



# Great Meeting Chapel Leicester

Newsletter - Winter/Spring 2022



**300 years of Freedom, Reason and Tolerance**

# SERVICES

## SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY

6th	11am	Led by the Minister: Garden room
13th	11am	Return to Services in Chapel
20th	11am	
27th	11am	

## SUNDAYS IN MARCH

6th	11am	Led by the Minister
13th	11am	Service will be followed with a Congregational Lunch
20th	11am	Baptism of Foxley Hunter Holme
27th	<b>3.00 pm</b>	Arthur's farewell service

## SUNDAYS IN APRIL

3rd	11am	To be announced
10th	11am	
17th	3 pm	
23rd	11am	

## SUNDAYS IN MAY

1st	11am	To be announced
8th	11am	
15th	11am	
22nd	11 am	
29th	11 am	

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

- **13th March 12.00 pm.** A Bring and Share Lunch. Simon will be in contact to co-ordinate catering.
- **27th March 3.00pm** Arthur's farewell service

## THE REV. DR ARTHUR STEWART

Everyone at Great Meeting will now be aware that Arthur has informed the Vestry of his wish to retire on 1 April, after thirty three years as our Minister. I am sure that while respecting his decision, there will be general regret, and even sadness. Most people associated with the Congregation will have known no other minister, and the handful of us who have been members longer than Arthur has been minister, will know how blessed we have been to have enjoyed his ministry and care. We have in fact been additionally fortunate, for Arthur has served us beyond the normal age of retirement.

There will be an opportunity for all of us to say farewell (though not goodbye) on **Sunday 27 March**, and to show our appreciation. Appointing his successor will be a challenge, but Arthur has left the Congregation in a strong position.

*David Wykes* President of the Congregation

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## FROM THE MINISTER

Dear Friends,

I could say the only reason I postponed retirement until this late date is that I have been dreading the goodbyes!

My experience of being a minister (since 1979) has in retrospect been all-enfolding. I was married to my dear wife Annie at the Unitarian Chapel in Evesham when I was minister there, and our first daughter Kate was baptised there. Our second daughter Jenny was baptised here at Great Meeting, she was married in the chapel of the college in Oxford where I trained, and of course Annie's funeral was also here at chapel.

These places of worship have been the cradle of my days, and it has been a privilege to share those great rites of passage with members of the congregations, and to have been invited to share in those very personal occasions when you, our members, have marked those memorable and significant days in your own lives: times of sorrow and times of great gladness and celebration.

Another aspect of ministry which I enjoyed for just over ten years was teaching the students at college in Oxford. I had all the joys and challenges of seeing their ideas develop, and of watching them go on into ministry themselves.

I would simply like to use the opportunity of my last “Minister’s Letter ”to say thank you to all our members, friends and officers (remembering also many good people who have passed away), both here at GM and in our District. You have made my experience of ministry rich and memorable.

With good wishes to all,

*Arthur.*

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## **BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT**

Warmest congratulations to Jennifer and Thomas Stewart on the birth on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022 of FOXLEY HUNTER HOLME, a little brother to Forest.



## RENOVATION UPDATE

When I wrote my piece on the renovation of the Chapel for the Autumn/Winter edition of the newsletter the hope had been that the interior works would be finished and we would be back in time for the annual Christmas Carol Service.

Sadly that was not to be as we hit serious problems with the repair of the damaged oak beam. The entire timescale of the project had to be pushed back whilst we awaited modifications to the galvanized steel plate that had been custom made to strengthen the beam.



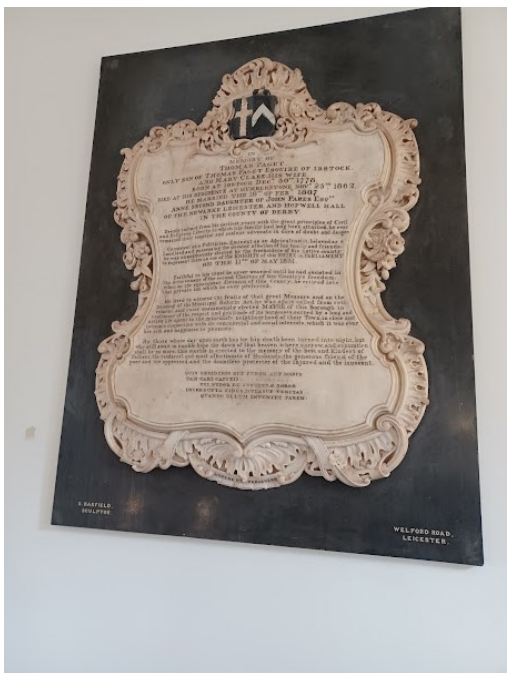
Thankfully, these modifications were successful and in early January the plasterers were able to get to work.

Once this phase was completed the decorators were able to take over. A new colour scheme has been chosen for the roof, the whole of the north east wall and the walls above the balcony.

Reactions so far have been positive, with words such as 'classy' 'timeless' and 'elegant' being used.



On 21st of January the final piece of internal scaffolding came down allowing a much needed clean up operation to take place. We are planning to hold the first service in the renovated chapel on February 13th. Please take this opportunity to look at the nine wall monuments which Vestry decided to have professionally cleaned whilst the scaffolding was in place and they were safely accessible. This work was undertaken by local conservator Alex Carrington and funded by a generous grant from the Pilgrim Trust.



