



Here's hoping ...

After a year of not being able to hold services in our Meeting House, we are starting to hope we may be able to return to base our services in the building (still sharing online too) sometime near the beginning of April. The work on altering the access to make it easier for people with a disability is progressing and the toilet installation is also coming along. We have held two socially distanced working parties to reclaim, to clean and to put all the stored items back in their places. There is more to do ... but we are moving nearer!

The Government restrictions allow services to take place now in religious buildings so long as people stay in their bubble with people they live with, stay socially distanced, the building is well-ventilated and all precautions are taken. We will follow all the advice before we open our doors.

Offering the services online via Zoom has been so successful that we will continue to do that too.

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Online services are important to me –

At a time when everything seems fragmented, when so many relationships have become estranged and where 'normal life' seems like a distant dream, it seems a paradox that over this past year I have felt more connected to this congregation than I have ever done. In large part this is due to the fact that I 'found' the Meeting House only shortly before I left Ipswich to come to London. I knew it was special when I walked in, and it has remained my spiritual home for over two decades - despite my attendances being irregular (particularly since the arrival of two children). Generally, there has always been a strong correlation between my attendance at the Meeting House and Ipswich Town playing at Portman Road. Over the past 5 years this has undoubtedly added a need for solemn reflection on Sunday morning! But I have always been in exile - yearning for the Suffolk skies, coast, fields and accents of my youth in a way which I don't think you 'get' unless you grew up here. But of all the things I miss about Ipswich, high on the list has always been the Meeting House - a place of peace, but imbued with a history of challenge and profound communion. And of course, our Meeting is so much more than a building - it's you lot! That is why I have felt physically present at the Meeting for a year now. I know for many people a service online is a pale imitation of the real thing, but for me the format of our services has brought us closer than sitting side by side in a box pew ever could. Seeing each other's faces every week, the laughter and even the tears, discussing the

Online services are important to me – cont.

topic of the service together - these have made our meetings feel a more shared experience. To have been able to do this with friends across the world has made it even more special. So when the time comes for you all to return to our incomparable Meeting House I will, like each and every one of us, offer a sincere prayer of gratitude - but I hope the lessons that we have learned over the past year will enable us exiles to join in, wherever we are, and help our congregation spread the light.

John Stevens – London

Joining the Zoom Ipswich Unitarian service was initially to support anyone unable to attend the meeting house because of shielding. It soon became part of my Sunday routine - the chance for some calm reflection with friendly and familiar faces, and the opportunity to reflect and broaden my perspectives in a time when everything has become closed in and locked down.

I particularly value the communion of silence....and my household values the 90mins without me nagging them to do something.

Gerrie Hudson – from Brighton UK

We've all been coping with the world of Covid for nearly a year now, and what a challenge it's been. As a retiree, I don't have the pressure of working from home or venturing out and braving exposure in an essential job. My finances are not affected and I've not been ill. For all this I'm grateful. Boredom is not a problem, either, thanks to plentiful big screen entertainment, books, and sewing projects. But I do sometimes struggle against the sense of isolation. Joining the Ipswich Unitarian worship services via Zoom is one of my best antidotes.

Although rising before the sun can be difficult, it is always worth the effort to share Sunday mornings with you. Putting my little digital rectangle among yours, those of you I've known for decades and

others met just recently, is a wonderful way to expand my focus. Every service contains elements that refresh my spirit. The sense of community is comforting. You helped me realize that there is life beyond the sometimes all-consuming arena of US politics. And the weekly visits let me monitor the latest developments in above-the-waist fashion in trendy East Anglia. Zooming with you adds spice to my pandemic dictated days. Thank you for being such a warm and welcoming congregation.

