



Happy New Year!

We wish everyone connected to the Meeting House a very happy and healthy 2023. Thank you to everyone who supported us and our charities during the past year and we look forward to building on that support over the coming months.

At the AGM in November the following people were confirmed as Trustees – Paulette Reed; Liz Constable; Tessa Forsdike; Robert Waller; John Stevens and Adam Whybray. The main responsibility for managing the affairs of the Meeting House will fall on their shoulders, but they need the guidance and support of the membership and congregation too. If you have a concern or a suggestion, do speak or send a message to any of them. We welcome all comments, constructive complaints and fundraising ideas.

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Suffolk Sight

At the AGM on November 13th, members of the Meeting House voted enthusiastically to dedicate the 2023 fundraising efforts to support the local, community-based, independent sight loss charity Suffolk Sight. As an independent local charity, Suffolk Sight receives no government funding, and relies entirely on local fundraising, donations, legacies and non-statutory grants. Members felt this makes it a local organization that’s particularly deserving of Meeting House support this coming year. Moreover, among our congregation, Sandra and Malcolm Hawes attest to the invaluable support Suffolk Sight has provided through the visits of community workers skilled with the expertise in assistive technologies, aids and adaptations that can make daily living easier with vision impairment.

Suffolk Sight was founded in 2020 and represented an amalgamation of two organizations: The East Suffolk Association for the Blind (ESAB) and West Suffolk Sight (formerly known as West Suffolk Voluntary Association for the Blind, or WSVAB). As their website explains, ESAB and WSVAB, founded in the early twentieth century, focused primarily on financial support for people living with vision impairment. By contrast, and indicative of the socio-cultural changes towards ability and disability in the intervening decades, Suffolk Sight’s services extend far beyond financial support. In keeping with a social model of disability that considers disability resulting from the ways society is organised, rather than an individual’s difference, Suffolk

Suffolk Sight cont.

Sight works to remove barriers that restrict life choices for people with vision impairment. It provides services that enable more inclusive and independent ways of living for the vision impaired, and it's estimated that around 4000 people in Suffolk live with vision impairment. Their newsletters provide a sense of the impressive range of services Suffolk Sight provides for adults and children of all ages living with vision impairment. Advice on and access to aids and equipment, low vision assessment, visits with one of their trained community workers, participation in social clubs and support groups, computer training, befriending, and the regular publication of the Suffolk Sight newsletter. Just as membership of Suffolk Sight is free, perhaps most remarkable is that the majority of these services are also provided free of charge to the beneficiaries thanks to the support of donations, beneficiaries, and the volunteers.

Here are some of the ways Suffolk Sight enables vision impaired people to participate in activities on an equal footing with everyone else. For children aged 5 and above, Suffolk Sight Juniors runs a group each first Saturday of the month, and thanks to donations, the group undertook a trip to Colchester Zoo in July 2022. In collaboration with Ickworth Estate, Suffolk Sight launched a new richly descriptive audio-described guide to the magnificent house and grounds. This was made possible by a technology called VocalEyes, a charity working to make art and culture accessible to the vision impaired, and the new audio-described guide can be easily pre-booked prior to a visit. Suffolk Sight's telephone counselling service, Looking Ahead, set up in 2019 has been tremendously successful in providing emotional support for those adapting to vision loss. And last but not least, the Suffolk Sight newsletter brings together invaluable information about local activities, news and events of particular interest to the vision impaired.

- Liz Constable

Christmas Gallery



From Brewery to Bordello!



If you haven't already heard, we have moved. Only about 100 metres, from the 15th century 'brew house' that we have occupied for 13 years to a circa 18th century building that was, allegedly, in the 1950s the local 'house of ill repute'.

We were neighbours to the Roman Catholic Church and we are now neighbours to the Protestant Temple (Evangelical Reformed Church – very 'Jesus' centred as we found during a couple of visits!).

