

BYOT – Build Your Own Theology

'Building Your Own Theology' is a ten part spiritual development course devised by Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert. It is focused upon individual participants taking stock of and developing their own theology through reference to Unitarian beliefs and practices, as well as other spiritual and religious teachings and traditions. While each theology is individual, each is developed in discussion and conversation with the other participants. There are readings and worksheets set between sessions that help facilitate this conversation. The course will be led by Dr. Adam Whybray, who has been a Humanities lecturer for the last eight years and has written and delivered several services and sermons for Ipswich Unitarians. We will be meeting in person on alternate Thursday evenings from 18:00 to 20:30, starting Thursday April 7th. Please email adamwhybray@gmail.com to express your interest in participating.

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Welcome to the new babies



Matilda Forsdike was born on 5th February – congratulations to parents Karl and Emily and to grandparents Tessa and David Forsdike.



Gryphon Bradbrook was born on 9th February to parents Zoe and Phillip Bradbrook – a brother for Edmund. Congratulations to all – including grandparents Robert and Hottensiah Waller.

Membership Service Welcome

On 30th January we celebrated our Membership Service. What a happy occasion it was in the Meeting House with the sun shining through the windows. Linda had put an engaging service together with meaningful readings and relevant hymns. She, Robert and Sandra spoke in turn about what membership of the MH has meant to them and Ann led the actual short ceremony to welcome Hilary Hamilton and Elizabeth Constable into the congregation. It was very special to see them commit themselves to become members of the congregation. Hilary who has been coming to the MH with her parents Rosemary and Ivan since she was a child has 'returned to the fold' after an absence of many years in another town. Liz is very much a newcomer to Ipswich and the British Unitarian movement and is still feeling her way into our congregation. We, as congregation, re-committed ourselves too in the ceremony to support each other with loving kindness towards each other and especially the new members "so that ye shall know peace and joy". After the service we had a lovely, shared membership lunch, the first one after two years of Covid, and very much enjoyed our haggis, neeps and tatties followed by Jenny's delicious chocolate soup! It was a Membership Sunday to remember.

Riena Jackson



Services in March

6th – led by Dr Nick Groves, Norwich Unitarians.

13th - led by Lizzie Kingston, Framlingham Unitarians

20th – led by Andrew Benedict, East of England Faiths Agency.

27th – led by Paulette Reed & Dr Liz Constable, Ipswich Unitarians – Mothering Sunday.

Request -

Liz Constable and Paulette Reed will lead worship on Mothering Sunday (27th March). We are asking those attending to bring a photograph of their child/children. Alternatively, please bring a photograph of yourself as a child. Those joining on zoom can have their photo to hand.

Recent Visitors ...

For many years now we have had days when we open the building and invite people to come inside. It is always a satisfying sensation when greeting and welcoming visitors as they enter the inner door their expression is always "W O W"! So often people are rushing from here to there and just don't have the time "to stand and stare". Then there are those who are 'Suffolk born and bred' and didn't even know the building existed – it's only been there for 322 years! Others believe it to be a private residence.

Following major restoration work, the effect of the pandemic and the various lockdowns and restrictions, we are slowly getting back into the groove of welcoming visitors to the Meeting House. Recently we had such a group, they were the 'Happy Snappers' - people who are handy with a camera.

I told them of the reasons for the Meeting House being built...its history since 1699 to the present – one of the oldest, Nonconformist, timber-framed, purpose-built place of worship in continuous use in the country. From the outside and on entering the building it is nothing like a church, so you need to recalibrate. Church/Chapel/Meeting House – what's the difference? Status, wealth or

Recent Visitors – cont.

governance is one answer, but there is so much more to it.

The 'Happy Snappers' were suitably impressed with the building, its history in the town, and what goes on within its walls, and spent a good while taking pictures, searching for centuries old graffiti, and asking questions.

Paulette Reed

We hope to have some of their photos to add to the newsletter later ... Ed.

As If Everything Were a Miracle

April launch of Peter Watkins' book

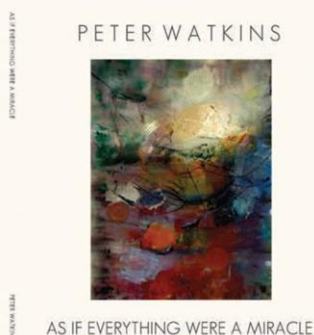
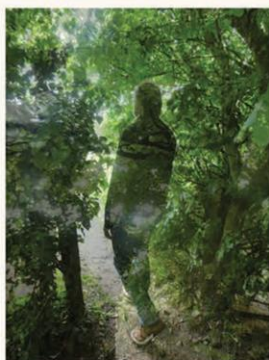
This beautifully produced and illustrated book is almost overwhelming in its simplicity. The poems lack all poetic pretensions but the images and thoughts sparkle like dew on the grass in the early morning. Each of these poems is the fruit of one man's solitary walks and meditations and are unlike any other poetry in their immediacy"

James Roose Evans, author of: Older - A Thought Diary; Inner Journey Outer

Journey; A Life Shared; and Blue Remembered Hills.

