



Meeting House - Work Update

Although the Covid 19 lockdown has directly affected the work on restoring our Meeting House, we are fortunate that the site foreman Mark Frankis has been continuing to work dedicatedly on his own during the last 8 weeks, so the project will not be as long delayed as we might have feared. We owe him a big vote of thanks. Now he has a skeleton crew working with him, with social distancing to keep everyone safe. So far the main focus of the work has been on the South elevation where all the render has been stripped, the metal plate has been removed and an oak plate installed to replace it. This involves a steel lifting rig with two 12 ton jacks to raise each pillar (9 of 11 have been completed) and it is a slow careful process to protect our building. A start has been made on installing the insulation to the South elevation and repair to the timber. Also work on the West elevation has started – removing the render and exposing the timber here. The windows have been surveyed and new frames are being made (using the original glass

and repairing it where necessary). The scaffolding is all in place, with monoflex around it to seal the site. The fire alarm has been installed and is connected to an alarm centre and to three Trustee phone numbers.



One of the jacks in place during the restoration work

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Fundraising continues

Our first aim in raising funds was to secure the future of our building and the grant support from Historic England made it possible to start work on our restoration project. We also realised that this is an ideal opportunity to future proof our building by installing an easily accessible toilet (in the front porch) and to adapt the entrance by lowering the paving outside and creating a slope to make it easier for anyone with a mobility challenge to enter our building. This increased the amount needed for the whole project to £661,910.60. With the current funding we have confirmed, the amount outstanding to raise is £204,599.02 – but we have grant applications in place which we are hopeful may reduce this

Fundraising continues – cont.

deficit to at least £106,688.42 and Linda King and Tessa Forsdike continue to draft and to send in applications to meet this last hurdle. In these uncertain times, no application is guaranteed to be successful – all charity donors rely on investments to supply the monies for their grants and currently the interest rates are falling or uncertain, which affects their ability to be generous. One further application (to the Garfield Weston Foundation) has been accepted for consideration and each week we continue to contact other donors.

So how can members and friends of the Meeting House support us? One way is by telling all your friends about our JustGiving page - <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/meetinghouse> so that they can make a direct donation – every little helps!

Some companies make charitable donations to worthwhile causes that their employees are supportive of, so if you work for a large company and are able to encourage your Directors to contribute to our funds, we would be very grateful. We can supply all the information they may need.

Covid 19 has affected many people and there are very sad and stressful situations which have challenged us. As well as supporting one another, we need to ensure our building is there as a source of solace in the future.



Anniversary Service – led by Rev Cliff Reed on 26th April 2020

SIGNS OF THE COVENANT:

MEETING HOUSE AND RAINBOWS

Part One: Today is the 320th anniversary of the opening of our Meeting House. On 26th April 1700 the Rev. John Fairfax preached a sermon there in which he presented the justification for building it, for there were those who disapproved of its construction. In that sermon, which had the Latin title *Primitiae Synagogae*, he traced the history of what he called “Places for God’s Solemn Publick Worship” from the “Tabernacle of the Congregation” “which Moses reared up in the Wilderness” through to what he called “this large, spacious Meeting-Place”. And for 320 years we – the continuous and continuing congregation – have, to use Fairfax’s 17th-century terminology, recorded God’s name, solemnized his true and pure worship, and instituted ordinances, “which God hath respect to, when he saith, I will come unto thee and bless thee.” And these words mark the Covenant that exists between this historic congregation and God, its spiritual foundation. It may be true that there have been all manner of changes – theological and linguistic – since Fairfax’s day, but that Covenant holds good. If we remain true to the Divine values then the Divine Spirit will remain with us and among us, making of our community a home for loving kindness, reconciliation, personal integrity and social justice.

And in most, if not all, of those 320 years we have been able to celebrate our continuing Covenant in the Meeting House where Fairfax preached about it. But this year we do so, not in our Meeting House, which, as Fairfax might have said, “is shut against us”, but in a context which he would have found unimaginable – namely that of Zoom! And even if coronavirus hadn’t kept us away, the now suspended building work would still have kept us out of the Meeting House itself. But the idea of our worshipping somewhere else would not have fazed Fairfax. He recalled the days of the early Church when “Neighbouring

Meeting House and Rainbows – cont.