Our new house is a building with a chequered history, probably starting life as a cottage for the gardener/huntsman of the big domain in which it was situated. So for a while, to Sheila's amusement, it was, in part, dog kennels! Over the years parts of the domain were sold off & the main house is now a ruin. Though we are still within a few minutes' walk of the centre of the village we are also on the edge of the village (yes it's a lop sided village!). We have a large piece of land to the side of the house on which is growing the tallest tree in the village, a 350 year old Sequoia planted in the mid-18th century in the original park by a retired Protestant minister on his return from working in Canada.

The main house, as I said, now a ruin, was taken over by the Gestapo during the occupation and it seems that it was after the war that our building started its next run of incarnations from bordello, through to night club & restaurant. It then fell into disrepair and was bought by a Dutchman around the turn of the century, (sometimes seems strange that we and most of you remember 'the turn of the century') and used as a holiday home with part turned into a gîte.

Nothing had been done to the house for 20 years and

it needed new, double glazed, windows; replacement exterior doors: replacement tiles on the roof; full insulation; new heating; considerable electrical work; re-vamped bathroom; you name it, it needed it! We employed an architect who came up with a scheme that was submitted to the local Mayor and duly approved. The architect project managed the works that were carried out by five different companies. Fifteen months later we moved in! To cut some costs we undertook to carry out modernisation of the kitchen and do all exterior painting and interior decoration. Some of this is still 'a work in progress'! Meantime we had an old 'brew house' to sell. Three stories and a cellar, that's a lot of steps and not everyone's 'cup of tea'! Estates agents' fees in France are astronomical, usually 10% of selling price, and so it's not unusual to sell privately. This seemed rather daunting to us but local friends suggested a notice in the Mairie for starters. Sheila went along to the Mairie to ask about this and was halfway through her question to the Maire's secretary when behind her there was the noise of a chair scraping on the floor of an adjoining office, the door flying open and the Maire shouting, "I'll buy your house!" This was on a Friday afternoon and on the Saturday afternoon the Maire and his wife came round to view. They made us an acceptable offer and so the house was sold, with most of the furniture and all the fittings, within 24 hours with no agent's fees! The inclusion of most of the furniture was a relief as we had all our furniture from our flat at Leiston in store, where it had sat for nearly three years! Fortunately, again, by asking at the Mairie we had been put in touch with the owner of a local ex industrial building that had been used for storing horn (yes, cows horns) for the local comb making industry which was a major employer up until the 1950's when plastic combs finally finished the local industry off. He gave us space for storage at a very low rate. As our 'old' house was being bought by the Mayor and his wife 'to let' we were able to delay the actual sale until all of our main works were completed enough for us to move in. So some things do just work out well! Next project is the garden – more on that next year! Best wishes for the coming year to everyone at the Meeting House.

Sheila & Ray Seal

Sheila and Ray are members of the MH now living in France.

Charity fundraising

The collection at the Carol Service for Christian Aid realised £200.23. From mulled wine and mince pies provided by Sandra and Malcolm Hawes after service the next day and the Bits & Bobs Christmas table we collected £90.40 to support St Elizabeth Hospice.

The Dickens by Candlelight event organised by the Friends of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House sold 77 tickets – 55 via Eventbrite and 22 on the door – and gave a profit of over £800 (including some donations on the night). Thanks go to Bob Allen who presented the readings and entertained us so well. As this was so successful the Friends are planning to make it an annual event with a slight variation each time.

Jenny Brabazon wrote to thank us very much for the tremendously warm welcome and a lovely service when Jenny spoke about Amnesty. After the service we signed 37 cards of support and made donations – a total of £98.75, which included the speaker's fee. If people would like to do more and maybe do some more cases at home, some of which can be done online, you can just search for Write for Rights 2022 and download individual cases or indeed the whole campaign booklet. Here too is the link - [Write For Rights 2022 | Amnesty International UK](#) . If anyone would like to join one of the local Amnesty meetings, the group meets monthly at the Friends Meeting House at 37 Fonnereau Road on the third Wednesday of every month (except August) at 7.30pm

Thank you to everyone who donated and supported these events.

