



## Restoration at our Meeting House

How quickly things change ... in our last newsletter we were pleased to see the builders move in to start work on restoring our historic building. Now all work has had to stop and the site is being shut down until there is further advice about the Corona virus and how we can restrict the spread. It is a sad but inevitable delay. Mark, the Site Foreman, assures us that depending on the length of the stoppage there may be little delay to the Restoration Project.



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## In these challenging times...

While the last service (for the time being) was being held in the Upper Room, 11 of us met online for our first “Zoom” service, kindly organised by Adam Whybray. We were joined by John Stevens from his home in London and Gerrie Hawes from Brighton. I lit a chalice candle with the words used by Linda in the Upper Room and added “*It is truly a blessing to be, it is truly a blessing to be here now, it is truly a blessing to be here now together*”. It certainly felt like a blessing for us to be able to have this contact with each other.

We were able to enjoy readings, prayers (including the Prayer for Peace requested by Malcolm), and some silence, as well as a recording of Poulenc’s “Salve Regina” chosen by Riena in recognition of it being Mothers’ Day. I ended the service with the following John O’Donohue Blessing:

*May the nourishment of the earth be ours, may the clarity of light be ours, may the fluency of the ocean be ours, and may a slow wind work around us an invisible cloak to mind our life.*

And at Gerrie Hawes’ suggestion, we had coffee “together” afterwards too during which we chose the theme for the next service. We will all I know be nurtured by meeting in this way until life reverts to “normal” and may we all keep well and positive. Ann Baepler

**All future services will be held via a Zoom connection on the internet. To be sure of being invited to be part of these services, please let Adam Whybray know by email - [adamwhybray@googlemail.com](mailto:adamwhybray@googlemail.com)**

## Face to Face v Coronavirus

The oldest, timber-framed, purpose-built, Non-conformist place of worship in the country in continuous use...until now! We've had infestation of death-watch beetle, wood worm, dry rot, damp rot and flood. But this new virus has stopped us in our tracks.

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March we held our last service for the foreseeable future in the vicinity of our beloved Meeting House. Nine of us gathered in the Upper Room for a poignant circle service devised and led by Linda King. It being Mothering Sunday we had readings on the topic of mothering and mothers, including a "Prayer for all who mother" – those who tend and care for others – with or without any biological link and interspersed with hymns and reflective music. Excerpts read from the message from General Assembly President, Rev Celia Cartwright, gave much encouragement and hope for the future in this fearful and uncertain time and ended thus "With love and beautiful blessings". So very different from previous Mothering Sundays at the Meeting House when we handed out posies of freshly picked primroses from Christine Hyde's garden, miniature bars of soap or seeds planted in pots to be fed and watered and wait and see what comes up. Just like bringing up children!

At the same time but in the virtual world another group were also worshipping via ZOOM using some of the same material as a symbolic link.

Stay safe and keep well.

*Paulette Reed*

## Support for our Community

With the impending spread of the corona virus, should anyone associated with our community become infected we want them to be able to access support, whether practical or emotional. In case of need, contact Riena Jackson on 01473 210064 and we will make every effort to arrange help!

During our Zoom meeting, Jodi Warren suggested that all members & attenders who wished to could share their contact details with each other and also list any help they could offer or alternatively specify any help they might need.

*Please let me know if you would like to be part of this contact group.* If so, please let me have a contact telephone number, what help you might be willing to offer and/or what help you need/might need.

*Ann Baepler*

## Thoughts on the Changes ...

This morning, Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, I left my place in Westerfield Road and went downhill to join the congregation at the Meeting House. Just past the Woolpack pub on my left I had a depressing view of its courtyard: every bench, chair and table had been moved away and left empty space. As you probably know, from now on the congregation is going to meet on Zoom, an online platform, and the last traditional meeting has happened just today in the Upper Room due to the measures in place for the pandemic. Although I appreciate everyone that has been working to make the online meeting possible I see it as an expedient and not a substitute of Sunday worship. It is the same difference between watching and listening to opera at the cinema or going to the theatre. However the virus will pass and we will really meet together again, have biscuits and coffee again, and face-to-face chats.

