



Photo by Maggie Hodges

Contents –

- 1 – Thank you
- 2 – Opening the Meeting House; Collection tins; Friends Group; Birthdays; Book Group
- 3 – Memories and Reflections
- 4 – Memories and Reflections cont.; Christian Leaders Conference; Cartoon
- 5 – CL Conference – cont.; Claire and Henry's Wedding; Progress Update' Services; EAUWG
- 6 – The Same Boat & Ali Mercer's Reflections
- 7 – General Assembly AGM
- 8 – Zoom Society Days; Poem; Beyond Darkness; Yalda's Concert; Poetry Group; Contacts; Thought for the Month

Thank you to everyone

Each month when I prepare this newsletter it feels that we are inching our way back to reclaiming our Meeting House and being able to admire the wonderful work of the many craftsmen who have restored and preserved the building for future generations. When the work first started in February 2020, we had expected to be able to hold services there again in the autumn of that year. Little did we know how Covid-19 would affect both our congregation and the Restoration Project. It has meant more unavoidable delays but in the scheme of the more than 300 years of the building's existence, another few month's delay is relatively little. What matters is that the work has been done well and it is possible to take the building off the Heritage At Risk Register – a special achievement.

Our priority now is to prepare the building for re-opening and to express our thanks to all those who have made the project possible.

We are particularly grateful to our Property Manager Phil Chatfield who prepared the first report on the condition of the Meeting House and without whose expertise and management of the project, we would not have achieved this result. Phil has been dedicated to the Meeting House and despite moving to Devon has still visited regularly and liaised with Valiant, the builders, to ensure the high standards of restoration. Phil is aiming to reduce his work commitments but will complete three other projects for Historic England including the restoration of the Treadwheel Crane at Harwich, Essex.

Opening the Meeting House

Because of the current Covid restrictions we cannot open for proper services until the end of June, so will continue with the online services until then – and hopefully even when we are back, we can live stream services for all those extra people who have joined us online this past year.

We know, however that many of you are keen to see what has been done. Trudi Hughes from Historic England said early on in the work that she would consider the project a success if when people came back, they wondered what had been done as the building would look as it did before ... except that the inside of the walls, the roof and the windows have all been repaired and restored – and insulated too. Much of the work then may seem invisible, but what you will notice is the access forecourt, which is now level with the entrance, making it much easier for anyone with a disability. We also now have a toilet in the Meeting House – it is amazing how proud we can be of something so essential!

We are arranging a 'soft launch' – so we plan to open the building for private prayer, reflection or a look round on Sundays 16th and 30th May from 2pm to 3pm. Our organist Robert Waller will play the organ to enhance the atmosphere. All are welcome – we ask that you wear a face covering. There will be Covid measures in place - one way system; social distancing; open doors for air circulation; sanitiser.

Respecting the request from our main grant donors Historic England, we are not making a big publicity splash about this opportunity until after 13th May, which is when they will be launching their publicity drive about the funds they have given us and the work that has been done. So please put the dates in your diary and then after 13th of the month you can tell everyone!

Restoration Collection Tins.

We have twice passed the time of our usual annual collection so the tins may well be getting a bit full! It is necessary that we wind up the tins and prepare them for our new fundraising effort, 'Lighthouse Women's Aid'. Please contact Paulette Reed or Linda King if you wish for your tin to be collected.

Friends of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House

A committee made up of both people from our congregation and people in the community with an interest in our building has been working on the launch of a Friends Group to support and keep the building open for the public to use and enjoy. More news next month!



This photo of the Meeting House shows it in years gone by – we are unsure of the date, but the photo was found when we were clearing the building. It shows the old heating boiler and outside chimney on the side – certainly not allowed now under the fire regulations!

Birthdays in May

Happy birthday to –

Daniele Falcinelli on 2nd; Simon King on 16th; Gerrie Hudson on 28th; Ben Harvey on 30th (a special one!) and Paula Chapman on 31st. We hope you all have a great day and next year.

Book Group

The Book Group next meets on Thursday 13th May at 7pm via Zoom to discuss 'My Sister the Serial Killer' by Oyinkan Braithwaite. This was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2019 and is described variously as '*a literary sensation*' '*delightfully naughty*' '*utterly addictive, a pure joy*'.