Christians were wont to assemble to Worship God” in “some part of their houses”. He reminded the congregation that for “twelve or thirteen years last past”, they had worshipped in a “hired house, whereof you had the use, but wherein you had not a Propriety”. And he even foresaw, with regard to the Meeting House, that “It may possibly so come to pass, whereof past experience is a convincing Argument, that you may not be suffered by the Magistrate to use it as you do this Day”. Religious liberty was still a tender flower, as Fairfax well knew, and the future of our Meeting House was by no means secure.

But people had worshipped before they had Meeting Places of their own and they would still worship if they lost them. As beautiful and as convenient as the new Meeting House was, Fairfax was saying, it was not - and is not - the be all and end all of what this congregation is about. And at a time when we are Zoomitarians as well as Unitarians, we would do well to remember that. As Fairfax put it, “Let us not satisfie our selves that we have built this House of God, for his solemn Worship, where his Name may be recorded. This is not our whole Duty, nay, ‘tis but a small part thereof. God expects that we prepare him another Habitation, even our Hearts.”

Part Two: The idea of a Covenant between ourselves and God was important to Fairfax and his contemporaries. God’s promise that, “I will come unto thee, my Spirit shall be with thee”, meant – amongst other things – that he would “enlighteneth dark Minds,...breaketh hard Hearts, humbleth proud Hearts, perswadeth unbelieving and disobedient Sinners and bringeth them into the bond of his Covenant, that they may be saved.” Fairfax thus observed the belief that salvation and the Covenant that promised it were, potentially at least, open to all people and not just a predestined ‘Elect’. In 1700 this was a liberal affirmation and one which paved the way for this congregation’s evolution as a liberal religious community. And in this 21st century there is another dimension to the

idea of Covenant that we must attend to.

The idea of a Covenant is something brought to mind by that most contemporary of all ancient symbols, the rainbow. Everywhere today we see rainbows, usually made by children and placed in their windows. It is a heartening sight in these troubled times, an affirmation of hope in the face of menace – the menace of coronavirus and the Covid 19 disease which it causes. This anti-coronavirus ‘rainbow trail’ seems to have originated in Italy, where it is usually combined with the words “Andra tutto bene”, meaning “Everything will be alright”. Exactly who introduced the rainbow trail to this country is unclear, although one candidate is an Ipswich woman named Crystal Stanley. But although the rainbow is now a symbol of defiance in the face of a pandemic, it has meant all sorts of things to all sorts of people around the world and down the millennia. In our own time it has become a symbol of unity in diversity with regard to such things as ethnicity and sexual identity. But in the deeps of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the rainbow is the symbol of a Covenant made by God with humanity, as represented by Noah, after the great Flood. And in that Covenant, the rainbow represents the promise that “never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all creation.” And God declares, “Whenever the bow appears in the cloud, I shall see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and living creatures of every kind on earth.” (Genesis 9: 15-16).

The rainbow is thus a symbol of creation’s wholeness, of which we are a part, and of the covenant, the shared promise – human and divine - to respect it and to save it from destruction. And in these days of dangers like coronavirus and climate change, both of them – it would seem – the result of our abuse of Nature, our violation of the Covenant, the rainbow can be both a symbol of hope, hope that we can change our foolish ways, and a reminder of the promise to do so. Few things in

Meeting House and Rainbows – cont.

Nature are as beautiful and as transcendent as a rainbow. It may be a physical phenomenon, whose spiritual, emotional and mythical properties originate in us rather than in the sunlight refracted through water droplets, but as William Wordsworth wrote in another context,

“Earth has not anything to show more fair:

Dull would he be of soul who could pass by

A sight so touching in its majesty.”

(‘Composed on Westminster Bridge’)

And in the same year of 1802, Wordsworth referred more specifically to rainbows in a poem whose opening lines certainly speak for me, and for you too, perhaps:

“My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:”

Part Three: Rainbows and their seven colours visible to the human eye have been a rich source of stories, myths and legends in most, if not all, cultures, times and places. How could it be otherwise?

