



Report from the 2026 General Assembly Annual Meetings

The Annual Meetings this year felt really heartening. We were in a new venue, *The Hayes* in Derbyshire, which is a not-for-profit Christian centre rather than a more corporate conference hotel, and I do think that changed the feel of the weekend. There was a more spiritual atmosphere: lovely grounds, a lake and a labyrinth for walking and meditation, and a chapel on site. We did have a few teething problems with room bookings, which is inevitable when you try somewhere new, but people were very good-natured about it, and I think everyone could see that we were doing our best. The weekend itself wound together worship, business and fellowship, with Sarah Corbett as keynote speaker and Daniel Costley as the Anniversary preacher.

One of the highlights for me was hosting a newcomers' reception for about twenty of our newcomers. That felt inspiring and really needed. Among the newcomers were people from the Foundation Worship Studies group, who had worked together online and were

meeting in person for the first time to much excitement. Sarah Corbett really inspired us with her gentle approach to "craftivism", and Daniel Costley and Jane Blackall led an Anniversary Service that felt deeply inclusive, grounded in what unites us, and, wonderfully, also made space for a telling of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The Anniversary Service included time to welcome 6 new Ministers onto the GA Roll, and a time to hold in our hearts the 9 ministers who we have lost this year, a poignant moment of shared grief and gratitude for their service.

Another uplifting moment was the Unitarian College workshop, all of us training for ministry and newly qualified ministers were on stage while the names of all the congregations that have supported us were read out – Ipswich got a mention of course. Other workshops included a brilliant *Satsang* hosted by the Hindu Connections group, an in-person gathering for the monthly online Facilitators Network, meetings for the Safeguarding Network, Earth Spirit Network, and Social Justice Network. GA Staff held a number of workshops including Rory Castle Jones' workshop exploring ways to strengthen ministry and leadership and our new Communications Officer Pamela Welsh presenting her strategy, vision and top tips for congregations.

Professor Geoff Levermore ended his time as President and the Bradleys took over – Revs. Jean and Alex Bradley becoming joint Presidents with Jo O'Sullivan as Vice-President. In terms of the formal business, the motions included one that would allow our Chief Officer to issue timely public statements on current events within agreed safeguards; one that

Contents

- 1 – Report from the 2026 GA Annual Meeting
- 2 – Report cont.; No Kings
- 3 – Tributes – Jenny Pile, Angus Hamilton, Mike Medhurst; Services in May
- 4 – Some Glorious Realm; Concord Media trustee?
- 5 – Wellbeing walks; Book group; Birthdays; Suffolk Connected
- 6 – Ride and Stride; Curiosa; Thought for the Month; Contacts

Report from the 2026 General Assembly Annual Meetings – cont.

named protest as a fundamental Unitarian spiritual practice and challenged recent restrictions on protest; and an emergency motion calling for peace, respect for international law, and humanitarian aid in the Middle East. So, there was significant and serious business too, as there always is and overall, it was a weekend of real warmth, substance, and meaningful connection.

Lizzie Kingston Harrison

No Kings



Over the past 15 months, under Donald Trump's tragic, narcissistic, perhaps megalomaniacal leadership, the government of the United States of America has taken dangerous steps away from tripartite, democratic governance towards autocracy or worse. The three branches of governance, all constitutionally prescribed as equal in authority, have become muddled. To some extent, Trump now rules the country

through executive orders of questionable legality. Both houses of the US Congress, controlled by the Republicans, have become subservient to Trump on major issues of the day, like sycophants without moral postures or backbones. What Trump wants, he gets.

Though the courts have pushed back a bit, the inertia of judicial processes lags way behind immediacy of executive actions, and only recently have checks from that arm of government begun to place limits on Trump's behaviour.

Trump controls Congress with fear and intimidation of individuals, much like occurred in Germany in 1933 and beyond. Trumps sees himself as a king, not subject to controls. A substantial proportion of Americans apparently see no harm in this—out of blind, nearly religious faith that Trump relishes and uses effectively.

America got rid of monarchical rule, without limitation, in 1776-81, but in some sense, many feel it has returned. We do not want a king in America, though Trump sees himself in this light.

So, recognizing protections of free speech and rights of assembly provided in the first amendment to the US Constitution, eight million plus concerned citizens nationwide protested recently with additional millions protesting around the world and others cheering them on.

So, it was a good opportunity for Unitarians to have a voice. No Kings here, only democracy as envisioned by our founding fathers and defined in our Constitution, adopted in 1788. No Kings!

Dan Cohen

(pictured with Suzanne Leary Cohen at the protest)

Both Dan and Suzanne join us for services and celebrations when they are in the UK.