Anyone is welcome to join us for the discussion and to choose the next book. Contact Tessa for the link invitation (tessa@tessajordan.co.uk).

Memories and Reflections (cont. from last month)

1950 – 1952

The Rev^d William Haworth came in 1950, by this time members had drifted back, feeling lost on a Sunday with nowhere to go!!! Things seemed to be in a bad way. The “Meeting House” was in disrepair, owing to lack of funds, it was decided to hold our services in our old hall, with a small congregation this proved most fitting, members became more friendly. Mrs Haworth formed a sewing class with the view of having a bazaar in the Autumn, this was a great success, we were all surprised at what a few people could do.

Ms Haworth arranged for lectures to be given – once a fortnight – on Literature, films on ‘Bird Life’ etc, he was a Rotarian and his friends were willing to come along to help, we also had Mr Ralph Mottram from Norwich who talked to us of John Galsworthy and Dr Stewart Carter from Cambridge talk to us of his visit to America. We really began to feel we were getting life & interest in the place once more. Then came the sudden death of Mr Haworth and we were again left without a minister. But I must say during all these years we had a very good and able friend in Mr Robert Collett, who was always ready to hold the fort and take our services for us, when we hadn’t a supply – what we should have done without him I do not know!

1954 – 1956

In 1954 we were fortunate in getting the Rev Phillip Hewett from America. Soon after he came he arranged for members of the Youth Movement to come for a long week-end, and with the help of our young members they soon got to work and cleaned the “Meeting House” so once more we were back in our rightful place.

During Phillip’s stay with us, he invited Sir Adrian Boulton – who was visiting Ipswich, to come along and give us a talk on music, this was a great success. We had a full house. Margaret – that is Mrs Hewett – asked us to get together to see what we could do about having a bazaar, target to be

£100 – some of us whispered between ourselves – we should never make it! However, Margaret gave us each £1 and we were asked to double it, we all set to work to do our bit and when the great day came we had cleared well over our target!!! We couldn’t believe it!! Another interesting featured during their stay with us, Phillip advertised his subject for the Sunday evening service – in our local press – these were talked about in the town, so much so, one evening after the service, in walked four men from other church communities, it would seem they had come to show us the error of our ways, or save our souls or whatever. After a lengthy discussion – Mrs Warn, a really remarkable woman, tall and stately a born Unitarian as energetic a worker for the cause as her nieces at Cambridge, Miss Bertha Hinkins and her sister Nora told them we were the ones who had seen the “light” not them! We got a number of people in during Phillips stay with us, but after a while they got jobs out of town, so back we were to our faithful few. In 1956 he left us to go to Vancouver, we are always glad to see him Margaret and family when they are able to visit us.

1957 – 1974

The Rev: Nicholas Teape came to us from Rotherham in 1957, he was with us for 17 years, during his ministry June – his wife – formed a Folk Dancing Club, a Sunday School, later a youth club, finally a Junior Studies Group, sad to relate only one member stayed with us, Linda King, who is now a valuable member of our congregation.

The Meeting House floor was made of plain wooden blocks, always looked dirty and needed constant attention. Nick organised a week-end working party of young Unitarians from London, and our own youth club. The floor was skinned and coated with [polyurethane]. Nick insisted on six coats the last coats during the week being left to Nick and his wife. Another year these same young people came for a working weekend

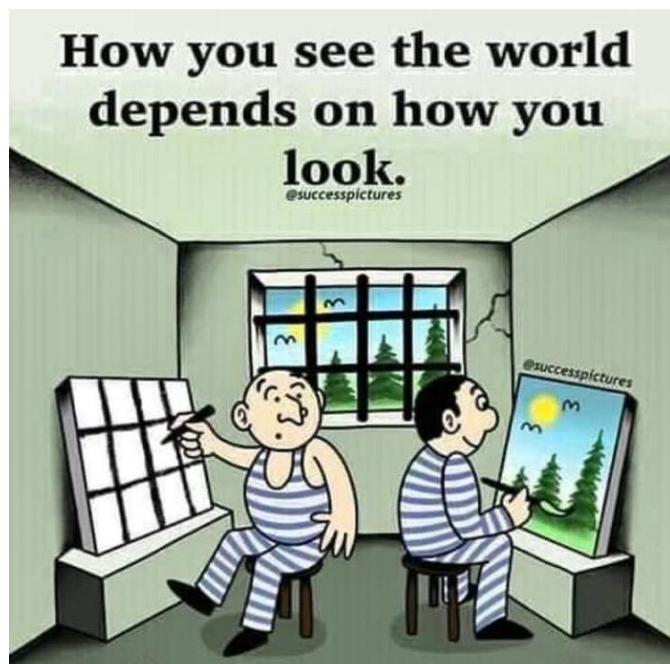
Memories and reflections – cont.

and repainted the hall.

