reed. Minister Emeritus, Ipswich.

28<sup>th</sup> - Ann Baepler - Ipswich member.

Thank you to all who led the services, organised the music, and gave readings for the services in January.

## Coping - Contact – Covid

As I was trying to recover from more miserable news on the radio the other day, I told me to pull myself together. This Covid-19 global pandemic had 'only' been around for almost a year. What did I have to complain about? During World War 2 (before my time), people had to cope with the threat of invasion, the risk of being bombed, losing loved ones, fighting all over the world, food shortages, various restrictions such as blackouts and many personal stresses – all of which went on for six years. There were similarities with our present situation (fear, stress, limits on freedom), but they went on for much longer than we have had to cope with this virus fallout.

Having given myself a good talking to, I thought I could force myself to cheer up – or at least to feel thankful for my health, my garden and the ability to make contact with friends and family online via various internet and phone options. It is true – I am grateful.

However, like many of us now, my resilience in the face of an indefinite lockdown is wearing thin. A little voice in my head started to protest – *'but during the war people were able to see friends, touch and hug family, go to the pub, theatre and cinema. Getting together and supporting one another, laughing, gossiping, sharing food, working towards a common goal – all these were uniting factors'* – so my voice argued.

Maybe this lockdown is more similar to internment during the wars? Certainly, internees lost their freedom of movement, did not know how long the restrictions would last, had no individual power to change or affect the rules they lived under. This sounds familiar.

Currently many of us have more immediate stresses than the boredom or depression of lockdown (as important as those are). Some of us have lost jobs, focus, our business or livelihood, health, education, security, some have even lost family or their own life. So what is happening to us is as serious as the international disasters of World Wars. Speaking of the Covid-19 pandemic,

some politicians in the UK (at least) have freely used the language of conflict, talking of *'fighting Covid-19'*, *'frontline services'*, *'beating this virus'* and it feels like fears have been intentionally stoked to make us behave and keep within Government rules and guidelines.

This language does not encourage unity or co-operation. Studies by Dr Zahira Jaser from the University of Sussex

([www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/52112](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/52112))

compares Boris Johnson's use of language with that of Jacinda Ardern (Prime Minister in New Zealand). *'The starkest difference in the leaders' style lays in their choice of verbs, the analysis finds. The most used verb by Mr Johnson in his first ten speeches on Coronavirus was 'to want' (52 times) whilst Ms Ardern's most frequently used verb was 'to need' (48 times).'* Collective pronouns were more common in Ms Ardern's speeches (we – 305 times/our - 97 times) with Mr Johnson's figures being (we – 230 times/ our 57 times).

This difference has a marked effect – even now months later the political language still talks of 'beating' the virus. Here in the UK the emphasis does not seem to be on a collective focus. People avoid one another in the street and when on footpaths for their daily exercise. Our masks are a barrier not only to infection, but also to communication and contact.

I crave contact with my family. Testing positive to the Covid virus, my mother (aged 93) is isolated in the bedroom of her Residential Home. Happily she is symptom free. We have not been allowed to see her for weeks. We have not been allowed to touch her since March 2020. Phone calls are the only link. She copes and 'goes with the flow'. It is me who needs to hug her, to touch her before she dies – of whatever cause.

New-born babies need to be touched and held in order to grow and develop – even to survive. Adults deprived of touch suffer too. People's mental health often depends on it. We hear occasionally of the cost in terms of people's mental health as we struggle to cope during the

### **Coping – Contact – Covid cont.**

lockdowns and other restrictions on our life, but addressing the problems is being deferred. Calls to the NCPCC Helpline are up 50% and their records of domestic abuse are up 53% from pre pandemic levels. The Samaritans organisation reports that *'In the six months since social distancing restrictions began we provided emotional support to our callers over 1,200,000 times. 1 in 4 of these conversations has been with someone who is expressing suicidal thoughts or behaviours. Common themes where callers express suicidal feelings included feeling isolated, hopeless about the future and trapped (e.g., "not seeing the end to this").'*

It is time to pay more than lip service to the problems we are storing up. There are serious consequences to the restrictions and lockdowns, which in the longer term may have more damaging effects on the general public – of whatever age.

Please politicians, start to be more honest and genuine with us. We know the virus will not – cannot – go away. It will continue to mutate. That is what viruses do to survive. We need to find a way to survive as a community – and to move towards more than survival.

By Tessa Forsdike

### **General Assembly Annual Meeting**

This year's Unitarian annual meeting will be held online via Zoom on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April. There is no charge, but you will need to register – by 3<sup>rd</sup> April (more details will be available soon). If any member of our congregation would like to propose a motion for consideration, please contact one of the Trustees for more information. We also need a volunteer to represent our congregation – you need to be a member and to be prepared to vote on the motions according to the direction of our members. Please contact Linda King for more information.

