

Ipswich

Unitarian Meeting



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October 2020

YOUR MEETING HOUSE NEEDS YOU

Some of you may remember reading in the August edition of our newsletter that new Trustees will need to be elected at our next AGM on 8th November. The five present and long-serving Trustees were all due to retire three years ago, but opted to continue because there wasn't a queue of people putting themselves forward for election but also because there were such important issues facing the Meeting House, not least the restoration project.

Now that the restoration is on its way to being finished, Riena, Andrew and I will be stepping down at the next AGM. Linda King and Paulette Reed have very generously agreed to stand for re-election, but this means that there will still be FOUR Trustee vacancies. If you have been a member of the Meeting for at least one year (a stipulation of our bylaws), please will you consider standing for election? (If you'd like to know more about what is involved, please do feel free to get in touch.) Ann Baepler (Chair of Trustees)

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Nominations for Trustees

Following on from Ann writing about the need for new Trustees, I am looking forward to receiving nominations by the 30th of October, which is 10 days before our congregation Annual General Meeting on 8th November.

Please could you send me the name of the member you are nominating together with your name and the name of a second member who is supporting your nomination. This in accordance with the bylaws.

Riena Jackson (Secretary to the Trustees)

mjack76748@aol.com

Harvest Festival

On 11th October we will be holding a service to celebrate the Harvest. No doubt it will be an uplifting service with contributions by several members, but particularly on this special day we will all miss the Meeting House with its autumnal decorations and displays, including Jenny's harvest mouse.



Jenny's Harvest display in 2019

Harvest Festival – cont.

In the past we have brought food to the Meeting House that we then have donated to the Women's Refuge in Ipswich. The Refuge has always been very appreciative of our gift and it would be a shame if they have to miss out this year due to Covid. You are therefore invited to drop off any food contribution you may want to give at my door rather than the Meeting House by Saturday 10th October and I then will take it to the Refuge. However, this may be far too difficult for many of you, so alternatively you are invited to donate (by 6th October please) some money with which I then can buy food and deliver it to the Refuge. You can either send me your contribution through the post (R.Jackson, 2 Vere Gardens, Ipswich IP1 4NZ) or you can just email me (mjack76748@aol.com) with a promise that you are happy to donate a certain amount. I will ask you for that money once we are back in the Meeting House.

Riena Jackson

Online Shopping

My sister Peggy decided to order her grocery shopping online when her daughter Louise went on holiday. My sister and her husband are both in their nineties. The shopping duly arrived. When checking and putting away the groceries my sister found one solitary mushroom at the bottom of the basket. She delighted in telling me and we laughed together. *'What can I do with one mushroom?'* We laughed again and I said, *'I will send you a recipe.'*

Recipe: Serves 2

Finely slice THE mushroom, sauté in butter, garlic and cream. On warm plates place rounds of lightly toasted sourdough, cover with sauce, and dress with assorted salad leaves.

- Fill two glasses with chilled white wine.
- Call Husband.
- Light candle.
- Bon appetit.
- Use leftovers for soup.

Rosemary Hamilton

Have you received an odd online shopping ingredient ?

Gospels, Gnostics and the Growth of the Early Church

Over the past five weeks, courtesy of Zoom, I have been able to join Ipswich Unitarians in a course on "Gospels, Gnostics and the Growth of the Early Church" led by Cliff Reed. It was good to see so many people taking part in these sessions, demonstrating that Unitarians are keen to improve their "religious literacy".

It would be impossible to attempt a summary of Cliff's lectures which would do justice to their content and I will therefore limit myself to a very brief overview. Participants have been provided with the full text of the talks which is a meaty read and shows just how much work went into their preparation. I am sure that further copies can be sent to any members of the Ipswich congregation who were interested in the lectures but unable to attend.

Cliff began his lectures by pointing out how little we actually know about the life of Jesus. Most people who know anything about the beginnings of early Christianity have in their minds a rudimentary summary which goes something like "Jesus went around Palestine teaching and healing followed by twelve apostles, fell foul of the Jewish and Roman Authorities and was crucified. After three days he was raised from the dead and was then taken up into heaven". This account is gleaned from the New Testament - the four Gospels (which are not histories or biographies), the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul, the "archetypal convert."