Dee DeRoche - USA

Craftsmen's quotes –

Over the past year many craftsmen have used their skills and worked their magic to mend, restore and rebuild our Meeting House building. Here some of them share their thoughts about what it has meant to them to work there –

As a local Ipswich 'boy' who has been aware of the Meeting House building for years, it has been a real pleasure to work locally and to put something back into the town. I get a real buzz from seeing the two Grade 1 listed buildings next to one another, so different and yet both so important. It has felt important to put the Meeting House back to what it was originally, to remove the steel work, to replace that with oak timber and to put the original lime wash back.

Mark Frankis – Site Foreman for Valiant

I have lived in Ipswich all my life and have been aware of the Meeting House building, but never knew what it was – it seemed quite mysterious. My mother-in-law used to clean there and said what a lovely building it was. I have enjoyed working on it – I started with the early work of putting in the lathes and was involved from start to finish of the plaster work, which gives me a sense of pride. It is a nice feeling to work on an old place like this – it puts a smile on your face – and it feels good that I will be able to walk past with my grandchildren and say 'I was part of that'. When I work on a building like this I try to work out how they built it and what the history is. It is fascinating to learn more about it.

Nigel Davies - Master Plasterer, working for G. Cooke and Sons

Craftsmen's quotes – cont.

Thank you for inviting me to comment on the Unitarian Meeting House project. As I said to Adrian and Mark, it was a great pleasure to work on such an historical building. Due to the Covid pandemic I worked long hours alone at weekends enjoying the feeling of calm in the building. I thought a lot about the lives of the craftsmen who first constructed it. Imagining what a hard life they must have had working by candlelight, with only basic clothing (no steel toe caps) and highly likely no consideration to health and safety either. I often wonder how the designs were drawn in those days without the benefit of large sheets of paper. This shows itself in the patterns of the lead lines, as the size of quarries vary greatly. I saw this most often in the geometric patterns, where the last part of the pattern would differ in order to make it up to the correct size. There were quite a few glass quarries with historic graffiti and it was interesting reading the names of previous glaziers. Interestingly there were quarries with window numbers indicating what was probably the original window plan. The numbers still corresponded making a logical plan to this day. I feel it's very important to keep restoring historic buildings using traditional methods and materials, leaving imperfections alone, they have character and are part of history. It was absolutely right to do minimal restoration to the leaded lights, adding to the building's history, rather than taking away from it. My belief is that modern day craftsmen and craftswomen should respect the work of previous craftsmen who worked on the building, preserving their work true to its original form. I hope you enjoy many more years in such a wonderful building.

Terry Lankester

LANKESTERS – Traditional Hand Made Leaded Lights

BH Electrical Ltd attended the Meeting House to do the electrical installation of a new fire alarm system and update some of the electrics.

Working in The Meeting House was not only a privilege to be part of the renovation of a 300 year old building, but the historical content of the meeting room is both moving and interesting.

The renovation work has been sympathetic to its history while ensuring it is brought in line with the health and safety requirements of the present day.

Mr James Rash Electrical Engineer for BH Electrical Ltd, Colchester

This has been an exceptional project for KLH to be involved with and I am really grateful to be able to be involved with undertaking works to a building of such historic architectural significance this early in my career. Through the investigations there has been a steep learning curve and required some quick and adaptive thinking to overcome some of the unforeseen (or rather unforeseeable) issues. The team from Valiant have been superb in every detail despite the obvious hurdles that 2020 put in place. Mark has been the foundation of this right from the start as the sole practitioner on site for several months! Phil has brought such a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the project which everyone has learned from regardless of their own age or experience, again it has been great to be a part of this team. The building itself has such an individual character which is owed not only to the original builders but the craftspersons who have since undertaken repair works to preserve the building in their own way. The journey of discovery through the initial investigations that KLH undertook, then more in depth once scaffolding had been erected and render removed was my personal highlight. We picked up a lot of graffiti (for lack of a better way to describe it) on the quarries - makers marks from those involved in construction of the original build to more recent restorations from the 1990s. Each one a moment in time that has contributed to the survival of the building.