Nick introduced Amnesty to Ipswich, a meeting was held on June 11th 1969. When a local group was formed and officials appointed, this grew in strength. Meetings were held in the Meeting House every month.

It is interesting to note when he wrote his message in the Suffolk Unitarian he always addressed the public not his congregation. I quote what he wrote in the December number 1969 – *“I have always resisted the temptation to produce the traditional “My dear Flock” type of pastoral, though there may be some who think I ought to do that. Whatever may be said for the use of such imagery in some quarters, there is little in its favour when applied to the relationship between a Unitarian Minister and his congregation, also as a country man, I have found that intimate knowledge of sheep keeping detracts from the romantic illusion. In any case, I feel a minister should not be always preaching to the converted. He has opportunity to address them every Sunday. So why not produce something once a month which is likely to be read also by people who are not members? That is what I have tried to do”.*

To be continued next month ...



Christian Leaders Conference

On Thursday 22nd April I attended the 'Ipswich Christian Leaders Conference' by Zoom at the request of the Trustees. Once we are back in the Meeting House we may wish to consider how we as a Unitarian group or as individuals can be active in certain charities or support them financially, just as we do the Lighthouse charity at the moment.

The conference had arisen from a growing interest in exploring how the Christian community might respond together to the impact of the Pandemic in the Ipswich area, through building fresh and purposeful connections. More specifically, the aim was to bring Christians together to acknowledge the extent and nature of the growing needs in our town as a consequence of the pandemic, to celebrate some of the existing joint work between churches and charities and to consider how to “join the dots”, discussing how to work even better together, going forward. Within the framework of a Christian church gathering with prayers and a rousing address based on the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Nehemia, Tom Hunt, the MP of Ipswich started the meeting by referring to the needs of many people in Ipswich and praising and supporting the efforts of many church groups and charities during the pandemic.

This was followed by speeches of representatives of these groups and charities like Selig Suffolk (homelessness), CAP (Christians against Poverty), Route 2 Freedom (dealing with addiction), Families First, Ormiston Families, Lighthouse (vulnerable families) and many others. In a selection of break-out groups we could hear of even more that are active in Ipswich. I chose the 'vulnerable families' break-out group and the time given to this was not long enough to hear about all the groups and charities working in this area throughout Ipswich.

Christian Leaders Conference – cont.

One of the aims of this conference was to collect data about all the voluntary work going on in Ipswich churches in order to develop a website a website that will be easily accessible to volunteers and those who need help. A group was set up to develop this site and in due course I will be sent the details which I will forward to our Newsletter.

I was left with a very positive feeling about the meeting. The work done in Ipswich is impressive and I hope the 'new' Meeting House will allow us to play our part further in responding to some of the needs in the wider Ipswich community.

Riena Jackson

Claire and Henry's Wedding



Claire Johnson and Henry Parkinson will be married at the local library on 15th May with a blessing to follow at our Meeting House and high tea outside afterwards for the guests. Numbers are limited because of the Covid restrictions, so we cannot all be there to congratulate them in person. We wish them both well for their future happiness.

Progress Update

Both Jenny Pile and Ian Gray are now doing well as they convalesce after their stays in hospital. Jenny has now been home for a short while, with carers to help her with showering and dressing, but is hoping to 'pass the test' to show she can now manage on her own as she is sure she can do. She feels much better now and is walking better too. We were pleased to see her join our online service again and wish her well with a continued improvement. Jenny wants to thank everyone who has phoned and send cards to her. Ian has found his knee more sore than he expected after his knee replacement operation, but is doing his physio and walking to the bottom of the garden. He has an hospital appointment on 24th May and hopes to be permitted to drive again from then. He is also looking forward to going to the pub with his sons for a well-deserved pint of beer!

Services in May

2nd May - Rev Cliff Reed - Minister Emeritus, Ipswich.

