



Services in Lockdown

It seems an eternity since the last Sunday service was held in the Hall, let alone the Meeting House itself. But thanks to the miracle of modern technology Sunday services have continued via the internet, so that we have managed to maintain regular contact through “zoom” with services and also through an on line coffee morning, meetings of the poetry group and the newly formed book group. If this pandemic had overtaken us even 10 years ago all these means of communication would have been far more difficult to come by and we would have been much worse off! And I’m also wondering if in some strange way whether we haven’t been drawn even closer together – could it be something to do with being almost inside each other’s homes during each zoom contact? And another bonus is that we’ve been able to share our services more widely, with Unitarians from Colchester, Bury, Norwich AND Canada attending. In the absence of a minister in post, the Worship Group had service leaders signed up, but in view of “lockdown” and social distancing these have had to withdraw. But members of the congregation have stepped forward - we are immensely grateful to all of

Contents –

- 1 – Service in Lockdown
- 2 – Positives of Lockdown; Collection
- 3 – Remembering Ivan Hamilton
- 4 – remembering Ivan continued
- 5- Blessing for Ivan; Birthdays; Nail Pride; Chalice Lighting; Words for Reflection; Poetry Group
- 6 – But it could still ... ; Book Group
- 7 – Services online; Film recommendation; Funny photos; Contacts; Thought for the Month



A screen shot of one of our online services – thanks to Jodi Warren for taking this.

these for their hard work in creating services at short notice. And if you’re anything like me, the lockdown situation is starting to feel almost normal. I can’t pretend that I’m being a little ray of sunshine 24/7 but perhaps I’m not the only one who is in some way adapting to the status quo. So as I wrote when we were faced with Lewis’ resignation as our minister, I know we’ll not just survive this situation but come through it both strengthened and more resourceful.

Ann Baepler (Chair of the Congregation)

Thank you to those who led our services in April – John Stevens, Jodi Warren, Linda King and Rev Cliff Reed. If anyone is keen to lead a service in the coming weeks, please contact Ann Baepler (Chair) or Linda King (lead for the Worship Group).

Positives of the Lockdown

As we enter our sixth week of lockdown, some of us are finding the social isolation difficult, so we invited people to share what positives they have found from the situation. The more positive our outlook, the more we support our immune system. Here are some of the blessings people are experiencing –

- A buzzard riding the thermals over a field near Harkstead.
- Pairs of peacock butterflies in the sunshine.
- More contact with friends and family.
- The sight of the first swallow – they have nested in our garage for the past 16 years!
- I do not need to bother about wearing different clothes for different occasions. In fact I am living in the same clothes most of the time.
- Being able to walk on Rushmere Heath without having to consider golf balls!
- The pleasure of having a morning paper delivered.
- Not having to look at the clock or my calendar.
- Discovering previously unknown parts of the local area...e.g. how to get on to Bixley Heath!



Even Bitumen won't stop us reaching the light – noticed and photographed by Linda King

- The friendliness of strangers when out walking.
- Out of necessity, learning more about how the computer and iPhone work.
- Counting my blessings each day.
- Investigating ant activity in my garden until they decide to bite my ankles – maybe I was being too intrusive?
- doing crosswords
- enjoying daily walks around the cemetery and my garden.
- Saying good morning (via the internet) each morning to all the family
- Having time
- More time to garden
- The online Meeting House services – soul food

Thank you to everyone who contributed their positives - Ann Baeppler; Riena Jackson; Paulette Reed; Linda King; John Stevens; Sandra Hawes; Tessa Forsdike.

Collection

As your Treasurer it has occurred to me that those members who usually make a donation during the service have not been able to do so recently. Quite a few members already give regularly by Standing Order from their bank to the Meeting House account. If anyone would like to consider this option for now please contact either Carol (Membership Secretary) carol.linda.gibbs@gmail.com or me andrewgibbs41@gmail.com and either of us will send you details of the Meeting House bank account to allow you to set something up.

Please also let us know if you set up a standing order for banking purposes and subscription identification.