But this is far too simplistic. The story of how Christianity developed from a small Jewish movement inspired by a wandering preacher into the Universal Faith of the Western World is complex. Cliff told us that in preparing his lectures he came across the names of thirty different versions of Christianity active in the days of the first Christian communities. The most important of these, and the main rival to the developing 'mainstream', were the Gnostics, a mysterious and heretical sect with its own bewildering variety of theological beliefs and sacraments. It would be extremely difficult to give a comprehensive account of Gnostic Christianity but there are certain main themes, the crucial one being the idea of "gnosis", a divinely revealed knowledge that would enable human beings to know God. What is perhaps

Gospels, Gnostics and the Growth of the Early Church – cont.

particularly attractive about the Gnostics for a twenty-first century audience (particularly those with feminist inclinations) is that they gave an honoured place to women.

The story of Christianity's development is still changing as scholars come up with new hypotheses and new documents are unearthed.

Perhaps the most important find in this context was the discovery of a hidden cache of early gnostic texts in a cave in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. Scholars were aware that there were many texts circulating in the early years of the Christian story which had been lost. The discovery at Nag Hammadi enabled a major advance in knowledge. The find included the Gospel of Thomas, which consists of the sayings of Jesus, which has attracted wide interest from scholars and lay people alike. Other lost gospels found at different times include the Gospel of Mary (Magdalene), and the Gospel of Judas.

Cliff devoted his second lecture to reminding us of the process by which scholars agree that the four Gospels of the New Testament were written. Matthew and Luke drew on Mark (the earliest Gospel) and supplemented this with material from a hypothetical lost Gospel of Sayings known as Q (German for Quelle – source). John, the last Gospel to be written, is very different in character and may include some gnostic elements.

The earliest writings in the New Testament are the Epistles of Paul, dating from 50 CE. Of the fourteen (if we include Hebrews) Epistles there is general academic consensus that only seven were actually written by Paul. What we know of his missionary journeys, which spread the faith into the gentile communities around the Mediterranean, is found in Acts, probably written by the author of Luke, and it is from Acts that we learn about the fledgling churches to whom Paul wrote his letters. In Acts we can also see the beginnings of a hierarchy in the first Christian communities.

There was no agreed official Christian doctrine in the first two hundred years of Christianity but increasingly many felt the need for one. The group responsible for this effort are now known as the Apostolic Fathers. Among their writings we find "The Shepherd of Hermas" which attempts to draw up a bureaucratic scheme aimed at preventing backsliding and apostasy. Two other works by the Apostolic Fathers, the First Letter of Clement to the Corinthians and the Letter of Barnabas, nearly made it into the official canon of the New Testament finally agreed in the fourth century.

Another document, produced by the Apostolic Fathers, the Didache, or teaching of the Twelve Apostles, gives a picture of early Christian practice including the procedures for Baptism and the Eucharist. Cliff mentioned that he was particularly fond of the Didache and I would be interested to know more about his reasons.

The final session of the lectures introduced us to the Infancy Gospels which are imaginative accounts of the childhood of Jesus. This kind of creative filling-in of the gaps in the Gospel accounts is also found in the Nativity Stories in Matthew and Luke, showing how important it is not to interpret the Scriptures literally.

Cliff offered his lecture series without charge but expressed the hope that participants might consider making donations to the Chapel's building Restoration Fund. Judging by their comments at the end of the course, I feel confident that everyone will make a donation as a token of appreciation. It is my hope (shared by other participants) that we might persuade Cliff to lead another course on a topic of his choosing. Speaking personally, I shall miss our weekly Tuesday evening gatherings.