Services

Our services continue each Sunday at 10.45 online and all are welcome to join us – contact Adam on adamwhybray@gmail.com to ask for the invitation link each week.

Thank you to everyone who has organised and contributed to services during May – Adam Whybray, Linda King and Sandra Hawes, Rev. Matthew Smith, Ali Mercer and Rev Cliff Reed.

Services in June will be led by – Ian Hartley, (Quaker) on 7th; tbc on 14th; Ali Mercer (Ipswich Congregation living in Devon) on 21st; John Stevens (Ipswich Congregation, living in London) on 28th

Please send all suggestions and offers to lead services to Linda King - lindapendal@gmail.com

Trustees Update

As your Chairperson I’d like to update you on various congregational happenings. Your Trustees met via Zoom on Tuesday 12th May. In view of the current lockdown situation, we decided to offer our three tenants (Garden House Nursery School, The Frame Workshop and the Olde English Sweetshop) a limited rent holiday to be repaid at a later date, as it not only behoves us to take care of our own financial wellbeing but also to support their survival as local businesses.

We are glad to report that the Manse in Tuddenham Road has found a new tenant, bringing in some welcome additional income. Jodi Warren had expressed the view that it would be useful for newcomers to the Meeting House to know “who was who”. We therefore plan to have an information board when we return to our newly restored building. Members/regular attenders will be asked to supply a recent 6” x 4” photo which will be displayed on the board with their name underneath. Also listed will be groups attached to the Meeting House.

Liz Constable has applied for membership of the Meeting. All the trustees were delighted to accept her application! Liz will be welcomed formally at the Membership Service at the end of January 2021.

At the moment for reasons we are all only too familiar with, the Taizé Group cannot sing together, but the Poetry Group has been meeting online, as has the newly established Book Group. Online services: These are continuing to be accessed by around 30 people. It’s a joy to welcome quite far flung “visitors” to these. Tessa Forsdike and Linda King are continuing to devote untold hours to applications for funding. Their efforts deserve to be amply rewarded! And finally, by the time you read this report, building work will have re-started on the Meeting House and we can only hope that the grand re-opening will not have to be delayed by too many weeks.

Ann Baepler

The next Trustees’ meeting is on Tuesday 30th June. Feel free to raise any issues you’d like us to consider!

At our service on 10th of May, we marked VE Day by inviting members of the congregation to contribute their memories. As John Ellis' part was not quite ready in time, here is his story –

LIFE IN WORLD WAR II IN LONDON

At 11 o'clock on Sunday 3rd September 1939, the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain came on the radio to say that German troops had entered Poland; Great Britain had required Germany to remove their troops, but there had been no reply to the British demand, *"and therefore I must inform you that we are at war with Germany"*. My father, my mother, my (3 years older than me) brother and me were all in our front room standing quietly. I was 7 years old and said *"what does that mean?"* *"It means that for a start you won't have any more bananas until the war is finished"*.

The first three months of the war have been referred to as the *"phoney war"* because nothing seemed to be happening; other than - some weeks after 3rd September I was in our front garden and saw about 10 or 12 planes flying in formation a short distance away towards Croydon, which had an airport. The planes then started dive bombing the airport. Only a few minutes later, a similar number of RAF planes appeared and there followed an enormous "dog fight" with both British and German planes turning, climbing and diving and trying to shoot each other down. I watched the "dog fight" fascinated: - until my father ran out of our house and called me indoors to (hopefully) safety!

Germany bombed London by day and by night from 1940 - 1942 and then quite often by day when I was at school. Before I went to the Grammar School in 1942, I was at the ordinary elementary school and on one occasion after we had been in the shelters in the middle of the day, the *"all clear"* siren went so we left the shelters to find the whole playground covered with shrapnel from at least one exploded shell and (we think) one German bomb. It would have seriously injured or killed almost everybody in the playground if there had been anybody there.

People used to collect shrapnel and sell it to other children at a penny per piece or threepence if you had a nose piece of a shell or tuppence if you had a piece of brass which was on part of some shells.