Stuart Edgar – KLH Architects

We were pleased to be involved in the restoration and renovation of this historic and important property for the appreciation of future generations
Les Hopton – Contracts Manager for Valiant.



Craftsmen's quotes – cont.

We were thrilled to be the approved Joinery company to work on the Unitarian Meeting House restoration project. As a joinery company that has worked on a number of Heritage Buildings we understand the need to respect the fabric of the building through the use of high quality materials, and the use of traditional joinery methods. This not only preserves the look and feel of the building, but also ensures that it will stand the test of time. Douglas Fir was the main timber used to construct the Flush Casement Windows, Window Frames and various other items including Pentice Boards, Radius Arches and much more. We meticulously followed all architectural drawings and worked closely with the on-site team to provide all joinery on schedule. There is always a great sense of satisfaction and pride when working on such historic and beautiful buildings and the Unitarian Meeting House certainly ticks all those boxes. It is our responsibility to preserve these buildings for our future generations to visit and enjoy their beauty.

Precision Made Joinery

Services in March

7th - Rev John Midgley. Unitarian Minister (Ret'd) Yorkshire.

14th - Rev Sue Woolley. District Minister of the Midland Unitarian Association.

21st - Adam Whybray. Ipswich Unitarians.

28th - Carol Chambers. Horsham Unitarians & Worship Leader.

We very much appreciate the work and dedication people put into leading our services – thank you to you all.

Trustees Meeting

The next Trustees' Meeting will be held on Friday 5th March via Zoom.

If any member of the congregation has a significant comment or question(s) for the Trustees to consider, please contact the Secretary by Wednesday 3rd March – tessa@tessajordan.co.uk

We are keen to know of any concerns you may have.

Debating or Fighting?

Everyone probably knows how difficult it is to have not only civilized conversations on specific subjects but constructive and open debates. The following is a non-exhaustive list of really hot subjects easily triggering rage or even hysterical reactions: Imperialism, racism, Zionism, antisemitism, religious beliefs, progress, equality, gender issues, and so on. I would like to give an example from social media.

Recently the actress Seyi Omooba has lost a discrimination lawsuit against Curve Theatre in Leicester after being sacked for a specific post on social media dated 18th September 2014 and considered anti-gay. The post was shared on 15th March 2021 by Aaron Lee Lambert, an actor, who introduced it in the following way: "*@Seyiomooba Do you still stand by this post? Or are you happy to remain a hypocrite? Seeing as you've now been announced to be playing an LGBTQ character, I think you owe your LGBTQ peers an explanation. Immediately.*" To put it in context you need to know that the actress was due to play a stage performance of *The Color Purple* and the character she was due to play was lesbian and that was exactly the play she was dropped from.

Seyi Omooba posts a traditional Christian stance in relation to homosexuality. According to her, homosexuality is not right. To corroborate her view she makes two references to the Bible that I share with you, taking them from the New International Version:

"Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NIV

Debating or Fighting? Cont.

"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24 NIV)

Was Seyi Omooba a hypocrite as Aaron Lee Lambert supposed? Are you a hypocrite if you are right-wing and play a left-wing activist character? Are you a hypocrite if you are vegetarian but you play a hunter killing plenty of wild animals? Are you a hypocrite if you play a lesbian character but you think that homosexuality is wrong? Maybe it is about another kind of hypocrisy that I cannot get.

Aaron Lee Lambert attacked Seyi Omooba personally, taking for granted that she was homophobic without exploring and facing her religious and theological background, or her rationale. Moreover in some comments to the post you find offensive statements or stereotypes about the actress such as *"hateful creature"*, *"bigot"*, *"her toxic religious behaviour"*, *"small mind"*, *"she's far too indoctrinated"*, *"superstitious bigot"*, *"her vile homophobia"* etc.

