



Advent Wreath

Our advent wreath was part of every service leading into Christmas Day. Thanks to Maggie Hodges for creating it.



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Almost 2021

It is Monday morning and according to the Gregorian calendar, there are only a few days remaining until we move into 2021. The garden is bathed with sunshine which is streaming through the windows and I am sitting very peacefully, reading the paper and half listening to *'Woman's Hour'* on the radio: suddenly, a phrase spoken by a participant pinged into my consciousness, "we can see in our lifetime, ourselves from outside our planet"

Having missed most of the programme, Google came in to its own: In a discussion on *'Women & Space'* Karine Polwart, a folksinger & playwright, had made the comment in the section on *'cultural significance'* and again I quote, from the programme's blurb, *'Looking up at the stars is a trope of romance but it is also a reminder of how small & insignificant our own lives are – seen against the life of the cosmos'*.

So there we have it! Something most of us already know, in the vast scheme of things we are *'small & insignificant'*. However, whilst we live in a vast and mysterious universe, our personal experiences of living take place on a small dot, and it is within this microcosm, we live with others - family, friends, others in our community, other countries and their peoples.

Our experience of sharing the same space and having to work together has been very forcefully brought home during 2020 with the spread of

of the Coronavirus around the world. Some of us in our congregation have come face to face with the pain and loss of loved ones, friends and people we know, or have experienced the psychological effects, the ache of loss of touch, hugs and personal face to face communication with family and friends.

Within our own little space we are not *'small and insignificant'* and as we enter 2021 and have to confront the changes which are likely to come with every mutation of the Coronavirus, we also have to meet with many other *'confrontations'* in areas of education, unemployment, homelessness and other illnesses, both physical & psychological, treatments of which are at present on hold.

We don't know how the *'new normal'* will end up, for, as with life, we are always having to face *'new normals'*. With every change in our personal knowledge and understanding, we hopefully will become larger and more significant on our small dot and in our understanding and work to confront the resultant effects of Coronavirus and whatever else threatens the health, happiness, wellbeing and peace of humankind throughout the world.

Wishing you all a 2021 filled with hope, positive experiences and love.

Linda King



Poem

When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world and am free.

Wendell Berry

Carol Service 2020

Our Carol Service proved very popular this year – even though we had to provide our own candles and refreshments. Two of the screen shots below show some of those who joined us for the traditional sharing of songs, carols, poems and readings. This year a highlight were the carols sung by Bea Stevens with her father John on guitar. For some of us, this was the beginning of the Christmas festivities.

Thank you to Robert Waller, who co-ordinated all the contributions and to everyone who took part – Tessa Forsdike, John and Bea Stevens, Rosemary Hamilton, Linda King, Robert Waller, Jodi Warren, June Teape and Rev Cliff Reed. We hope next year to be back in the Meeting House to welcome everyone there.



Charity

As we start a new year, the Trustees are inviting suggestions for which charity we as a congregation would like to support with our fundraising. After such a long time seeking funding for our own building we now want to focus outwards on other charitable needs. The Trustees have requested that we choose a local charity.

So far only one suggestion has been received - Lighthouse Women's Aid, which supports women, young people and children from all over Suffolk. <http://lighthousewa.org.uk/>



We welcome other suggestions (or endorsement for this one) before the next Trustees' meeting on Friday 29th January. Please email or speak to one of the Trustees.

Amnesty International

Jenny Brabazon representing Amnesty joined us on Zoom for a service in December to raise awareness of their campaign to ensure prisoners are remembered, especially at Christmas. To offer your support, go to www.amnesty.org.uk – actions – campaign booklet - for more information. Usually we have cards at one of our December services to sign and donate our support. In 2019 6.5 million messages were sent out. These are very important to prisoners and help to strengthen their struggle for human rights. Their biggest fear is that they will be forgotten. It is not too late in January to sign in and show you remember those whose freedom is restricted.

The Inquirer

Our national Unitarian newsletter, The Inquirer, is the oldest non-conformist paper in the UK and has published its 8000th issue. To celebrate this the front cover was published in colour. You can support the survival of the publication by becoming a subscriber and/or by pledging £3 per month (or more) as a Friend. Contact Steve Bisby, Administrator, 71, Earlsmere Avenue, Balby, Doncaster DN4 1QD or steve@helpwithadmin.com – and please add Gift Aid if you are eligible.