Tributes - Jenny Pile

A member of this congregation since October 2011, Jenny suffered a stroke in February and spent some time in hospital. Her condition deteriorated and she died on 23rd March 2026. We have very fond memories of Jenny who travelled from Great Oakley in Essex, accompanied by her pet dog, to attend services. Jenny was sweet, gentle and softly spoken and a farmer's wife, mother to Roger and Kate, who latterly drove Jenny to services. Rosemary Hamilton remembers Jenny telling of her early married life of moving into an enormous farmhouse with very large kitchen, and Jenny wondering how she would ever get round it. But she did, preparing meals for guests after the shoot. Also, her husband always presented her with a bunch of the first snowdrops of the season. Small of frame and feisty, she loved her garden and the great outdoors. One stand out occasion was when Jenny organised for a group of us from the Meeting House to visit the farm run by Roger. We walked and talked and spotted the many wildflowers growing on the farm. Jenny loved her dogs and during the time she's been attending the Meeting House she's had two. Jenny shared her knowledge of farming with us at Harvest time when she would set up a display with bags of wheat, barley, sugar beet, (and the end products of bread and sugar) in the vestibule. It was always stunning. The funeral was a family-only affair.



Photograph shows Jenny with Riena, Hilary and Paulette

Tribute - Angus Hamilton –

The sun shone and we three (Robert Waller, Cliff Reed, Paulette Reed) travelled to Guildford crematorium. By chance we met the Hamilton family, at a pit stop for refreshment and facilities, heading the same way, to mourn the death and celebrate the life of Angus Hamilton. At the venue more family and friends gathered (including Stephen Reed on his day off). There were some wonderful tributes from sisters Hilary and Rachel; fond memories including big brother taking them to parties – unbeknownst to their parents; daughters Tilly and Ophelia on the dad who was always there for them no matter what; widow Janine; and school friend James Bolton who shed light on the antics they got up to. Angus loved rock and roll music and one of his favourite singers was Elvis Presley. The service included music by Elvis – *“If I could Dream”* and *“Viva Las Vegas”*; and ending with Jerry Lee Lewis’ *“Great Balls of Fire”*. A larger gathering was planned for the weekend when more stories would be shared about Angus: his passion for theatre, singing and dancing. A beautiful farewell for a wonderful person.

Mike Medhurst, warden at the Ipswich Quaker Meeting House, passed away in February. A celebration of his life will be held on Saturday 2nd May at 2pm at the Friends Meeting House and Unitarians are welcome to attend.

Services in May

3rd - Helen Simpson, Octagon Unitarian Chapel, Norwich.

10th - Lizzie Kingston Harrison, Ministerial Student, Ipswich.

17th - Dr Phillip Pinney, Bury St Edmunds Unitarians.

24th - Lizzie Kingston Harrison, Ministerial Student, Ipswich. Service followed by communion.

31st - Lynne Davies, Octagon Unitarian Chapel, Norwich.

All services on Sundays start at 10.45 and are also available on Zoom.

Some Glorious Realm

Around 60 people gathered in the Meeting House on the afternoon of April 25th for the successful launch of "Some Glorious Realm", Peter Watkins' third volume of poetry published by Eye Wild Books. The audience enjoyed poems, largely spiritual meditations inspired by Peter's walks in the Suffolk landscape and observations of nature.

Ian Griffiths and Carol Lawrence, the co-owners of the press, publish small print run poetry and art books from their garden studio on the shoreline of the Stour Estuary, with each volume enriched by artwork by Carol, a multi-disciplinary artist whose work has been exhibited in London, Cornwall as well as locally in East Anglia.

Ian (a published poet himself) and Peter introduced the collection, with readings by Peter, Ian and Peter's partner Ann Baeppler interspersing their conversation.

Our historic and characterful building proved an ideal venue for the event. Peter and Eye Wild Books would like to thank the Meeting House for their welcome, with particular thanks due to Paulette Reed for all her help.

Copies of "Some Glorious Realm" are available to purchase from Eye Wild Books (www.eyewildbooks.com) at a cost of £10 + P+P) or from Ann Baeppler.



Concord Media Trustee?

I am seeking a new trustee for Concord Media - legal name Concord Video and Film Council. I founded this with other Ipswich Quakers in 1963. At that time, all the trustees were Quakers. It grew to be in effect a not-for-profit business employing 30 people with a turnover in present day terms of several millions a year. Now with the changes in technology and a change in the markets served we are down to just one office worker for 2 days a week plus an IT specialist who does a few hours a month.

Also, all the Quakers who were trustees have either died or moved away. There are now only 4 trustees, myself, Lydia, who is to retire as unfortunately she is suffering from senile dementia, and 2 Labour councillors. I am now 101 years old and may not last long! But I am still ok mentally at least, and most people agree! I am wondering if there are any Unitarians who might consider being a trustee? I think all the films that we distribute are ones of which Unitarians would approve.

The work is not onerous. We meet 2 or 3 times a year for less than an hour, usually by Zoom. Concord makes a slight surplus each year and our reserves have just passed £50,000 which is equal to about twice the annual expenditure. I can supply the last three years' accounts and minutes of trustee meetings for anyone you can find who might be prepared to think about it. Eric Walker.