The headmaster of the Grammar School which I attended from 1942 – 1949 allowed us to play cards

while in the shelters PROVIDING it was "bridge". So we all learnt how to play "bridge" and got teachers or parents to explain how to "bid" and when to "not bid".

At home my father had a brick shelter built inside the semi-detached garage on the side of the house. The whole family went to bed every night in the shelter. My father was in the Army for the last year of the 1914 – 1918 war and was just too old for the Army in the 1939 – 1945 war. However, he was an Air Raid Warden in the second world war. His duties as a Warden included taking his turn at being on duty (with other Wardens) to attend when bombs came down (usually at night) and often did not explode. Also, he would attend when houses were destroyed or damaged by bombs to make sure that any injured were taken to hospital.

I lived in Baron Grove in Mitcham which is on the Southern outskirts of London, during the war and a house on the other side of the street about 60 yards away was hit by a bomb which did explode. The house was destroyed, the daughter of the doctor who lived there with his wife was killed and (I seem to remember) the doctor and his wife were injured but survived.

Often when I walked to school I found bits of shrapnel from the air raid which took place the previous night. We had a 3.7 (I don't know whether that was inches or a metric measurement) anti-aircraft gun positioned on "the common" which was only about ½ mile as the crow flies from Baron Grove and when this was in use it was nearly as loud as any of the bombs which were landing around us. The shells exploded in the air when they were near their target, which, of course, was an enemy aircraft, but a lot of the shrapnel came from the exploded shells coming from this gun.

Our house received only very minor damage. An incendiary bomb which was about 3'0" long and 4" or 5" in diameter hit the house next door and broke through their sloping tiled roof; the bomb did not "go off" and burst into flames but a displaced roof tile from where the bomb entered their roof space, slid down their roof, crossed the space between the two houses and broke the window of our ground floor WC. which was situated on the side of our house. We mended the glass and considered ourselves very lucky that the blitz did nothing worse to our property.

DOODLEBUGS

I cannot remember whether it was 1943 or 1944

Life in WW2 in London – cont.

when we first had “doodlebugs”, but it was “well in” to the war when we really felt that we were winning! The siren had gone and we were all in the air raid shelter with the French teacher (who was actually French) standing at the door. She suddenly said - there was a funny little plane that flew over just now; it had a long tube above the fuselage and no tail plane but it crashed “over there”. We all thought “silly woman” – couldn’t she recognise what plane it was? But of course, she wasn’t really so daft! It was the first of the doodlebugs! They were unmanned “flying bombs” sent by the Germans from occupied France.

They were programmed to dive into the ground after they had travelled as far as London - BUT there was a fault in their design, which saved many British lives. When the programming came into place and the doodlebug turned downwards towards the ground, the fuel remaining in the tank went to the front end of the tank and could no longer feed the engine and keep it running. Consequently, as soon as the bomb turned downwards, the engine stopped. It was intended that the “bomb” should blow up as soon as it hit the ground AND THE ENGINES SHOULD STILL BE RUNNING. It took about 6 seconds after the engine stopped before the bomb hit the ground and exploded. WE HAD SIX SECONDS TO TAKE COVER! Unless the doodlebug was going to land less than (say) 100 yards away from you, the best thing to do was lay down flat on the ground and protect your head. There was one occasion when THREE ***** doodlebugs in V formation were coming over me (with the middle bug being DIRECTLY over me). I was about ½ mile from home and quickly laid down close to a small front garden brick wall. All three doodlebugs came down a little less than a mile away - thank goodness it was NOT where my/our house was situated.

The war came to an end with the unconditional surrender of the Germany army on VE day (Victory in Europe) on 8th May 1945. The war in Europe had lasted for 5 years 8 months and 6 days. I was by then 13 years old.

Taking everything into consideration, my family, including me, were very lucky!

John Ellis

Happy Anniversary!



Alison Mercer is celebrating our wedding anniversary. 22 mins · 🌍

Apparently it's our 10th Anniversary today! 10 years of ups and downs, and lots of love and laughter. Happy Anniversary to my 'partner in mischief' (in our vows 🤪) As 10th is Wood, we're going beach combing for driftwood 🌲



Congratulations to Ali and Phil on their 10th Wedding anniversary – the service was in our Meeting House. We wish them many more happy years together.