If you want to read the comments you find them here:

<https://twitter.com/aleelambert/status/1106581724354539520>

Here is Seyi Omooba original post:

<https://twitter.com/aleelambert/status/1106581724354539520/photo/1>

This story has given me a lot to reflect on because in some cases, on or off-line, opinions are really polarised. Rage and indignation take over people's ability to listen and to think critically, above all when we debate on religion, gender, ethics and politics. We can think we are following lofty ideas such as truth, equality and justice but we may express just destructive feeling and our obsessive thoughts.

Daniele Falcinelli

Remembering ...



James Patrick Higgins

Jim died peacefully on the 29th January 2021 aged 79 years, at Ipswich Hospital.

Jim and his wife Gill moved to Ipswich to be closer to their family; in doing so, Horsham Unitarians lost a member and Ipswich Unitarians gained a regular attender. Prior to ill health, Jim attended the Meeting House regularly and between life threatening illnesses his presence in the pew was a testament to his determination to 'carry on as normal'. Jim enjoyed 'coffee time' after the service, his pleasure in discussing not only the service but almost anything and his interest in others led to considerable expression of views and, even with an opposing view, it would be made in a quiet manner along with a gentle smile and a verbal recognition that we all have our own opinions.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Gill and their children, Katie, Joanne and Jonathan.

George Southgate.

Several of you will know George, who along with Lesley, have for several years been regular and reliable 'sitters & welcomers' on Meeting House summer opening days. Within the past two weeks George became very ill and declined rapidly. He died on the 23rd February aged 79 yrs.

Our sympathy, thoughts and prayers reach out to Lesley, her family and the community of the Church of Latter Day Saints, where George has been a member for many years.

General Assembly Executive Committee Election

All members will now have received their ballot papers for the GA Executive Committee elections. Five candidates are standing and you each have four votes. Please return your papers to arrive no later than 23rd March 2021.

East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group

A meeting of the EAUWG will be held on Tuesday 9th March via Zoom.

The discussion subject will be '*What kind of group are we? What do we want to achieve?*'

The meeting welcomes and is open to Unitarian women from congregations in East Anglia or who are members of the National Unitarian Fellowship (NUF)

For further details please contact Linda King.

The **Unitarian & Free Christian Bible Discussion Group** is holding a series of four Bible Talks that take place between Lent and Pentecost, led by Rev Bob Janis-Dillon, Rev Mária Pap, Rev Stephen Lingwood, and Rev Sheena Gabriel. [Find out more.](#)

<https://www.unitarian.org.uk/?s=bible+talk> -

Suffolk Libraries

Do you have a card for Suffolk Libraries? The e-library is really handy during lockdown and it's free. It's easy to download e-books, audiobooks, newspapers and magazines and watch films, documentaries and courses or listen to music. [Suffolk Libraries Day Book Festival is from Saturday 20th March](#), with online "live" events, including discussions with writers Elly Griffiths, Bernard Cornwell, Nicci French and many more.

<https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/elibrary>

Book Group

The next meeting is on Thursday 8th April via Zoom from 19.00 – we will be discussing *Burnt Sugar* by Avni Doshi. All are welcome – contact Tessa for the link – tessa@tessajordan.co.uk

Snow in the Suburbs

by
Thomas Hardy

Every branch big with it,
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork like a white web-foot;
Every street and pavement mute:
Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back
upward when
Meeting those meandering down they turn and
descend again.
The palings are glued together like a wall,
And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.

A sparrow enters the tree,
Whereon immediately
A snow-lump thrice his own slight size
Descends on him and showers his head and eye
And overturns him,
And near inurns him,
And lights on a nether twig, when its brush
Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a
rush.

The steps are a blanched slope,
Up which, with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in.

Poem contributed by Rosemary Hamilton – as a
reminder of the snow here in February.

Lighthouse Women's Aid

Lighthouse Women's Aid is a charitable organisation based in Suffolk, providing support and advice to women, young people and children experiencing domestic abuse in their personal or family relationships. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in the UK will be affected by domestic abuse in their lifetime.