For anyone who pays tax and is able to sign a Gift Aid form to enable us to reclaim tax on your donation, please ask too for the relevant form.
Andrew Gibbs

Remembering Ivan Hamilton



In my diary entry for Sunday, 26th November 1978, I noted that “In the congregation are a couple named Hamilton and their...children. They say they hope to come again.” Well, they did come again, and continued coming for the next forty-two years. That Sunday morning was not only Ivan’s introduction to our Meeting, it was also pretty much his introduction to Unitarianism, although Rosemary had tried to give him some idea of it previously, using the formula that Unitarians believe in “One God, no Devil and twenty shillings in the pound”! Whether or not these down-to-earth, no-nonsense ideas had anything to do with Ivan’s enthusiastic, though always questioning, embrace of our liberal faith tradition, I can’t say, but embrace it he did. He soon became an extremely active member of our community and was elected to the Meeting’s committee (as it was then called) only a year later.

Ivan came from a large family, being one of twelve children. As it turned out, he was to be the last of them to die. His background was in the austere Irish Presbyterianism of his rural Ulster origins but although he came to reject its theology and beliefs, something of that ancestral Calvinism stayed with

him, manifesting itself in a dogged and always sceptical fascination with religion. He couldn’t leave it alone and loved to talk about it, especially after a Sunday service – of which the sermon was his favourite component. Ivan wasn’t one to leave his questionings of my sermons unexpressed, and those post-service discussions over coffee are among my fondest memories of Ivan. Some may have thought him argumentative, so relentless was he in his pursuit of a point, but argumentative is the wrong word. It implies friction and a degree of hostility and neither of these is appropriate with regard to Ivan. Warmth, friendship and a twinkle in the eye always transcended what others might have seen as an argument. And yet Ivan’s concern to seek out the truth was genuine. He described himself variously as an atheist and an agnostic, although I think the latter term was the most appropriate. It was the possibility to hold such views as he did and yet be part of our liberal faith community that made Ivan a Unitarian. But beyond beliefs and ideas, it was the distinctive community of our Meeting that Ivan valued above all – and contributed to so richly.

Of course, Ivan cannot be seen in isolation from his family. With Rosemary and their children – John, Alison, Kate, Angus, Hilary and Rachel – Ivan brought a whole new vital component to the life of our Meeting, both at the Meeting House and in their home, which was the scene of many a party and gathering. On such occasions Ivan would display his remarkable ability to recite poetry from memory and he and Rosemary would sing together. Who can forget those renditions of his signature song, ‘Paddy McGinty’s Goat’? Ivan’s mischievous sense of humour was a feature of these and most other social interactions of which he was a part. But it was, above all, his love for his family that made of their home such a welcoming place and such a sure foundation for the children as they grew up.

Remembering Ivan Hamilton – cont.

At the time when Ivan first came to the Meeting House he was teaching at Ipswich School and before that he taught at Copleston High School. But his first career was as an officer in the Royal Navy, an occupation that took him – and his family – to many interesting places, one of the most interesting being the waters of the Antarctic. Something of the ‘sea dog’ or, rather, the naval officer remained part of Ivan’s persona, although his time in the forces didn’t stop him from supporting CND in the 1980s! After retirement Ivan continued to teach on a private tutorial basis and was never one to succumb to idleness. In his younger days he was a keen and accomplished rugby-player, in later years he was a keen jogger as long as his body permitted. But in the end his body began to fail and, most sadly of all, so did his mind as dementia began to creep up on him. This steadily robbed us of him, which was a cause of much sorrow. We should be grateful, perhaps, that dementia never entirely separated him from his family and that death saved both him and them from that terrible fate. His final year was spent in a care home and it was from there that he was taken to hospital, with Covid 19 – as it was afterwards discovered – and there passed from us. What might have happened then is something Ivan would have loved to discuss – and maybe still does!

Cliff Reed 9th April 2020

Ivan died on 28th March and his body was cremated on 21st April 2020.