Birthdays

Happy birthday in June to – Molly Stevens on 1st; Zoe Bradbrook and Suzanne Leary on 2nd; Alison White on 6th; Ian Gray on 14th; Stephen Reed and Malcolm Hawes on 17th; June Teape on 30th.

Book Group

We held our second meeting via Zoom to discuss *'Fingers in the Sparkle Jar'* by Chris Packham and most agreed it was a book worth reading and one which some of us might not previously have picked up.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 2nd July at 7pm to discuss a book suggested by Morag Blue – *'Larchfield'* by Polly Clark. This is a first novel and tells of a young man, torn apart by his illegal desire, standing on a deserted beach. W H Auden is longing to be a great poet and for someone who understands him. He throws his phone number into the sea in a bottle. Decades later Dora Fielding is on the same beach, lost and desperate – she finds the bottle ...

Poetry Group

At the May meeting the group discussed poems by Helen Dunmore – see one below. The next meeting will be on 25th June at 2pm and the poet will be Edward Thomas. Contact Riena Jackson for more details - mjack76748@aol.com

My Life's Stem Was Cut

My life's stem was cut
But quickly, lovingly
I was lifted up.
I heard the rush of the tap
And I was set in water
In the blue vase, beautiful
In lip and curve,
And here I am
Opening one petal
As the tea cools.
I wait while the sun moves
And the bees finish their dancing,
I know I am dying
But why not keep flowering
As long as I can
From my cut stem

Helen Dunmore



An old photo of our Meeting House – possibly from about 1972 before the demolition work for the Willis building – thanks to Karen Tricker for finding this on the Ipswich Remembers Facebook page. Does anybody recognise their car?

Odd bits

Jigsaws – many of us have been spending time during the lockdown doing old jigsaws. If you find you have any spare ones (complete), please consider donating them to Suffolk Refugee Support. Contact –Michaela Freeman on 01473 400785 for this or other offers of help.

Plants – the Garden Centres are now open, but if you are nearby, do call at the garden of 200 Rushmere Road in Ipswich, where Helen grows and sells plants of all sorts in aid of our local Hospice.

Books – there is a book swap stall in a tent just past the bridge on the left on the way out of town on Henley Road Ipswich – take your own to swap. Open all day.

Virtual Pride: Saturday June 27th

Ipswich Pride have signed up to Global Pride 2020 on 27th June and are hosting an all day virtual Suffolk Pride event.

They are planning the following

- A virtual Suffolk Pride Parade
- A Queer photo exhibition
- A free fancy dress dance class
- Performers live and pre-recorded (music and spoken word)
- A panel session
- Flying the Rainbow Pride Flag from buildings all over Suffolk

Info from the local Quakers –

Mike King has just launched a new blog on the theme of mysticism as the fount of faith. It has 16 short introductory posts and Barbara Richardson is hoping it will stimulate debate.

The site is here: <https://stochasticpress.com/religion/>

Time for us girls

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.
You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.
They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.
We may seem sweet old ladies
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s –
If you only knew the truth!
There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.
Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana,
Who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!
So here you find me stuck inside
For 4 weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!
It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no flaming flour!
Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.
At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!
So let's all drink to lock down
To recovery and health

And hope this awful virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.
We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!

Pam Ayres
With thanks to the Brook Street Chapel
newsletter!

Imagine a church where you could find
wisdom in Christianity, Buddhism,
Judaism... and in science and poetry.

Imagine a church where women and
men were equal and LGBT+ people fully
welcome and loved.

Imagine a church which didn't tell you
what to believe, but helped you discover
your own spirituality.

Imagine a church with no dogmas or
creeds, but with tolerance and love.

#WeAreUnitarians



What a compliment ...!

Comment from a friend: *I felt really welcomed when I first visited the Ipswich Meeting House; had I turned up in a jester outfit I suspect it wouldn't have been any different!*

Contacts

Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa before the deadline of Thursday 25th June to 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
Website – www.unitarianipswich.com

Thought for the month

The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life.

- Rabindranath Tagore