'As If Everything Were A Miracle' is Peter Watkins second published collection of poems with Eye Wild Books. The poems were written during the Covid Pandemic of 2020/21 and reflect deeply on the consolations of the natural world. Seen through a wider lens they are an exploration of what it means to be human and our interconnection with the more than human world.

www.eyewildbooks.com contact: carol@green-lantern.co.uk



A Personal Experience

Covert domestic abuse sometimes cannot easily be detected. It can consist of co-dependency, threats and gaslight bullying. I've been divorced for 13 years (on the grounds of his mental cruelty). The detrimental effects still impact me, (although life at times is much better).

When co-dependent relationships break up that balance is disrupted and collapses. Then gaslighting can occur. There can be accusations, blame, misunderstandings, misinterpretations heartbreak, exclusion, isolation, disempowerment.

Most things triggered my challenging memories. At first, a couple holding hands traumatized me.

And it's not easy to ask for help because my trust in humanity had been shattered. I was very alone, discredited. I'd lost my feeling of belonging anywhere. I didn't fit in - even more than before.

I knew my perspective had not been heard or had been overridden. I'd been given a false identity in my perception. The only person who was really available to help and support me was me.

From somewhere within myself I found the strength and resilience to keep myself reasonably balanced. I made so many mistakes but gradually I learnt from them.

I studied trauma techniques and reduced the intensity of negative challenging feelings, soothing my emotional wounds and scars. Then I found the ability to really empathize with others and I allowed others to have their own different opinions. But if they took actions that harmed me, I just removed myself from that situation.

The only person you can change is yourself and your perception of others and situations.

A Personal Experience – cont.

Nothing is rigidly fixed

Further to my email about covert domestic abuse, the reason my late husband used this behaviour was because before I met him prior to 1967 he had become homeless briefly. A man invited him to sleep on his sofa. Unfortunately though, my late husband was raped.

He was admitted to a mental hospital. The violation he felt manifested as violence. But he was in an old-type mental hospital. At one point he was stripped naked and put in a padded cell.

After our marriage he did not get help from the NHS for fear of being treated like that again.

There are few convictions for rape because the resulting mental illness is focused on, rather than the original unresolved violation and trauma.

An anonymous contribution from a reader of the Ipswich Unitarian.

We thank this person for sharing such a powerful and traumatic experience. Our work supporting Lighthouse is also about raising awareness of domestic abuse and we publish this article to share one person's pain as a true example.

We are all just a car crash,
A diagnosis,
An unexpected phone call,
A newfound love,
or a broken heart away
from becoming a
completely
Different
person.

How beautifully fragile are
we that so many things can
take but a moment
to alter
who
we are for
Forever ?

-Samuel Decker Thompson

fb/the idealist

Domestic Abuse Awareness

We held two awareness raising sessions in our Upper Hall last month. Katherine Ahluwalia spoke movingly and informatively about the issue of abuse and about what we can do to support women and men who are affected by it. We thank the Mayor Cllr Elizabeth Hughes for joining us for one of the sessions. All of us who attended were moved and some shocked by the statistics Katherine shared with us. If anyone would like to see the presentation slides from the sessions, please contact Tessa Forsdike.



Mayor Cllr Elizabeth Hughes with Katherine Ahluwalia.

Birthdays in March

Happy birthday wishes to Joel Waller on 7th and to Jenny Pile on 24th March. We hope you both have a great celebration!

Book Group

The Book Group meets next on Thursday 3rd March from 19.00 via Zoom to discuss 'Open Water' by Caleb Azumah Nelson. You are welcome to join us even if you haven't yet read the book – ask Tessa Forsdike for the link.

The Start of Lighthouse Women's Aid

by Deb Johnson

In December 1974, St John's Ward wanted to commemorate International Women's Day and had an initial idea of opening a Women's Refuge in Ipswich. On 13th March 1975 the Ipswich Borough Labour Party meet and discuss the proposal, and on 3rd April 1975 the initial application for the house was submitted and 13th November 1976 the Ipswich Women's Refuge is opened to residents.

