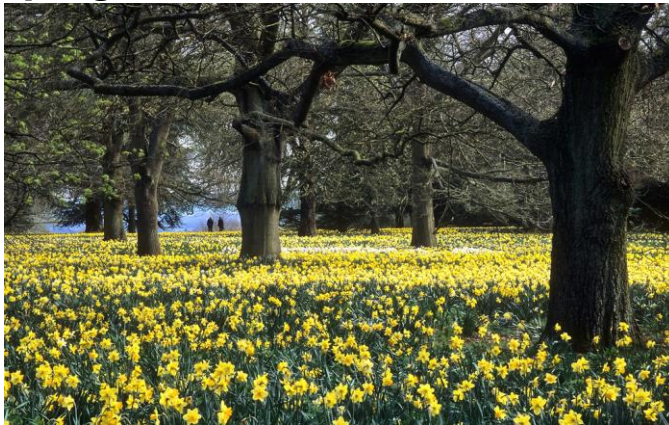




## Spring is here!



Spring flowers are showing their beauty – including the bulbs around our Meeting House – and this brings us to thoughts of our annual **Spring Concert**, which will be held this year on **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May** at 6pm. Please put the date in your diary and think about what your contribution will be to entertain us – a musical piece? a song? A reading? A poem? Our organist Robert Waller will be organising the programme, so he welcomes all offers and suggestions. Please invite your friends to come along too. There will be a collection in aid of our Restoration Fund.

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## Induction Service for our Minister Lewis Connolly

At the service on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, Chair of the Trustees, Ann Baeppler welcomed Lewis with the following words –

Lewis, I am so glad to offer you this formal invitation to be our Minister. This I do on behalf of the members of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House.

We warmly welcome you, Lewis Connolly, and hereby induct you as our Minister. In that role we will look to you to lead us and to accompany us in our explorations of the spiritual life, guiding us towards deeper understandings and richer insights, for the benefit not just of ourselves but of all those with whom we come into contact. We affirm your freedom to preach according to your conscience. We ask that you offer us pastoral care during times of joy and during times of tribulation. Finally, we pledge ourselves to work with you in integrity to create a vibrant spiritual community.



Photo by Maggie Hodges

## **My spiritual journey to Unitarianism**

Having recently been formally accepted into membership of the Ipswich Unitarians I was offered the chance to provide a few reflections upon my spiritual journey to Unitarianism, which I will here oblige to the best of my abilities.

I had a confused and confusing spiritual upbringing as a child, sandwiched between a stalwartly atheist father and a devoutly Irish Catholic aunt who, when she would visit, would pour holy water upon me when my dad was out of the room. I attended Nacton Church of England Primary School, where I remember listening attentively to the local parish vicar who would occasionally visit and take assembly. As an earnest and often overly literal child, I was sometimes troubled by the messages of the hymns we sang in assembly, which I often only partially understood – the lines *"I was cold, I was naked, were you there? Were you there?"* in the Quaker hymn *'When I Needed a Neighbour'* left me stricken with guilt for years afterwards and an awareness that, as a small child, there was seemingly little I could do to help the cold and the naked.

It is perhaps not surprising therefore that as a teenager I became an avowed agnostic, publicly identifying as a humanist, in the wake of discovering seminal science-fiction authors like Isaac Asimov and Kurt Vonnegut, both of whom were, successively, President of the American Humanist Association. However, strange quasi-spiritual experiences from childhood still haunted me. I still remembered staring at light bulbs until coloured splotches danced before my eyes, then trying to communicate with these as though they were alien presences. I remembered kneeling by my bedside reciting prayers that my grandma had taught me and how this ritual had become more and more obsessive and anxious, not being able to sleep until I'd done them. Having OCD, constitutionally and aesthetically I am attracted to Catholicism. I appreciate ritual. However, intellectually and ethically I am liberal and pluralistic. It has often been a challenge for me to balance these two facets of my personality. At the University of York, where I went for my undergraduate degree and MA, I befriended and

dated a Quaker named Ren (who now co-hosts my podcast 'Still Scared' with me) who encouraged me to come along with them to Meeting. Quaker Meeting was a revelation to me, so different from my experiences of Catholic mass and C of E services as a child. It was one of the first times where I really felt as though I were communing with something greater than myself, and whether this was shared humanity, a silence collectively held, or a manifestation of God, it did not seem to matter. However, I sometimes found myself struggling to orient and anchor myself within a full hour of silence. Lacking spiritual guidance I would occasionally retreat into neuroticism and self-doubt and leave Meeting depleted and anxious just as often as I left it rejuvenated and spiritually fulfilled.