Carol Palfrey

Octagon Chapel

SHCT Ride and Stride

On Saturday 12th September we gathered outside our Meeting House to welcome the Riders and Striders from local churches who were raising sponsorship in aid of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust. Our stalwart supporters Lesley and George Southgate came to sign the register and we thank them very much. Riena Jackson lent us her gazebo (in case of rain) which almost blew away in the wind but was rescued in time! Paulette Reed and Tessa Forsdike were also there to welcome visitors. In total we had 59 visitors, which is many fewer than in 'normal' years, but was a good representation, perhaps helped by the fact of us being very central in the town.

Linda King, Sandra and Malcolm Hawes were our riders and striders and we thank them for their efforts.

Thanks too to Rosemary Hamilton who is our local organiser and who will return all the forms and monies.

Charities

Firstly I would like to thank everyone who sponsored Linda, Sandra and me for the Suffolk Historic Churches Ride and Stride event held on Saturday 12 September. As Linda said last Sunday, if anyone missed sponsoring us it is not too late. A cheque made out to Suffolk Historic Churches Trust could be sent Rosemary Hamilton and she can include it with ours and Linda's contribution. It is not too late to contribute and half of the money raised by people from the Meeting House comes back to us!

St Elizabeth Hospice

You may recall that in February Ipswich Unitarian I asked people to comment on our long-standing Mulled Wine and Mince Pie event. I asked whether in your view this event has run its course. If you want it to continue or if anyone has a fresh new way to raise money for the hospice, please contact us.

The Meeting House has been given a lot of money from grants for the restoration work and it

seems important that we as a congregation should contribute to a local charity.

It now seems unlikely that we will be back in the Meeting House before 2021 therefore we need to think of a new, New Year or perhaps spring event, to raise money for the Hospice if you consider we should continue to raise money for them.

Perhaps we could discuss this after a service to float some ideas in the coming weeks?

Malcolm Hawes

Grant Update

Last month we were pleased to learn that the Lord Belstead Charitable Settlement have agreed to grant us £2000 towards our second project to install toilet facilities in the entrance to the Meeting House. Three more grant applications are in the pipeline and if these are successful, we are hopeful that we will raise enough funds to complete the work. Our Property Manager Phil Chatfield will be reviewing the projects again very soon and will be able to update us on the outstanding work.

Unfortunately there was a slight hitch in the progress of the restoration work in September when it was found that the wrong corner tiles had been ordered and delivered for the roof. We hope this will not delay the project too much.

Book Group

Our next meeting of the Book Group will be on Thursday 15th October at 7pm – via Zoom. We will discuss 'Happiness' by Aminatta Forna. If you would like to join us, you are welcome (even if you haven't finished the book – or just want to know what we think about it before deciding whether to read it) – just let Tessa Forsdike know and she will send you the link.

Bury St Edmunds Unitarian Meeting House - Monograph and Calendar

Explore the detail and events of the Bury St Edmunds Unitarian Meeting House all year round with the 2021 Unitarian Meeting House **Calendar** (A4 and A3 sizes). The meeting house is a Grade I listed, magnificent early 18th C treasure, and recognised as a building of local and national importance.

A Very Special Building is a 16-page full colour monograph, packed with illustrations, and written by local conservation architect Peter Riddington.

In the booklet Peter details what makes the building so distinctive: its particular cultural, historical and architectural significance.

The calendars and monograph, *A Very Special Building*, are on sale for £9 each or £15 if you purchase both together. Proceeds go to the Friends of the Unitarian Meeting House for the maintenance of the building.

They are available from Martin Gienke (martin@gienke.net) or from Martin Lightfoot (lightfoot@freebie.net) Chantry House, 5 Hatter Street, B.S.E. Cheques payable to 'Unitarian Meeting House' or bank transfer - sort code 20-12-21 acct 83804879.

Please include your name and 'mono/calendar' within the reference.

Nightingale Centre Fighting Fund Update

A huge thank you to everyone who has responded to my appeal to support our precious Nightingale Centre during the Coronavirus crisis. At the time of writing, the Fighting Fund, as it has been named, has raised almost £23,000 - a magnificent total which shows how highly we all value our Unitarian Centre and the lovely staff who look after us when we stay there. The Fund has provided a vital source of cash flow during a very difficult period. Most important is the huge encouragement and support it has given to the Members of the Management Committee who are working so hard to keep the Centre in

business. That's the good news.