Backed by a grant of £2,500.00 and a workforce of 10 volunteers, Argyle Street became operational, with the first resident arriving with her child on the 28th November 1976. Referrals were very different in 1976, most of the women accessing the Refuge were from the Ipswich area and could just arrive at the door. Therefore this meant they were easily found by the perpetrators who could just turn up at the door and demand to see their victims. Referrals were also made mainly by Doctor's and Council Services or by other Refuges from around the country.

Whilst housed at the Refuge, the volunteers would assist the residents with benefit applications, court support, job centre meetings and would provide informal well-being support as well. The Refuge was furnished mainly with second hand furniture that was donated by individuals, the Ipswich Furniture Project or was collected by volunteers after car boot sales, making use of any furniture that was not sold.

To date the refuge has housed 4,065 women.

In November 2000 Lighthouse Women's Aid backed with a £455,000.00 Lottery grant, opened a new purpose built refuge, with room for 15 families, a playroom and associated offices.

Staff now include dedicated Welfare Workers, Children's Workers, a Resettlement Worker and a Housekeeper all helping the women and families when they flee to Refuge. With the Refuge being a secure location it is now a much safer place for women and children to come.

Referrals are now made from a much wider variety of services, these still include self referrals from women, but also Schools, Health Care Professionals, Social Workers and the Police, amongst others who can

access refuge spaces.

During their time in the Refuge, residents can also make use of the many other services provided. These include nutritional cookery classes with a qualified Cook, emotional and practical support from the dedicated team. The Children's Workers provide a range of parenting courses and play sessions for the children as well as linking in with schools to ensure the children transition into their new school as smoothly as possible.

Working closely with the Women's Centre, residents have access to courses such as the Freedom Programme and Power to Change. These are educational toolkits which explore the impacts of domestic abuse, this also enables them to meet other women outside the refuge. Residents can also attend the monthly well being sessions, these have included: February Facials, Easter Bakes, CV Writing and Christmas Wreath Making. As well as our wonderful Reconnect programmes for mums and their children. Once residents are ready to move on from refuge they are fully supported by our Resettlement Worker.

To date the refuge has housed 5,277 children



The first refuge in Argyle Street in 1976



The current modern facilities in the new refuge.
Article reproduced from the Lighthouse newsletter.

Going Green(er)...

We are all aware of the damage discarded plastic is having on our environment at every level and thereby on ourselves. To this end I had the idea that we might stop using the green plastic oasis in our flower arrangements at the Meeting House. But what could we have as a sustainable, less harmful alternative? Then it came to me: whenever I'm out walking I always manage to find and pick up a pebble or two, and over time I have collected quite a few. So, next time you are out-and-about see what you can find and bring it to the mix. These pebbles/stones should, ideally, be no bigger than a medium sized egg. We can use them instead of oasis for holding the stems of the flowers. The major work of saving our planet is to be done by governments and industries but if we do our little bits, join them all together then it will make a difference. If you have any other suggestions please let me know.

Paulette Reed

Ukraine Support

https://help.rescue-uk.org/ukraine-crisis-se?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=fy22_ukraine&utm_content=ukraine1&gclid=CjwKCAiApfeQBhAUEiwA7K_UH6FyOW27xnNsKYxCMdjiXtO10ztPPurfpVy8O6PN4JaAp7IF4toSvBoCHtkQAvD_BwE

Instructions for Life from the Dalai Lama

- 1 - Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risks.
- 2 - When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
- 3 - Follow the three R's: Respect for self, Respect for others, Responsibility for all your actions.
- 4 - Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.
- 5 - Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly.
- 6 - Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
- 7 - When you realise you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
- 8 - Spend some time alone every day.
- 9 - Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.
- 10 - Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
- 11 - Live a good, honourable life - then when you get older and think back, you'll be able to enjoy it for the second time.

12 - A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your happiness.

13 - In disagreements with loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don't bring up the past.

14 - Share your knowledge. It's a way you achieve immortality.

15 - BE GENTLE WITH THE EARTH

16 - Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.

17 - Remember that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.

18 - Judge success by what you had to give up in order to get it.

19 - Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.

The Dalai Lama 2000

Published in the Stockton Unitarians' newsletter

Contribution?

If you are connected to our Meeting House in any way and wish to make a financial contribution, our bank details for a transfer are – IBAN GB72BUK40253181421980; Branch Identifier Code HBUKGB4114U; Bank – HSBC; Account 81421980; Sort code 40-25-31.

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 Tuesday 29th March 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

Motivation is like food for the brain. You cannot get enough in one sitting. It needs continual and regular refills. - Peter Davies