9th May - Alan Ruston - Lay Preacher, Watford Unitarians.

16th May - Ali Mercer - Ipswich Unitarian in Devon.

23rd May - Rev Celia Midgley - Retired Unitarian Minister, Skipton, Yorks.

30th May - Rev Matthew Smith - Minister to Framlingham & Bury St Edmunds Unitarians.

Thank you to all who volunteer to lead our services and to Linda King who finds the volunteers.

East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group.

EAUWG will be meeting on Zoom on Tuesday 18th May, 10.30am for 11am start. The subject under discussion is *'How we feel about re-emergence into a changing world'*.

We would welcome new faces so extend an invitation to Unitarian women who are members & attendees at a place of worship in East Anglia, living in East Anglia or a member of the National Unitarian Fellowship to get in touch with Linda King for further information.

The Same Boat
by Julie Sheldon

We're all in the same boat 'they say
But I would disagree
So many different sailing craft
Upon this stormy sea

Some sail on ocean liners
In comfort, style, and ease
Relaxing on their balconies
...Sipping their G & Ts

Some speed along in motor boats
As if it's all ok...
With little care for smaller craft
Which may get in their way

Some struggle on their battleships
Where nothing's going right
Endlessly preparing...
For the next relentless fight

Some huddle in their lifeboats...
And pray that they'll be saved
Hoping for a calmer sea...
And fearing every wave

Some drift around upon their rafts...
They barely stay afloat
They're praying for a change of luck...
And chance to board a boat

Some haven't found their sea legs yet...
And dread each wave and swell
They're struggling to stay upright
And don't feel very well

So whilst you're on your journey
To a safe and calmer port
Look out for fellow sailors
Who may need some support

Could you throw them a life belt?
Or a paddle or an oar?
Perhaps you could help guide them
A bit nearer to the shore

We've all spent a year adrift, cast far from the shores of our normal lives, navigating an unknown ocean full of uncertainties, fear and loss. Stripped of the familiarity of our usual place of meeting and of the joy and comfort of close contact, loneliness is the monster which has stalked us from the deep. But while we have been forced to ride in our own little boats during this time, something rather special has happened, proving the saying that a church is made of people, not wood, stone or bricks: metaphorical ropes have been thrown and caught, holding us together over wide stretches of land and ocean, keeping us connected as a community. Like a flotilla of small ships, we have stayed gathered together while the storms of life have battered us. Though the pandemic has been new to us, our Meeting House has seen hard times before. I wonder how previous worshippers coped during the Spanish Flu' just over a century ago? How lucky we have been to have the modern technology which enables us to stay in touch, even if it sometimes baffles and frustrates us. Those of us in our speedboats have had to slow down to lend a hand to those on their rafts and dinghies, making sure no-one is left behind as we make our common journey. Ironically, in spite of us being separated from our place of worship, it has continued to bind us together to safeguard its future. The planning, fundraising, discussions and physical work to restore the Meeting House have kept us busy. Now, as we celebrate the anniversary of not just the building but, more importantly, of its community, we are very much looking forward. We will soon be able to disembark from our separate little boats and gather together in... what? What kind of vessel are we setting sail on next? Who will be on board and where will we be heading? We will need navigators and paddlers, carpenters and mechanics. We will need to continue throwing out ropes to those in need, pulling passengers aboard, giving them refuge, sustenance and offering maps to help guide their way. Our ship has done this for so many years: we will never know how many people it has helped along the way; we will never know how many people it may help in the future. All we can do is steer our true course, trusting the journey, holding on each other as we sail towards new horizons.

By Ali Mercer (contributed to our service on 25/4/21)

General Assembly Meeting 2021.

The Annual General Meeting of the Unitarian & Free Christian Churches was held on Zoom Saturday 24th April. Owing to Covid restrictions, this meeting was held only to conduct the business of the General Assembly.

As our congregation had already indicated their wishes regarding the 6 motions which had been submitted for discussion, it was now my responsibility as their representative to turn my back on the sunshine streaming through the window, find a way around the voting system, concentrate on the meeting and at the same time, absent myself from the screen ...

Four of the six motions chosen for discussion were, in the printed order:

2. From Cardiff Unitarians on Fossil Fuel Divestment. Passed. For 91. Against 3. Abstentions 10.

3. From Stockton Unitarians on the Youth Programme. Passed. For. 52. Against 27. Abstentions 25

5. From the Findhorn Unitarian Network. Call for a committee to prepare a Code of Ethics. Passed. For 73. Against 25. Abstentions 17.