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches Executive Committee

New candidates are sought for the Executive committee – particularly people in their 20s, 30s and 40s; LGBTQ folk; people of colour; people with disabilities – all of whom are currently under-represented. www.unitarian.org.uk

Do you have the energy, skills and fresh ideas to help transform and grow the Unitarian movement?

We Want You!

We are looking for candidates to stand for election to our Executive Committee in 2021.

Find out more:
www.unitarian.org.uk

the unitarian and free christian churches

New Puppy



Beryl Beech and family are pleased to introduce their new puppy Otis. He is keeping them busy and Beryl is enjoying lots of cuddles.

Decorations

This is in no way a scientific survey. My question of what other people put on top of their Christmas tree prompted two responses...so far. One person has a star, the other has a veritable magic fairy in that when the tree is first decorated it is topped off with a forty-year-old choir boy crafted from toilet roll innards made by one of her children - Blue Peter style. Magically on Christmas morning it is transformed into an angel. Now that is a miracle of Christmas!

Paulette Reed

Book Group

Our next Book Group meeting is on Thursday 4th February at 7pm via Zoom and we will be discussing *Always Coming Home* by Ursula LeGuin. All welcome – just request the link from Tessa.

Poetry Group

The next meeting is on Thursday 28th January at 2pm via Zoom and the poet to be discussed is U A Fanthorpe. To join the meeting, request the link from Riena.

Compassion Fatigue

A casual search via the internet revealed that there are over 168 thousand registered charities (as of 2018) in the United Kingdom, catering for cats, dogs, bears, horses etc, and humans. I find those numbers rather staggering.

During this Christmas time there have been any number of television adverts appealing to us to give to various charities: adopt a child in some far-flung corner of our ever-decreasing world, a pony or some other animal. They are all accompanied by the insidious music to induce us into feeling guilty and thereby parting with their suggested minimum amount. There have been reports where some people have fallen so far into the guilt trap that they end up needing help themselves. That cannot be right or good. Some charities benefit both human and other animals – win, win. I believe it should always be left up to individuals which charity, if any, they choose to support providing they can afford it and having as much information as possible.

There are well over 175 biblical references to the 'poor' – poor in spirit, without worldly goods or power. The 'rich' mentioned approximately 75 times. Most well-known, probably, from The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3) "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*". Another is in Matthew 26:6, as Jesus was on his final journey, he stopped off in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper. A woman came to him with a jar of expensive perfume which she poured and anointed his head. His disciples were indignant and questioned this waste, saying "*This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money give to the poor*". Jesus rebuked them saying "...*the poor you will always have with you...*". There is also the Chinese proverb: "*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime*".

Compassion Fatigue – cont.

The government has no money; that which it administers and spends is derived through taxation on the working population. Of course, the collective ‘we’ have a duty of care and responsibility to look after the less fortunate in our society. Today we still have the poor, many millions of poor, amongst us, at home and abroad. Are we poor of spirit as a result? Are the poor still poor amongst us because we hand out too much without teaching people how to better manage money, time, etc?

Let us give, generously. Let it be our choice of who, what, and the amount.

Wishing you all a peaceful, healthy, and contented new year.

Paulette Reed

Services in January

3rd – led by Barbara Smith - Trowbridge Unitarians

10th – led by John Stevens - Ipswich Unitarians (London)

17th – led by Revd. Dr. Ralph Catts - Retired Unitarian Minister (Australia)

24th - led by Tristan Jovanovic - Kensington Unitarians

31st – led by Martin Gienke - Bury St Edmunds Unitarians

Thank you to everyone who led services in December too.

Survey

https://kentpsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dbtuD0L6hzoB1lh survey

This survey is about your views and experiences of the current situation in the UK. We also ask about the things that are important to you and how you would describe your personality. The research is being done by the University of Kent and is being done in 13 places around the UK. You are invited to take part in this survey for **volunteers aged 18 and over who live in England, Scotland, or Wales.**

Please do not participate if you are not a volunteer or community activist, or if you do not live in Britain! The information we collect from you today will be incredibly useful, because it will help shape the direction of our work in your local area and give us vital evidence to support this work in the future.

Birthdays in January

Happy birthday to Paulette Reed on 14th; Riena Jackson on 26th; Juliette Spence on 27th; Mark Hawes on 29th.



In March 2018 we had enough snow for a snowman!

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 27th January 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

Happy New Year!

Thoughts for the month

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

For every minute you remain angry, you give up sixty seconds of peace of mind.

Quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson to ponder as you plan your new year resolutions.