As a congregation we will be supporting this Local charity and raising money for them through the year.

Alternative Lord's Prayers -

Spirit of Life and Love, here and everywhere,
May we be aware of your presence in our lives.
May our world be blessed.
May our daily needs be met,
And may our shortcomings be forgiven,
As we forgive those of others.
Give us the strength to resist wrong-doing,
The inspiration and guidance to do right,
And the wisdom to know the difference.
We are your hands in the world; help us to grow.
May we have compassion for all living beings,
And receive whatever life brings,
With courage and trust.
Amen

Contributed by Alison Donald and taken from a service by the East Midlands congregation.

A version of the Lord's Prayer being wary of absolutes.

Oh knowledge that is larger than the world we know, we seek thee.
We strive to learn the principles of your good, believing they will triumph in the end here in our daily life as they will throughout the future of the Universe.
May our life on earth be sustained.
We believe we will survive longer if we learn the lessons of compassion and forgiveness.
We're bound to make mistakes, but trust that, learning from our mistakes, with luck and help from others, we will find our way back to the principles of your good.
We believe that these principles, as we know them today, will, eventually, win and survive as the force of good for future living beings.
Therefore, we are prepared put our faith in these and act accordingly.

by Martin A Gienke

A Blessing Prayer in Difficult Times

May you know tender shelter and healing blessing
when you are called to stand in the place of pain.
May the places of darkness within you be surprised by light.
May you be granted the wisdom to avoid false resistance and
when suffering knocks on the door of your life, may you be able to glimpse its hidden gift.
May you be able to see the fruits of suffering.
May memory bless and shelter you with the hard-earned light of past turmoil,
to remind you that you have survived before,
And though the darkness is now deep,
You will soon see approaching light.
May this give you confidence and trust.
May a window of light always surprise you.
May the grace of transfiguration heal your wounds.

by John O'Donohue

Read as a closing prayer at the Women's Group meeting

Prayer ascribed to the Prophet

Muhammad, from *Fragments of Holiness*

O God, give me light in my heart and light in my tongue
and light in my hearing and light in my sight
and light in my feeling and light in all my body
and light before me and light behind me.
Give me, I pray, light on my right hand
and light on my left
and light above me and light beneath me.
O Lord, increase light within me and
give me light and illuminate me.

Contributed by Alison Donald.

Poetry Group

The next meeting will be on Thursday 25th March at 2pm. The poet featured will be Christina Rossetti. In April the poet discussed will be Padraigh O'Tuma.

To join the group, contact Riena Jackson - mjack76748@aol.com

Birthdays in March

Happy birthday to Joel Waller on 7th and to Jenny Pile on 24th. May you have good celebrations. Happy wishes go again to John Ellis whose birthday straddles February and March on 29th of last month.

Friends of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House

A small band has been working on the initial stages of a Friends of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House Group. They have drafted some promotional material, a constitution and done other groundwork in preparation for a launch soon. Ann Baeppler has volunteered to be Secretary of this Group and is looking for other interested people to join her on the committee. If you have an interest in the future of the Meeting House, whether a member of the congregation or not, please contact Ann on annbaeppler@gmail.com to find out more.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

[Community Sponsorship](https://resetuk.org/community-sponsorship) is a refugee resettlement programme enabling you to welcome a refugee family to your neighbourhood and support them as they settle into their new life in the UK. <https://resetuk.org/community-sponsorship>



Events in March

Monday 22 March **ENCHANTED LAND** concert. Celtic harp, duduk, flute, voice + evocative readings. 7 - 9PM

Weds 3 + Fri 5 March, **DANCE for HEALTH:** easy enjoyable workshops. Daytime
Stefan offers easy movement and sound workshops to boost mental/emotional wellbeing. [2.30 Weds / 11 Fri]

Contact Stefan Freedman for more details - stefanandbethan@gmail.com



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 24th March 2021 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

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change. Charles Darwin