6. From the LDPA, Peace Fellowship & 12 Members. Welcomes the foundation of an Interfaith Red Cross Memorial Peace Appeal etc. Passed. For 92. Against 11. Abstentions 11.

As was instructed my vote was cast on motions 2, 3 & 5, in accordance with the wishes of the congregation. Motion 6, was my own vote and after listening to the discussion, cast in favour of the resolution.

All the administration motions were passed unopposed.

As a full report of the meeting will be printed in 'The Inquirer' it is not necessary to go into fuller details here. However, if anyone wishes for further

information on the motion discussions, please contact me.

Usually after the annual meetings it is possible to write of one or two highlights of time spent together with fellow Unitarians. The highlights for me are usually the worship together, the singing together the lectures and the discussions outside of the meeting. This year, on Zoom, there was none of this for me: I sung lustily, along with many of the others I could see moving their mouths to the words of the opening hymn 'Gather the Spirit', but we couldn't hear each other; the chalice was very much in evidence but in the back of my mind was the new logo which being on all the screens appeared to be trying to elbow out the symbol of our faith community.

There were positives. The incredible amount of work & effort which was put in to organising the meetings online needs to be applauded for their success; the meetings ran with very few hiccups, support systems both on paper and emergency email connections with helpful people if anyone was having a problem with computers, voting etc all positive. The worship sessions before the meetings, the use of readings from Cliff's new book 'Beyond Darkness', the faces of friends, being able to put faces to names of people I'd only heard or read about and seeing so many Unitarians together. The emphasis on the youth programmes and positive reports of groups like 'Heart & Soul' being established around the country, attracting new attendees to online services. As is sung in the 'Sound of Music' *'these are a few of the wonderful things'*

The outgoing President, Rev Celia Cartwright deserves mention who along with Ann Mills, our new President and Rev Sue Woolley, Vice President, have worked tirelessly to carry out the extra work resulting within the denomination because of Covid.

Our final hymn was one written by our new President, Ann Mills and is a good note on which to end.

Linda King

ZOOM SOCIETIES DAYS

17th—19th June 2021

10.00 to 4.00 each day

Have you ever wondered what our Societies get up to? Join us for a fascinating three-day event, exploring what twelve of them do ... Each day, four Societies will showcase what they do and what they are about. You are welcome to join any or all of the sessions. Each day will split into two sessions, 10.00—12.30 and 1.30—4.00.

Thursday 17th June Friday 18th June Saturday 19th June

Register today for this FREE event with:

revsuewoolley@gmail.com

There will be presentations, samples of worship, break out rooms, time for coffee breaks, lunch and screen breaks. Opening and closing devotions will be offered by the Ministerial Fellowship on Thursday & Friday & by the Unitarian Peace Fellowship on Saturday.

A poem by A E Housman – suggested by Rosemary Hamilton whose favourite tree is the huge cherry next door to her. She writes - *I see it every morning in Spring when I open the curtains and it is just about to burst into flower ... later when a gentle breeze shakes the soft pink petals and they float silently down I stand beneath them and feel all is well with the world. Spring is such a beautiful time of the year.*

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

Beyond Darkness

Launch event with Cliff Reed & Kate Dean.

The video of our launch event is now available online [here](#). If you haven't ordered your copy of Cliff's new book of poems and prayers 'Beyond Darkness' yet, you can do so by ringing Essex Hall on 0207 240 2384 to place an order with a card payment, or go to the [Shop](#) page on the GA website.

Yalda Davis Concert

Yalda has recently recorded a concert of cello music and here is the link -

<https://youtu.be/K8RkIJHP4tQ>

The music features Bach, Frank Bridge and some new pieces written especially for her (with some animal themes too). You will also be able to find the link on the Hertford Music Club Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/hertfordmuso>

Poetry Group

The next meeting will be on Thursday 27th May, held via Zoom. Anyone interested in joining should contact Ann Baeppler or Riena Jackson for the link and details of this month's poet.

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 26th May 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

Thought for the month

May the stars carry your sadness away. May the flowers fill your heart with beauty. May hope forever wipe away your tears, and, above all, may silence make you strong. Chief Dan George