Daniele Falcinelli

## Prayer for our Meeting House

At John Stevens' Service 'Whatever Love Means' on 16<sup>th</sup> March, he read the following prayer for our congregation and Meeting House -

*God of love, you inhabit this place as you inhabit our hearts*

*Your presence is seeped deep in the very fabric of this building that surrounds us, that has borne witness to centuries of community, dissent and prayer.*

*Your house here has inspired us, has connected us to you, has been (and will be) a centre of spiritual thought and practice. A haven.*

*But we are more than this building. This precious thing we have will follow us to our temporary home. And return back with us in short time.*

*God, we ask for your blessing on our community in Ipswich, that it may grow; that we may grow; in wisdom and love, as we follow our unending quest to know the unknowable.*

*Amen*

## Restoration Fund collection from April 2019 to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020

	Donations	Bits & Bobs
April	£ 13.48	£ 42.00
May	£ 213.00	£ 11.50
June	£ 175.97	£ 20.00
July	£ 20.40	£ 8.60
August	£ 716.11	£ 56.80
September	£ 772.74	£ 43.30
October	£ 250.00	£ 22.00
November	£ 491.00	£ 16.00
December	£ 60.04	£ 69.40
January	£60.00	£ 29.20
February	£ 59.15	£ nil
March	£ 241.53	£ 16.30
	<b>£3073.42</b>	<b>£ 335.10</b>

Maggie Hodges has been collecting broken and/or unwanted jewellery to sell in aid of our Restoration Fund. Thank you to Maggie, Paulette and Tessa who have raided the corners of their jewellery boxes to find items for sale and between them have raised a total to date of £992.00. Thank you especially to Maggie who organises this option.

We do still need to raise further funds for the extra work of the toilet and easy access to our Meeting House. Linda and Tessa have been working on further grant applications and hope they will be successful. Due to the current restrictions, we cannot hold any fundraising events or have our Bits and Bobs charity table.

So we are extra reliant on donations via our JustGiving page. If you can pass on this link, please do -

<https://www.justgiving.com/unitarianipswich>

Thank you.

## PRIDE Quiz

As one of our last social events, we sent a team (and a half) to take part in the PRIDE quiz at the end of February. We had fun, didn't come first or last (we think) and contributed to raising £700, half of which will be donated to Suffolk MIND and the rest will help Suffolk PRIDE cover costs for the next PRIDE March.



The event was so popular, it was a squash to fit everyone in, which before the Corona restrictions was permitted!

## Services in April

All services will now be held via a Zoom connection on the internet. Adam Whybray is holding the list of emails from people who may like to join us some or every Sunday at 10.45am. Let him know if you are not already on his list and you would like to be - [adamwhybray@googlemail.com](mailto:adamwhybray@googlemail.com)

Jodi Warren has volunteered to anchor the service on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March on the theme of Communication and Community. If you would like to contribute, please email her (asap) on - [jodicoats@gmail.com](mailto:jodicoats@gmail.com)

## Birthdays in April -

Happy birthday to Miranda McIntosh on 3<sup>rd</sup>; Kate Gray on 5<sup>th</sup>; Morag Blue on 6<sup>th</sup>; Rev Cliff Reed on 12<sup>th</sup>; David Forsdike on 19<sup>th</sup>; Sheila Seal on 21<sup>st</sup>; Rosemary Hamilton on 26<sup>th</sup>

**Events** – sadly no events can happen in person, but here is advance notice of an exhibition on Thomas a Becket (mentioned by Cliff in a service recently) which opens at the British Museum from 15<sup>th</sup> October this year.