Lighthouse Women's Aid was our main focus for fundraising during 2021/2 and we will continue to support them with the bags and harvest donations. The centre has moved into a new home and manager Deb said *'The building looks lovely and welcoming and we are very excited about the future for Lighthouse and ensuring that we will be there to support those that need us.'* Women and families need support all year and often times like Christmas intensify that need. Check out the website - www.lighthousewa.org.uk

Services in January

1st - Robert Waller, Ipswich Unitarian member

8th - Paulette Reed, Ipswich Unitarian member

15th - Jackie Grace, Octagon Chapel, Norwich

22th - Rev. Cliff Reed, Minister Emeritus, Ipswich Unitarians

29th - Ipswich Unitarian Trustees. Membership Service and shared lunch – all welcome

Members update

Rosemary Hamilton fell and fractured her hip on Sunday 11th December – after the service. As she said, *'not what I put on my wish list.....very painful, being well looked after'*. Following surgery Rosemary went to Aldeburgh Cottage Hospital for convalescence. She is hoping to be home soon.

Beryl Beech came back to Ipswich for the Christmas holidays, staying with her daughter Alison (who is still struggling following a bad fractured ankle). Beryl has now returned to Surrey. The plan is for her to return to Ipswich in January – hopefully to the Norwood Home. Phil Chatfield has finished the chemotherapy and is taking things a day at a time, though feeling fed up, weak and tired – partly due to the disease and partly the treatment. As we go to print he is back in hospital with another infection. Ali has support from the Devon carers group and the community carers. She has been awarded a grant to fund a break, but Phil is currently not stable enough to leave. Our thoughts and prayers are with them both. Covid is still about and has affected Ann Baeppler and her partner Peter, Liz Constable and John Warren – all over Christmas. Hopefully they are now feeling better.



Before they returned to the US, some of us joined Dan and Suzanne Cohen for lunch in town after the service. We expect them back in Suffolk sometime in March.

Matthew's Book Group

Matthew Smith will be running a monthly book group class, starting in January, based on Charles Eisenstein's 2013 work *'The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible'*.

The course will be structured as a monthly in person group at Framlingham Meeting House on Wednesday evening starting on 18th January. For those unable to attend in person due to distance etc, there will be a duplicate online Zoom course on Monday evenings, starting on 6th February.

If you would like to participate, please email Matthew Smith - revmatt1774@outlook.com indicating whether you hope to attend in person, or for the online course.

To participate in the programme you will need a version of the text. Copies to buy are available from www.abebooks.co.uk for a little over £10 plus postage or via Amazon or other booksellers.

Poetry Group

Our poetry group will next meet on 19th January 2023 at 2pm and will look at John O'Donohue. For details contact Riena Jackson - mjack76748@aol.com

Book Group

Book group members are currently reading *'Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead'* by Olga Tokarczuk. We are aiming to meet in person for the first time since Covid on Tuesday 3rd January at 7pm at the home of Jodi Warren. Contact Jodi for details - jodicoats@gmail.com

Birthdays in January

Happy birthday to Paulette Reed on 14th; to Riena Jackson on 26th; to Juliette Spence on 27th and to Mark Hawes on 29th.

We hope you enjoy the celebrations and all have lots of cake!

UNITARIAN WOMEN

A Legacy of Dissent, edited by Rev. Dr Ann Peart

A celebration of the pioneering achievements of Unitarian women who made a difference to their world – as writers and artists, social reformers, suffrage activists, peace campaigners, educators and politicians, preachers and ministers – for 200 years from the mid-18th century. As Unitarians, they dissented from the orthodox doctrines of their time; as women, they dissented from the restricted cultural roles prescribed for them by society. They were supported by networks of friends – both women and men – and this book traces some of those interconnections across England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Rev. Dr Ann Peart is a historian and former Principal of Unitarian College Manchester. With contributions by Rev. Dr Rory Castle Jones, Rev. Andrew Hill, Derek McAuley, and Alan Ruston. Lindsey Press, 2019, ISBN 978-0853190929, softback, RRP £10.

Ipswich Council Meeting



Tessa Forsdike represented the Meeting House to offer reflections at the start of the Council meeting in November.