Photo (r) Ivan winning the Falklands Derby in 1965 and (r above) Rosemary and Ivan



Although unable to be at the Crematorium because of the lockdown, Rosemary and Hilary were joined online by Rachel, Alison, John and Angus at the time of Ivan’s funeral. They celebrated his life with memories and chat for several hours. Later they learned that Kate had gone to the crematorium and been allowed to enter, choose music to be played and started to read a poem which the officiant finished for her when it became too difficult to finish herself. Rosemary will later decide whether to hold a memorial service or to let the idea rest.

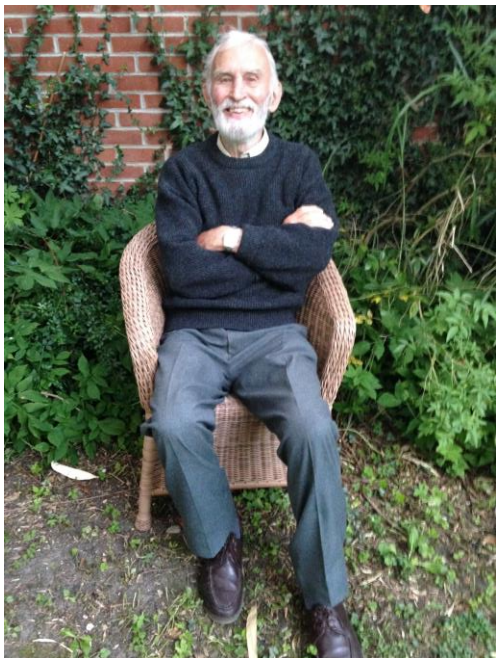


The Hamilton family – Rosemary says that at the time she didn’t realise she could raise the seat in the photo booth ... !



Blessing for Ivan

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
the rain fall soft upon your fields and until we
meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of his hand.



One last hand shake then ... I shall arise and go
now and go to Innisfree.

*'I was very lucky to have been his friend and
partner for 60 years'* – Rosemary

The last of 12 children, Ivan's ashes will be taken
back to his childhood home in County Tyrone.

Birthdays in May

Happy birthday to Daniele Falcinelli on 2nd; to
Simon King on 16th; to Gerrie Hudson on 28th; to
Ben Harvey on 30th and to Paula Chapman on 31st.

Nail Pride 1st May - Suffolk Pride Chair, Adria
Pittock says: *"Anyone should be able to make the
choice to paint their nails and walk down the street in
any town in Suffolk without having to feel afraid. Only
when we have got rid of this sort of hate will we all feel
safe to be who we are and free to express ourselves
how we like"*. - info@suffolkpride.org

Chalice Lighting

From our individual screens
In our individual homes,
We come together on one screen.
Though apart in body
May we remain close in spirit
Whilst together we journey
In this changing world.

Words for reflection

Our Palm Sunday is not to be found on the road
to Jerusalem but along the pathways and byways
of our own individual lives. Let us each pause on
our journey to remember many people, those in
our congregation who are unwell, those grieving
the loss of a loved member of their family; those
affected by the reality of the coronavirus
pandemic in our community who are unable to
visit or have visits from family members or friends
and those working in our hospitals, the wider
community and throughout the whole world.
And let us pause and be kind to our individual
selves, especially over any worries and concerns
we may be carrying, unable to share with
another.

We hold a silent space to think on these things ...

Written and read by Linda King at our service on
Palm Sunday

Poetry Group

The next meeting is on Thursday 28th May at 2pm
via Zoom (?). The featured poet will be Jackie Kay.

Margaret Atwood read the following extract from her book *The Tent* (2006) on *The World at One*, Radio 4, March 24, 2020.

But It Could Still . . .

Things look bad, I admitted. They look worse than they've looked for year, centuries. They looked the worst ever. Perils loomed on all sides. But it could still turn out alright.

The child fell from the 8th floor balcony. But there was a sheepdog underneath that leapt up and caught it in midair. A bystander took a picture. It was in the paper.

The boy went under for the 3rd time, but the mother, although she was reading a novel, heard a gurgling sound, and ran down to the dock and reached into the water, and pulled the boy out by his hair. And there is no brain damage.