## Happy Spring Equinox!

Apart from the fact winter is officially over, this is probably not a great time to be launching a Crowdfunding campaign ... but as a churchwarden said to me in a church the other day, *'we all need some music in our lives right now.'* There may be no more concerts for several months, so here's some music you can help to create that doesn't involve any mass gatherings

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/suffolk-church-recording>

As many of you know, in April 2017 I started a (slightly crazy?) adventure: playing my cello in all of Suffolk's 500 medieval churches (*including our own Meeting House in June 2018 - Ed*). I have now visited 423 churches, and I am planning to record a CD of solo cello music in a medieval church this summer, in time for the completion of my project in September (coronavirus permitting). It will include two Bach cello suites and a commissioned piece by Benjamin Ellin.

It would mean so much to me to be able to go ahead with this recording and the commission this year rather than having to wait until after the end of my project ... and your involvement would be so greatly appreciated. Whether that takes the form of helping me to get the word out via email, social media and word of mouth, or pre-ordering the download or CD, everything will make a huge difference. Please visit my Crowdfunding page to find out more, and to see what other rewards you can choose, from live cello music (once the coronavirus crisis is past!) to tickets to my final concert in Orford church.

Whatever support you feel able to give will be extra specially appreciated in these uncertain times and will contribute to a lasting celebration of music in Suffolk's churches.

Thank you so much!  
Stay well and stay safe.

Yalda Davis

You can find out all about my Suffolk church project at:

[www.crosswaysfarm.co.uk/suffolk-churches](http://www.crosswaysfarm.co.uk/suffolk-churches)

## Poetry Group News

We looked at the poetry of Joy Harjo, the American poet laureate at our meeting in February and all found her poetry moving and powerful. Here is one for you to enjoy:

### Eagle Poem

To pray you open your whole self

To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon

To one whole voice that is you.

And know there is more

That you can't see, can't hear;

Can't know except in moments

Steadily growing, and in languages

That aren't always sound but other

Circles of motion.

Like eagle on that Sunday morning

Over Salt River. Circled in the blue sky

In wind, swept our hearts clean

With sacred wings.

We see you, see ourselves and know

That we must take the utmost care

And kindness in all things.

Breathe in, knowing we are made of

All this, and breathe, knowing

We are truly blessed because we

Were born, and die soon within a

True circle of motion,

Like eagle rounding out the morning

Inside us.

We pray that it will be done

In beauty.

## **An Urgent Appeal on behalf of the Nightingale Centre**

Following the government's decision to instruct us all to avoid "non-essential" travel and contact with others and people in at-risk groups to stay home for 12 weeks, our much-loved Unitarian meeting place in Derbyshire - **The Nightingale Centre** - is facing a desperately difficult situation. Along with hotels, restaurants, theatres, pubs, and the like up and down the country, the Centre is facing the prospect of multiple cancellations and a virtual shutdown of the business. All business up to the end of May has already been cancelled which will result in a very significant loss of income. The jobs of the staff, who look after us all so well, are on the line. If the crisis continues beyond May it could wipe out all the Centre's carefully built up reserves. There may now be some help from the government for the staff but it won't come quickly and it won't be enough to compensate for the loss of income.

This message is sent entirely on my own initiative.

*Why?* you might ask. In 1972 when the General Assembly took over responsibility for what was then known as *The Unitarian Holiday and Conference Centre* I was one of a small group of (then!) young Unitarians appointed by the GA to manage the Centre, and I chaired the Committee for 14 years. The Centre was badly run down and business was rock bottom at 11% occupation.

We fought tooth and nail, with no resources, to gradually improve the Centre and build up the business. We had enough success for the Hibbert Trust - some 16 years later - to make the substantial grant which transformed the building into the lovely facility we enjoy today. Our brilliant Manager, Stella Burney, her staff and the Management Committee have continued to make many more improvements, building on the great work done by previous managers, especially Liz Shaw and Julie Dadson. The business has been built up to such a level that we all know we have to book months or years ahead to find a gap in the programme!