If you are interested, please contact Tessa for Eric's contact details.

<https://www.concordmedia.org.uk/>

Concord Media

Serving the caring professions & the arts world



WELLBEING WALK

1 April, 6 May, 3 June 2026 | 1pm-2pm

Join us for a walk and talk around Portman Road and the surrounding area
Meet at the Sir Bobby Robson statue | Open to ages 18+ | Wear suitable footwear
Contact community@itfcfoundation.co.uk to find out more

Book Group

We next meet on Monday 18th May at 7pm to discuss 'Prophet' by Helen MacDonald and Sin Blaché. All are welcome to join us. (changed date).

Birthdays in May

We wish everyone who celebrates their birthday in May a really good day – including – Daniele Falcinelli on 2nd; Sally Washington on 12th; Horst Gödicke on 15th; Simon King on 16th; Gerrie Hudson on 28th and Paula Chapman on 31st



From the U3A photographic group

Suffolk Connected

Suffolk police's free messaging service that offers local people policing news for their area now has over 5000 subscribers.

Since the start of October, Suffolk police started using a new free community messaging system called Suffolk Connected with around 5,120 subscribers joining since then, with just under 300 people registering in March alone.

Suffolk Connected allows anyone to sign up to receive updates and information about issues affecting local communities and replaces the old service called Police Connect.

Inspector Colin Clack said: *"It's great to see so many people signing up to the free service and we are confident that over the coming months that figure will continue to grow with a busy programme of outdoor events and engagements planned that our community police teams will be attending."*

"The service allows Suffolk police to communicate directly to our local residents through email and also allows our local officers to conduct surveys with residents relevant to their area to find out about the issues that matter to them."

"We'd urge people who have already signed up to tell their friends, family and neighbours so as many residents as possible remain connected and engaged with Suffolk police."

To register with Suffolk Connected people will need to sign up online. A link to Suffolk Connected is available via this link [Suffolk Connected](#)

It will ask for basic details such as name, address, email address, and telephone number – It will be up to the user if they wish to add any further details such as their age, religion, gender, first spoken language etc.

Registration is straightforward; the simple online process takes only a couple of minutes and will give people the opportunity to specify the type of information they would like to receive.

Ride and Stride

You will be delighted to know that the Ride & Stride and Pedal and Drive last September 2025 raised over £212,000 – a great result.

Riders and striders were met with perfect conditions, sunny, and the rain held out until later in the afternoon. As always, were all extremely grateful for the refreshments made available on the day. Manning your churches and staying open is a key element to the success on the day. Please encourage as many of your churches to open on the day. One should recognise that if the afternoon is particularly quiet, leaving the church earlier is perfectly acceptable. We are planning a new sponsorship form for church helpers, which we hope will provide another source of funds.

Please could you highlight again this year and think of a Fascinating Fact about your church. Please make the Fact visible on a notice board, or on a table. The Fact can be anything, or anybody, considered to be of interest.

We still have a particular area that we need to improve on. Our recovery rate in Gift Aid on the yellow forms was only 48%. Just Giving Gift Aid recovery rate was 86% in comparison. Please make sure that names and addresses have been filled in in the sponsorship form so that we can claim Gift Aid. We missed out on recovering over £17,000. We will be sending out an instruction pamphlet shortly to help with using JustGiving and avoiding paying “tips”, and a reminder to fill in all the columns for Gift Aid.

We say goodbye and a huge thanks to Patrick Grieve, our past Chairman of the Bike Ride, and Jean Goyder, for all their hard work over the years in supporting the Bike Ride and organising their Local Organisers.

Thank you again for an amazing effort. 2026 will, I am sure, be another great success.

Let's get the numbers of open churches up.

If you have any queries, please contact your Area Organiser.

With best wishes for 2026.

Simon Ronan

Curiosa

Lost & Found Tunes



Jorge Jiménez baroque violin
Joy Smith, harps & percussion

Album launch
Friday 8 May
19:00

Unitarian Meeting House
Friars St,
Ipswich IP1 1TD

Tickets: £15
Members/Concessions: £12
Book online:
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/jorge-jimenez/t-zooyyv>
Or on the door from 1h before the concert
More info: iuhfriends@gmail.com



Scan to book

★★★★★
"effortless technical finesse"
The Strad Magazine

★★★★★
"Risky and Original"
El Mundo

★★★★★
"Madness Crowned by success"
Scherzo Magazine



Thought for the month

I am going to try to pay attention to the Spring. I am going to look around at all the flowers, and look up at the hectic trees. I am going to close my eyes and listen.

-- Anne Lamott (author and essayist)

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 Forsdike before the deadline of Wednesday 27th May, ideally email tessa@tessajordan.co.uk. To contact our Secretary, ring 07980 641620, email ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or ring our Treasurer Robert Waller on 01473 610723.