**Napier Barracks asylum camp** was set up during the Coronavirus pandemic. There was never going to be enough space to socially distance here and now, with grim inevitability, many asylum seekers detained in the close confines of the camp have fallen ill with the Coronavirus. Here is a Guardian article explaining the awful situation:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/22/asylum-seekers-plea-for-help-as-covid-sweeps-kent-former-army-barracks>

Please consider signing this petition to have the camp shut down and the asylum seekers more appropriately rehoused:

<https://action.freedomfromtorture.org/close-the-barracks>

These people do not deserve a potential death sentence for seeking asylum from torture and violence. As Unitarians we should stand by this principle and maybe even release a statement to this end. Contributed by Adam Whybray

### **Walk for Water**

Do you go for a walk each day (or even most days) to get your regular lockdown exercise? Could you ask friends to sponsor you and support the Walk for Water campaign? Some women have to walk daily just to fetch water to survive.

Taking part in walk for water is simple

1 - Choose your goals. Sign up and set your targets. Choose your distance and fundraising goals. We recommend aiming for £150 as a starting point.

2 – Share your fundraising page with your friends and family so they can sponsor you to reach your target and track your progress.

3 - Walk for Water. From 1 March, walk for water every day for a month – it's flexible where and when you want to walk. Track your miles on Strava or through our manual tracking on your fundraising page.

<https://www.wateraid.org/uk/why-walk-for-water>  
[https://walkforwater.wateraid.org/?id=21/BAX/02B&utm\\_source=21/BAX/02B&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=warm\\_sign\\_up\\_button\\_1&utm\\_campaign=cee\\_walk\\_for\\_water\\_2021&dm\\_i=28HF,1PA8T,9FQEPO,5T7S4,1](https://walkforwater.wateraid.org/?id=21/BAX/02B&utm_source=21/BAX/02B&utm_medium=email&utm_content=warm_sign_up_button_1&utm_campaign=cee_walk_for_water_2021&dm_i=28HF,1PA8T,9FQEPO,5T7S4,1)

## **Meditation**

A meditation group called "Some Time to Be" meets in the evening on the first Thursday of the month. It is led by Ann Baeppler who has done an interfaith ministry training. The meditations are designed to offer an oasis of peacefulness and are fully guided, though some past experience of meditation would be useful. For more information contact Ann on 01473 327089.

## **Poetry Group**

The next meeting will be on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February at 2pm. The poet featured will be Sara Teasdale. To join the group, contact Riena Jackson - [mjack76748@aol.com](mailto:mjack76748@aol.com)

## **Book Group**

We probably had so many books for Christmas that we were all a bit late finishing the book we chose to discuss, so have deferred the meeting until Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February when we will be discussing *Always Coming Home* by Ursula LeGuin. You are welcome to join us even if you too haven't finished the book! Let Tessa Forsdike know and she will send you the Zoom link.

## **Dogs Trust Fostering Service**

The Dogs Trust Freedom Project is a specialist dog fostering service for people fleeing domestic abuse. The service supports survivors to get to safety knowing their beloved pet is safe and well cared for until they can be safely reunited. The service is now extending into Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. We hope that by doing this we can support more people and their pets to flee domestic abuse across the UK.

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/>



## **Birthdays in February**

Happy Birthday to Jean Odell on 1<sup>st</sup>; Robert Waller on 2<sup>nd</sup>; Ali Mercer on 3<sup>rd</sup>; Kate Dickinson and Rachel Hamilton on 5<sup>th</sup>; Tracy Sakals on 11<sup>th</sup>; Linda King on 14<sup>th</sup>; Beryl Beech on 16<sup>th</sup>; Ralph Spence on 19<sup>th</sup>; Tessa Forsdike on 20<sup>th</sup> and John Ellis ... on the mysterious 29<sup>th</sup>.

## **World's Richest Men**

The increase in the wealth of the world's ten richest men last year would pay for a coronavirus vaccine for the world and reverse increases in poverty since the pandemic began, according to Oxfam. (quoted in The Times)

## **Charity Chosen**

Each year we support a charity and organise fundraising events. Recently we have needed to focus on raising funds for our restoration Project. As this is nearing completion and we are lucky enough to have sourced most of the funding, the Trustees decided to accept the suggestion from Ann Baeppler to support the local Lighthouse Women's Aid charity. Although our ability to fundraise is still affected by the lockdown, we hope to raise funds during the rest of 2021. Ideas for events or ways to raise money very welcome.

**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 Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February by email to [ipswichunitarian@gmail.com](mailto:ipswichunitarian@gmail.com) or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS

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## **Thought for the month**

A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right and evil doesn't become good just because it's accepted by a majority. Booker T. Washington