A wide range of top-class Unitarian events take place at the Centre - the Youth Programme, Unifest, weekend conferences for Unitarian groups and societies, and - not least - the many holiday weeks for disadvantaged children provided by the Send A Child to Hucklow Fund. It is also our Unitarian World

War 1 Memorial. The Centre plays a vital role in our movement and is much-loved by young and old alike. All in all it's a great Unitarian success story ... **But all that hangs in the balance because of the Coronavirus restrictions.** I want to see the Nightingale Centre continuing to serve Unitarians for many years to come. I don't want to see all the hard work that got it to where it is today going to waste. Above all I want us to do all we can to safeguard the jobs of our dedicated staff members. My appeal is supported by **The Foy Society, The Northern Unitarian Association** and **Stockton Unitarians.** **What can we do?**

There will soon be an almost painless opportunity to give to the Centre. We are all greatly disappointed at the news that the GA meetings have been cancelled. We can't go against the government measures which are necessary to protect all of us. On the 'plus' side, however, it seems that many of us will get, at least, a partial refund of fees paid. For churches, districts, societies and individuals this represents an unexpected bonus. **I am asking you all to donate some, or all of your refund, when it arrives, direct to The Nightingale Centre - and perhaps add a bit extra if you can afford it.** Individuals who are also tax-payers could Gift Aid their donations as well. This simple action could raise a substantial sum. It would make a huge difference to the survival of our centre. In the unlikely event of some being left over we can be sure that Stella and the committee would put it to good use to make the Centre even better. **I am acutely aware that some congregations and individual Unitarians will be facing their own severe financial difficulties caused by the Covid-19 crisis. They should, of course, prioritise their own situation before donating to the Centre. Don't put yourselves at risk, but:**

**Please do all you can to help our precious Centre to survive Covid-19! Finally, please spare a thought for the members of the Management Committee. They are all volunteers, carrying a huge weight of responsibility, fighting on our behalf to keep our Centre in business. A good response to this appeal will be a massive and well-deserved boost for them all.** Meanwhile - stay safe and stay well.

Yours in fellowship,

David Warhurst [hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk](mailto:hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk)

**Please make cheques payable to The Nightingale Centre and post to Stella Burney, The Manager, The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, BUXTON,**

## Book Group

We had planned a first meeting for Thursday evening, 23<sup>rd</sup> April from 7.30 ... and we are now planning an online meeting so that we can launch our Book Group despite the current restrictions.

We are reading *'The Faraway Nearby'* by Rebecca Solnit – a collection of short essays that start from her reflections on her mother's declining years and Alzheimers Disease, ranging over many important topics: What does it mean to empathise? What prevents us from empathising? How do the stories we tell ourselves to justify our emotions also impede our ability to understand others? She writes beautifully too.

I will circulate some topics and questions to structure our discussion and hope to have those ready next week.

If anyone is interested in joining us who has not already expressed an interest, do let me know - [elconstable@gmail.com](mailto:elconstable@gmail.com) and I will be sure to include you on the call via Zoom.

Liz Constable

## Poetry Group

This Group will also be meeting via Zoom – contact Ann Baeppler to join in - [annbaeppler@gmail.com](mailto:annbaeppler@gmail.com)

## Taizé Singing Group

Sadly this singing group will not meet again until they can do so in person. Do stay in touch in the meantime!

## Michael Hyde



Many who read this will have known Christine Hyde's husband Michael who died in Ipswich Hospital on 24<sup>th</sup> March. Though never a member of the Meeting House himself, he was a familiar figure at congregational lunches and on those wonderful occasions when we were invited to view the display of aconites in their beautiful garden at Old Villa Farm. I am sure that he will be sadly missed by all his family, to whom we offer our sincere condolences.

Ann Baeppler

*The photo above was taken on one of those occasions when we admired the snowdrops and aconites in Michael and Christine's garden and then enjoyed their hospitality with coffee and cake.*

**Contacts** Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa before the deadline of Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 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)  
Website – [www.unitarianipswich.com](http://www.unitarianipswich.com)

## Thought for the month

'Let the rain kiss you  
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops  
Let the rain sing you a lullaby  
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk  
The rain makes running pools in the gutter  
The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night  
And I love the rain.'

- Langston Hughes, *April Rain Song*