Despite meeting some lovely individuals at the Ipswich Society of Friends, I never felt as though I "clicked" with the experience of a smaller Meeting (York's and, then, Exeter's congregations both having been significantly larger). To my knowledge at the time, Quakerism was the only truly liberal, progressive branch of Christianity and so I went without attending any church for two or three years. That was until I met the Rev. Lewis Connolly at a board-gaming club hosted by my friend Luke. Lewis was introduced to me as a Minister, yet his outlook on life, intellectual playfulness and searching, questioning approach to the Bible was something I'd never experienced before, let alone in an ordained Minister! Lewis invited me along to hear one of his sermons... it was intriguing, intellectually gratifying and stirred something spiritual within me. When I first visited Lewis' rectory and laid eyes upon his bookshelf and the sheer eclecticism of the religious and spiritual texts housed within, I was even more intrigued. Finding real solace in the service given after the horrible and tragic Pulse Nightclub Massacre, especially during a period of questioning my own sexuality, I found that the community of members at Ipswich Unitarians were generous, thoughtful, warm and – as individuals – downright interesting! After attending weekly over several months, Lewis extended the offer of membership to me, which – after spiritual and personal reflection – I was more



Adam Whybray with Chair of Trustees Ann Baeppler and Minister Lewis Connolly after the Membership service – photo by Maggie Hodges

**My spiritual journey to Unitarianism – cont.**

than happy to take up. I feel proud to be a member of Ipswich Unitarians and hope that I'm able to offer our community and congregation love, interesting thoughts and some occasionally dramatic readings over the years to come. Thank you for reading about my journey.

Adam Whybray

**IPSWICH MOSQUE**  
Ipswich and Suffolk Bangladeshi Muslim Community Centre & Mosque

**OPEN DAY**  
Sunday 3rd March 2019 • 12.00 noon-3.00pm

An opportunity to visit your local Mosque  
**Everyone Welcome**

- Workshop
- Information Stalls
- Books/Accessories
- Refreshments
- and much more...

Official Programme  
2.00-3.00pm (inside the Mosque)  
Please dress modestly

32-36 Bond Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1JE

**ADVANCE NOTICE!**

**SUFFOLK PRIDE: AN ANNUAL EVENT SUPPORTING LGBTQ + EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

In past years we have supported Suffolk Pride and taken part in the parade and celebrations on the Waterfront. This year's event will take place on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June from 12 -6 p.m.

There will be stalls, live music and entertainment (more information later).

*Let's put the date in our diaries!*

**East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group.**

The next meeting will take place in the Upper Room at the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House on the 19 March at 11.30am, when the subject of discussion will be 'Pilgrimage'.

Future dates; 21 May Ipswich and 17 September Cambridge.

EAUWG are in the process of arranging a social meeting for Unitarian congregations in East Anglia on Sunday 30 June at the Framlingham Meeting House. Please look out for further details

We are a small friendly group within the catchment area of East Anglia and would welcome the attendance of other Unitarian women at our meetings. For further information contact [lindapendal@gmail.com](mailto:lindapendal@gmail.com).

**Restoration Fund Collection Boxes.**

We are fast approaching the end of another year of our individual 'at home' contributions to the Restoration Fund. Last year the tins raised just over £300 (not counting monies handed in during the year) so hopefully this year we will hit £500! Please bring your tins to be emptied after the service on Sunday 24 March. If you wish to have 'your' tin back, please 'mark it' for identification purposes. If you are not able to be at the Meeting House on the 24<sup>th</sup>, please give your collection tin to a trustee.

Every little helps, so maybe a last passing round of your tin to family, friends and callers at your home may bring in that extra that we need?

## **The Search for Religious Tolerance.**

Tuesday 26 March 6 -8pm, University of Suffolk.

As part of the Open Lecture Series and organised in collaboration with Ipswich Faith Community Forum, Professor Satvinder Juss, Professor of Law, Kings College, London will talk on a Sikh's view of the search for religious tolerance.