Suffolk Pride

Suffolk Pride cannot be successful without a team of dedicated volunteers helping to make it happen. Whatever your skillset, and however much time you have to spare, there is likely a role for you in our revised volunteer structure.

So what does Suffolk Pride actually do?

Suffolk Pride's primary aim is to organise a pride event, each year, in Suffolk that celebrates LGBTQ+ people. We also want to use this event to raise awareness around areas of LGBTQ+ inequality and use our influence to change things.

Outside of this, we're a community group. We want to build connections between LGBTQ+ people and establish that Suffolk is a safe place to be LGBTQ+.

As a result, one of the side-focuses of this year is developing further our year-round offering. What this exactly looks like, we aren't entirely sure but we are keen to continue to give back to our community and ensure that everything we do represents and is for all members of our community.

At Suffolk Pride, we're looking to ensure that each volunteer has a role that is manageable and can be worked quite easily around pre-existing commitments.

Whether you have a keen eye for numbers, a talented social media content producer, or are passionate about holding community events, there is a place for you.

The volunteer form is on this link -

[Suffolk Pride 2023 Team Application Form \(google.com\)](#)



Ipswich CAN (Clean Air Now)

A huge thank you for all your support, energy and ideas this year - together, we're delivering change! The campaign to get action on air pollution in Ipswich has been a long one but this year saw some real shifts - with more to come in 2023.

We've taken the campaign to Suffolk's Health and Wellbeing Board. This brings together leaders from the Borough, County Councils, Health, Police, University, business and local charities to tackle issues of health and wellbeing for residents.

As a result, in January 2022, a private Air Quality event was held. Led by Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health and opened by Cllr Matthew Hicks, leader of Suffolk County Council. This ensured that all councillors and local authority staff are unambiguously aware of air pollution health issues and their legal obligations. It also resulted in clarity around Prevent, Mitigate and Avoid actions – the most important of which can only be undertaken by our local authorities. See our website for information and links.

We're relieved that air pollution has finally been publicly discussed and is on the ongoing agenda of the Health and Wellbeing Board. We understand that it is now also a priority for the Suffolk Public Health team, who started work on engaging the public in October 2022 with an air quality event in town. Things are finally moving.

Building on this we want *everyone* to know about the issue and to see actions taken that **actually reduce pollution, especially for those most affected**. So, time to ramp things up a bit. In 2023 we're delighted to announce that we'll be working in partnership with the Evening Star, to launch a sustained press campaign to inform and drive action on air pollution in Ipswich. ITFC are also endorsing our campaign and will be working with the Star and ourselves to help inform and protect supporters whilst starting to reduce their carbon footprint.

We'd love some help with legal challenge and with communications and social media, so if you can help with that, know someone who could, or have any other ideas, or simply want to get more involved just get in touch.

Tony Horner – Ipswich CAN

tonyhorner2@gmail.com

Chandeliers

One of the special features of our Meeting House is the Chandelier which we light on special occasions such as at our Christmas Carol Service. On our recent holiday David and I saw beautiful chandeliers in quite different religious settings. The first is in the Greek Orthodox church of Saint George in Madaba, Jordan.



The second one is in the Muhammed Ali Mosque in Cairo, Egypt.

From the Hymn of Akhenaten

When you rise upon the horizon
The day breaks
And you shine as Aten in the daytime
You dispel darkness
And when you give forth your rays
The two lands are in festival
People are alert, standing on their feet
Now that you have raised them up
The entire land performs its work
All the cattle are content with their fodder
Trees and plants grow
Birds fly up to their nests
Their wings are extended in praise for you
All the kine prance on their feet
Everything which flies up and alights
They live when you have risen for them
The fishes in the river leap before your face
When your rays are in the sea
Whenever you set on the western horizon
The land is in darkness like death
And one eye does not see another
Every lion comes out of his cave
And all serpents bite
For the darkness is blanket
The land is now silent
Because he who made them
Is at rest on his horizon

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 Monday 30th January by email to ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS
To contact our Secretary, ring 01473 728498 email tessa@tessajordan.co.uk
Website – www.unitarianipswich.com

Thought for the month

I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights' – Maya Angelou