When the explosion occurred, the young man was underneath the sink fixing the plumbing, and so he was not injured.

The girl survived the avalanche by making swimming motions with her arms.

The father of the 2 year old triplets, who had cancer in every one of his organs, watched a lot of comedy films and did Buddhist meditation and went into remission where he remains to this day.

The airbags actually worked.

The check did not bounce.

The prescription drug company was not lying.

The shark nudged the sailor's naked, bleeding leg, then turned away.

The copy of Darwin's *Origin of Species* the soldier carried next to his heart stopped the oncoming machine gun bullet.

When he said, "My darling, you are the only woman I will adore forever," he really meant it.

As for her, despite the scowling and the cold shoulder and the unanswered phone, it turned out she loved him all along.

In this dim season of the year, we hunger for such tales. Winter's tales, they are.

We want to huddle around them as if around a

small but cheerful fire.

The sun sets at 4. The temperature plummets. The wind howls. The snow cascades down. Though you nearly froze your fingers off, you did get the tulips planted.

Just in time.

In 4 months, they'll come up. You have faith in that. And they'll look like the picture in the catalogue. In the brown earth, those were already hundreds of small green shoots.

You didn't know what they were, some sort of little bulbs. But they were intending to grow, despite everything.

What would you call them if you were in a story? Would they be happy endings, or happy beginnings?

But they aren't in a story, and neither are you. You tucked them back under the mulch and the dead leaves however. It was the right thing to do on the darkest day of the year.

Contributed by Liz Constable

Book Group

We held our first Book Group meeting via Zoom and discussed Rebecca Solnit's collection of essays entitled *'The Faraway Nearby'*. It was stimulating to find that each of us had slightly (or completely) differing views about the book. Having read this semi - autobiographical account, which starts with reflections on Solnit's mother's dementia, we have chosen a very different biographical memoir as our book for May. It is Chris Packham's *'Fingers in the Sparkle Jar'* (2016). This book reflects the difficulties Packham's autism created for him. As it say on the back cover – *'In a world that didn't understand him, it would take a magical relationship with a kestrel for a young boy to learn the lessons of love, life, death and acceptance.'* Our next meeting will be on Thursday 21st May at 7pm – either via Zoom or even (?) in person with social distancing, depending on the restrictions at the time. All welcome.

Services online

We are not the only Unitarian Meeting House to be holding online services – if you fancy a change or investigating other services here are a few links –

- [Altrincham](#) (pre-recorded, YouTube)
- [Bridport Chapel In The Garden](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Brighton](#) (pre-recorded, Facebook)
- [Bristol](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Cardiff](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Chorlton, Manchester](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Derby Unity](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Doncaster](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Edinburgh](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Gellionnen Chapel, Pontardawe](#) (live, via Zoom)
[English and Welsh Language]
- [Kensington](#) (pre-recorded, audio only)
- [Kingswood Meeting House, near Birmingham](#)
(pre-recorded, Facebook)
- [Manchester Cross Street](#) (live, audio only)
- [Mansfield](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Midland Unitarian Union](#) (pre-recorded, audio only)
- [New Unity, London](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Newcastle-upon-Tyne](#) (pre-recorded, YouTube)
- [Nottage, Porthcawl](#) (pre-recorded, Facebook)
- [Oxford](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [Rosslyn Hill Chapel, London](#) (pre-recorded, YouTube)
- [Sevenoaks, Kent](#) (pre-recorded, YouTube or audio version)
- [Sheffield Upper Chapel](#) (live, via Zoom)
- [South Wales Group](#) (pre-recorded, Facebook)

Film recommendation

I have just finished watching Michael Moore's latest film *Planet of the Humans*. It is a great thought provoker. I recommend people to watch it through the credits to read Rachel Carson's quote at the end of the film.

Andrew Gibbs

No doubt many of us will have been receiving and sharing funny clips during this lockdown time. Here are a couple to raise a smile ...



Contacts

Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa before the deadline of Wednesday 27th May 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

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature...the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.
Rachel Carson