*'The lecture sets out to show, through an explanation of the Sikh faith, how the claims of religious believers to moral superiority over secularists is diminished if they fail to preach the message of tolerance & mutual respect during these especially challenging times'*

The lecture is free but tickets must be booked through 'Eventbrite'. Further details can be obtained via Open Lecture Series/University of Suffolk website - <https://www.uos.ac.uk/event-list>

## **Saraswati Puja**



On a recent holiday in India we were lucky enough to be staying with friends in Kolkata when the celebrations for the Saraswati Puja took place. This festival honours education and learning. The photo shows the Brahmin in the family shrine performing the rites – which took about three hours and involved chanting, fire, food, flowers, incense and smoke. At the end he blessed us all with words and water. It was a special experience.

Tessa and David Forsdike

## **Update on the Restoration Project**

As you all know, the Meeting House building was put on the at risk register a year ago by Historic England. This followed a comprehensive report by Phil Chatfield. Subsequently we applied for a grant from Historic England to be able to undertake the necessary work. We have been granted a fund to undertake preliminary investigations to obtain a more accurate estimate of the total cost, which we think is in the region of £500,000.

In this period of time we need to indicate to Historic England that we are trying hard to get funding additional to their grant as they can only fund up to 80% of the total cost of the project. Because of the sizeable sum that we need to contribute, the trustees have agreed to appoint a professional fund raiser to help us reach this high target. We hope to appoint someone very soon to kick start the serious fund raising effort.

A piece of very good news is that Historic England, under a scheme called the Taylor Review Project, have granted us some monies to undertake the repair of the gutter between the two hipped roofs. There has been some leakage of water, from time to time, from this area when there has been heavy and prolonged rain.

So, early good news! Let us all use all our efforts to keep the ball rolling.

An important aspect of getting these grants is to show that we can reach out to the local community and demonstrate that the Meeting House can offer a service to it.

Andrew Gibbs

## **Events in March**

3<sup>rd</sup> – 7.20am – Tessa Forsdike on BBC Radio Suffolk

3<sup>rd</sup> – Mosque visit – (if female take a headscarf).

7<sup>th</sup> - Discussion Group – Upper Room 7pm – topic – Motivation – all welcome

15<sup>th</sup> - Red Nose Day

19<sup>th</sup> EA Unitarian Women's Group meeting at 11.30am in the Upper room.

20<sup>th</sup> – first day of Spring

24<sup>th</sup> – Restoration tins collection

28<sup>th</sup> Poetry Group meeting – 1.45 in the Upper room

30<sup>th</sup> – decorate our MH with daffodils for Mothering Sunday on 31st

## Lewis Connolly's Induction, charge to the congregation

I've been thinking recently about what it means to be a 'community of spirit' because I think that's what our congregations can be. And communities thrive on communication. – be it a relationship, a work place, a government even.

A community of spirit is like any other community – a family, a workplace, local or national or international government - they all thrive on open and deep and caring communication. And what can help such a process of communication develop in a community?

Michaela Von Britzke is with me today – long time a member of my congregation of Kensington Unitarians – who send their greetings to Ipswich Unitarians.

Michaela wrote an essay some years ago in a collection of essays edited by our very own Matthew Smith who is leading today's service – a book entitled *Prospects for the Unitarian Movement*. In her essay Michaela wrote:

*"Many unexpected processes of spiritual unfolding follow naturally once we learn to make the mystic's assumption that everything that lives is holy, as part of our formal spiritual practice. If we could learn to truly meet each other in this spirit, in the groupings that make up a church and its weekly processes, we would be well on the road towards a greater awareness of the holiness of the conversation. Once we learn to adopt the view that everything that lives is holy, we don't need to turn church into a place where we have to be careful and 'nice' to each other. We can start to face our conflicts together and begin to develop a sturdy intimacy with each other – the basis and goal of our longing to belong."*

*Sturdy intimacy* – what a lovely phrase and what a fine description for a healthy community of spirit. And of course we all know the challenges of attempting to conduct our lives from the position of 'everything that lives is holy' – an easy path when all is sweetness and light – a seemingly impossible task when life is tough and we come up against the wall of our dislikes, our sensitivities, our disapproval, our disgust even. If we stick around any community for long enough we come up against those barriers in ourselves and others – and then we have a choice – do we stay and deal with our discomfort or do we back off, retreat, return to a comfort zone of our own creating.