Mike Drucquer



## VISIT BY STUDENTS: LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY DEPT OF ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE

Fifty six students attended in two sessions through the afternoon of 25th November. Ian Baggott from PRP Structural Engineers and John Eaton RIBA presented a powerpoint about the chapel renovations and the technical challenges faced. Simon Hall, congregational support lead was in attendance to meet and greet. Mike Drucquer talked within the chapel about the origins and briefly about the heritage. It was interesting that none of the students were familiar with non-conformist chapels.

A small party asked to go back into the chapel to learn more at the end. They nearly missed the coach back to Loughborough!



## CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT LEAD: SIMONS' REFLECTIONS

It seems quite a while now since mid-November, particularly after having eight weeks in the south of France beforehand, which was sunny nearly every single day (and warm with it too) and I've experienced some very cold days in the Garden Room over the past month or so in comparison!

I started the combined role (including Lettings Co-ordinator and Heritage Outreach Officer) with a great sense of excitement and anticipation and those feelings have remained with me throughout the past couple of months and continue.

Initially there was (and still is to some extent) a great deal to explore and processes to discover and learn – I'm quite amazed that after a good number of years as a member of our congregation, I knew hardly anything about our administration or even where certain things were kept or recorded! I was extremely lucky (as we all were) to have employed Shazeen previously, as she had been an excellent administrator and all the paperwork/files had been left in a very organised and detailed fashion, including full instructions for the person taking over (myself) with check-lists etc, which was very much appreciated.

Most of us know that, to some degree, being 'thrown in at the deep end' is the best way to immerse oneself in the job and that's always worked with me, luckily! There has been quite a lot of information to review and understand, along with various processes for dealing with our room hirers including the monthly invoicing of course.

In terms of the Heritage Outreach element of the overall role, I am very lucky indeed in that Mike has been an amazing manager for the whole of the restorations project and to that end there was a visit booked for over 30 students of Loughborough University to come and have a presentation about all the works that had been in progress at our chapel. The visit was towards the end of November, less than a fortnight after I



started the job, which allowed me to participate and learn a lot about all the design and implementation of the new roof externally, along with some very interesting history (illustrated very well with an array of recent photographs) about the ceiling beams and restoration process that was well underway. The visit also included our Architect and , so meeting both of them was a bonus for me in this respect. The tutor and students very much enjoyed and appreciated the presentation and the chance to ask questions of those involved in the project as part of their courses.

My role will encompass the development of further visits and engagement with various organisations (youth/education/community) to enable/engender awareness and knowledge-sharing of both the historical importance of the chapel building in general and the extent and success of the recent restorative works in particular. We welcomed a small group from Leicester University for a general tour of the chapel and grounds (with some focus on the gravestones) who also appreciated the opportunity to be made aware of our presence.

Our Congregational Support role has been launched very well (even if I say so myself!) with a number of initiatives having started already:-

**Soul Haven** each Weds eve for 30 mins in the Garden Room and on Zoom - we've had between 4 and 9 people attending since the end of November

**Coffee Mornings** each Fri morning (10:30 – 12:30) in the Garden Room for both members of the congregation/family/friends and the general public – only half a dozen people attending so far, but a good opportunity as the weather improves and we start advertising the event!

**Congregational Visits** – David and I have been to the homes of 9 members so far in January, concentrating initially on those whom we've not seen in our chapel for some time

(due to health issues/Covid concerns etc) – *please do let me know if you'd like a visit yourself*

We have many ideas of further opportunities for us all spending time together in fellowship and spiritual exploration (possibly a Lent Course and some form of Retreat later in the summer?) along with concerts, meals and other social events in our building.

I'll be e-mailing (posting to those without e-mail) a letter/ update shortly, with a request for your input and feedback on suggestions for the future, along with details of proposed events over the coming few months.

We are extremely grateful to everyone for supporting this role (still in its infancy).

*Simon Hall*

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## WHY I LIFT...

I think you could call me an “Accidental Powerlifter”. I started lifting weights, very gently, about 8 years ago, when I did a series of sessions at a local gym on weight loss...I have a constant battle with weight. The idea of “resistance work”, which is pushing and pulling, is that it increases muscle, which has a higher energy requirement than other tissues. So, although you may not use as many calories during a workout compared to cardio work, the calories keep on being used after you finish. This combined with the benefits of reversing natural muscle wasting and bone density loss that occurs with aging, is why I continue. I really do not want to have difficulty supporting my own weight to get out of a chair or be so frail as to fall and break a hip, with usually fatal results. More recently there has been research to show that sitting/sedentary lifestyle contributes to the development of diabetes (there is a strong family history) so I am up and about as much as I can be. The weightlifting really took off

during Covid Lockdown. There wasn't much else to do but work and exercise. I had been working with a Personal Trainer twice a week at the gym and his income basically vanished overnight, so when he offered training by video I upped it to 3 times a week. I found some weights and a bench in the shed that belonged to one of my sons and kept going. After lockdown I continued, lifting decent amounts of weight but for several repetitions and sets. What changed was when I started at Nottingham Trent University in September this year and joined the Powerlifting Club. Powerlifting concentrates on 3 specific lifts-Squat, Bench Press and Deadlift. In competition you just do one repetition (so pick it up , put it down and walk away for a rest) so you can lift much heavier weights. The photo shows me at probably the only formal competition I will do. As it was University Event I was placed in the "Over 24 years old" age group. It was great fun.

While lifting heavy weights is not for everyone, lifting lighter weights will benefit everyone. I can recommend a book called "Strong Women Stay Young " by Dr Miriam Nelson. This starts with exercises without weights, just getting out of the chair, and progresses to small 1-2 lb weights, There are also books called "Younger Next Year" for men and for women which might suit some. Get moving, get pushing and pulling...



*Diane Romano -  
Woodward*

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