The bad news is that there is no prospect of a return to anything like normal at the Centre for the foreseeable future. The Centre remains closed until November at the earliest. When it does reopen there will be complicated restrictions to protect guests from the virus which will severely limit the number of guests that can be accommodated. Also, the limited government help which has been available is coming to an end. Consequently, it will take a very long time to build the business back to any kind of sustainability. This means that we need to keep on supporting the Fighting Fund as much as we can.

I know that some people have suffered severe financial difficulties during the lockdown. Please do not make things worse for yourself and your family if that is the case for you. Many of us, however, have been fortunate enough to retain our income and, being locked in at home, we have saved money that we would have spent on our normal activities, including events at the Centre. If you are in this position please bear in mind that the need for the Fighting Fund is going to continue for a long time to come.

I am acutely aware that there are other worthwhile organisations facing similar severe difficulties due to Covid-19 and those of us who can are doing our best to support them. This is also important. All I am asking is that you keep Nightingale on your priority list.

Regular donations, however small, are particularly welcome because they reduce the amounts that the Centre has to draw from its limited reserves to stay in business. Most important, it will help the Management Committee to safeguard the staff members, that we all value so much, as the furlough scheme winds down.

Stay safe and stay well.

Yours in fellowship,

David Warhurst

(Former Chair of the Management Committee, from 1976 to 1990), email: hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk

Please make cheques payable to The Nightingale Centre and post to: The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, BUXTON, Derbyshire SK17 8RH or pay by bank transfer to: The Nightingale Centre; Sort code 40-52-40; Account Number 00017812. If you are a tax payer please consider Gift Aiding your donations.

Thank you

Services in October

Thank you to all volunteers who are offering their services to cover our online Zoom services during these challenging times – and to Linda King who is co-ordinating them.

Here are the service leaders for October -

4th - Adam Whybray - Ipswich Unitarians

11th - Harvest Festival - Ann Baeppler - Ipswich Unitarians

18th - Linda King - Ipswich Unitarians

25th - Paul Hubbard - Lancs. Collaborative Ministry

Birthdays in October

Happy birthday to Maggie Hodges on 17th; Isaac Shaikh on 18th; Sandra Hawes, Louis Hawes and Edmund Bradbrook on 25th and Andrew Gibbs on 27th.

We hope you all manage to celebrate in your groups of six!

Pastoral Care

During this time without a Minister, Ann Baeppler has volunteered to be a resource for people who may need to talk through a problem or who need some pastoral support. Please contact her on 01473 327089 or annbaeppler@gmail.com in full confidentiality.

Time for a Chat?

Miranda McIntosh is now fully settled in her flat in Hadleigh, but because of the Covid-19 restrictions, she is unable to go out or to have visitors (except by special arrangement and outside). She would welcome a phone call for a chat and the evening after 7pm is the best time to call her on 01473 912877.

Wedding Plans

Claire Johnson and Henry's plans for their wedding are going forward and although it may be affected by the Covid restrictions, they hope to stream the service so that we can all share in it.

The Lord's Prayer

(translation directly from Arabic to English)

O cosmic Birther of all radiance and vibration
Soften the ground of our being and carve out a space
within us where your presence can abide.

Fill us with your creativity so that we may be
empowered to bear the fruit of your mission

Let each of our actions bear fruit in accordance with
our desire.

Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share what
each being needs to grow and flourish.

Untie the tangled threads of destiny that bind us,
As we release others from the entanglement of past
mistakes.

Do not let us be seduced by that which would divert us
from our true purpose,
But illuminate the opportunities of the present
moment.

For you are the ground and the fruitful vision, the
birth, power and fulfilment,
As all is gathered and made whole once again.

Amen

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 28th October by email 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

Wisdom comes with age - but some of us just have to make do with age. – Anon