It amused me to find this Mulla Nasrudin story the other day, Nasrudin the holy fool of Sufism. Nasrudin had apparently been reading that most accidents occur

within two miles of our own homes and so in order to reduce his risk he moved house to a place three miles down the road. The joke is that we can't escape from ourselves – wherever we go we tend to take ourselves with us.

For me a healthy community of spirit needs to be created in such a way that people feel safe enough to stick around, to work through discomfort, to create opportunities again and again for healing – be it our own individual healing or the healing so urgently needed out there in the wider world. And one way of sticking on that path is to recognise something of God in everyone we meet *and* something of ourselves – **this too is me**. We are all connected and that connectedness helps us to work through the barriers, to clamber over the divisions, to find health and healing and wholeness for one and for all.

Lewis, I know you have started some very interesting studies into the work of Carl Jung. You and many of your congregation will know Jung's concept of the wounded healer and isn't that what we all are, we members of prophetic communities, we who have a sense of the world's needs precisely because these are our needs too – needs for connection, needs for communication, needs for safe space in which we can flourish and can encourage the flourishing of others. By coming to own and understand our own woundedness we can assist those around us in their own healing explorations. .

So a community of spirit can make a tangible difference in the lives of the individuals who join us. And for such a community to be truly healthy, it also needs to be serving something larger than itself. Yes we are as individuals important, yes this congregation and this church building are important too, but we have to perceive ourselves as part of something far, far greater. As the Buddhist teacher and writer Jack Kornfield puts it in his book delightfully entitled *After the Ecstasy the Laundry*

*"If people gather in community primarily to alleviate their own isolation and loneliness, to have their needs fulfilled by others, they become like a group of needy children, and the community is likely to fail. But if their vision and creativity is in service to the sacred, to God, to the larger common good, there is a better chance for a healthy and wise community to grow."*

When we serve one another or our wider world, we are connecting I believe with the divine, with that which is holy, helping to create heaven here on earth. Our ways of serving may be large or small – the huge sacrifice or the tiniest act of generosity and kindness – all are ways to say 'yes' I am part of something greater than myself,

## **Lewis Connolly's Induction, charge to the congregation – cont.**

'yes' I want this to be a better world for all, yes, yes, yes to life.

And in saying yes to life we are turned around once again from the wider world to this, the world of our community, our community that has its particular issues to deal with, its own particular, unique path of faith to walk. As a community of spirit we are making a bridge between the material and the spiritual elements of life. We are faced with never ending practical tasks of governing ourselves, managing our financial and other assets, taking care of the fabric of this historic building, taking care of one another, playing our essential part in the life of the community.

As your Unitarian community of spirit here in Ipswich celebrates and embarks upon this new stage of relationship with your minister Lewis Connolly, I wish you all well and I bless all the connections within your community that they may be strengthened through the powers of communication. May all of you remember that the task of a religious community is to live in right relationship with one another, with the wider world, and with that which you hold to be divine; to uncover the hidden connections between all peoples and all beings and to strive for justice for all. Alone our vision may be too narrow to see what needs to be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together our vision widens and our strength is renewed. And may it always be so. Amen.

*This address was given at Lewis' Induction service by Sarah Tinker*



Phil Chatfield and Ali Mercer send their best wishes. They are well settled now in their new home and share this photo of Ali going back down the hill to Lynton from Hollerday Hill on a walk with their dogs.

## **Poetry Group**

We are going to read poems by Rabindranath Tagore on 28th March at the new starting time of 1.45 in the Upper room. All welcome.

## **Birthdays in March**

Happy birthday to Joel Waller on 7<sup>th</sup>; to Jenny Pile on 24<sup>th</sup> and below is the photo of Beryl Beech celebrating her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in February.



Photo of Beryl cutting her cake – by Robert Waller.

## **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 27<sup>th</sup> March – to [ipswichunitarian@gmail.com](mailto:ipswichunitarian@gmail.com) or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS

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

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

## **Thought for the month**

Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.  
Norman Cousins