



Great Meeting Chapel Leicester

Newsletter - Summer 2023



300 years of Freedom, Reason and Tolerance

SUNDAY SERVICES — all at 11.00 am

June

4th Flower Service. Please bring along a wild or cultivated garden flower garden as part of a 100 year old Unitarian tradition

11th Simon Hall

18th Simon Hall

25th Arek Malecki's first service as Minister

July

2nd The Minister

9th ”

23rd ”

30th ”

August

6th The Minister

13th ”

20th ”

27th ”

September

3rd The Minister

10th ”

17th ”

24th ”



WEEKLY EVENTS

THURSDAY 11.00– 1.00 AM : COFFEE MORNING

THURSDAY 1.00 –1. 30 AM MEDITATION

SPECIAL EVENTS

September 9th—16th

Heritage Open Week

Saturday September 9th

Tea in the Garden

LETTER FROM JUDE

It's been a privilege to work in the role of congregation support lead for the chapel over the last few months. Coming into the 'office' on a Thursday morning to the beautiful building and garden, putting out the coffee morning and meditation sign, getting the garden room warmed up and looking forward to some varied and always interesting conversations. For some of you it's a regular slot for connecting, for others when other commitments and health allow. Every week we host folk who find us through the Meet-up app that Simon joined us up to over a year ago now. Quite a few people are attending one of the city universities and looking to make local connections. I love that we are usually a multi-generational & cultural gathering. We also have passers-by coming through the doors, including a Leicester based artist Kendrick Snodin who was immediately impressed by the chapel and its potential for art. He will be coming back to exhibit during the heritage days openings in September which is a lovely addition. Our meditation time has branched out into the chapel on a couple of occasions to allow others to continue chatting in the garden room and people have commented that they appreciated the quality of stillness even if on some days blankets were very much required! I remain hopeful for the opportunity to sit outside one week, rain and fresh breezes allowing.

On Sunday March 12th we had our second board games lunch of the year. After an enjoyable lunch around one big table, with gentle encouragement we soon had two games in progress: Ticket to Ride, making routes across Europe, and Codenames, making word associations. Once we were warmed up there was no stopping us and much fun was had. Another session will be planned.'

I enjoyed various aspects of attending the Unitarian General Assembly in the week before Easter - connecting with a wide variety of

people from all over the UK and further afield; attending a variety of spiritual sessions including meditation, group sharings; participating in the conference choir with rehearsals and then a performance for the anniversary service; joining in group discussions about how to help congregations survive and thrive in challenging times as well as understanding more about the business side of the organization and committee from plenary sessions, plus voting for a resolution calling on the government to reconsider its Asylum Bill. For me, a particular highlight was the energy and interest around social justice issues. I have begun to more fully appreciate these aspects have always played a big role in the Unitarian movement. This was also the subject of Winnie Gordon's anniversary address which we used extracts from as part of our congregation service at Great Meeting at the end of April on Earth Care, People Care. Also, many of the break-out sessions on offer were discussing topics around how we can respond to the needs of our communities both local and global as unitarians of the 21st century. Something for us to think about in our congregation, perhaps linking up with Hinckley too and utilising central support that is also available. Let's keep talking and sharing ideas.

Welcoming Arek to Leicester over the last few months has been an exciting time. I was expecting him to need some help getting a feel for the city layout. However, driving and walking around together I quickly realised that one of his many attributes is an excellent sense of direction and super-quick memory and analysis of places: I was learning as much from him as he did from me! So perhaps the handover time we have together at the end of June will prove similar.....



Board Game
lunch

Thank you to everyone for supporting me in the role over the last six months, especially Mike, Simon and Diane.

Jude Casson

CAUSES FOR CELEBRATION

Congratulations to **Manish** who marked 6 months of being mental health ambassador for the University of Derby with his first workshop, held on 4th May, to an appreciative audience of students. The workshop covered how to deal with mental health, and the pressures that all the students have to face and deal with in their everyday lives.

Manish finds it very rewarding to help students combat stress and deal with the pressures of today's modern society. For the last 8 years he has been a mental health researcher for the NHS Leicester Partnership, as a part-time volunteer, and he finds that both these roles go hand in hand, by helping and supporting people from all walks of life.

As the workshop on mental health was so successful the University of Derby now want to move forward with this project, by exploring and looking into other new areas of both the symptoms, and dealing with this illness.

Congratulations to Vestry member **Peter Soulsby** on being recently elected, for a fourth term, to the role of City Mayor of Leicester. A fantastic achievement!

A very warm 'well done' is also extended to **Manjula Sood** who was elected to serve as a Labour Party Ward Councillor in the May 2023 local elections in Leicester. Manjula will be representing the Stoneygate Ward.

Manjula has a vast amount of experience in local politics, including becoming the first ever Asian female Lord Mayor in the UK. Manjula is very much a people's person, and she always goes out of her way to help the community with miscellaneous issues ranging from crime through to housing. We kindly wish her all the best for the coming days, months and years as she continues to serve the local community and society.

FOLK CONCERT

Thursday 27th of April saw another fantastic night of music at Great Meeting. After the success of the *Great Meeting 5* and headliners *The Illusive Quartet* last year it was certainly time for another gig in our awesome venue. The natural acoustics were used to full effect when folk combo *Looma* took to the stage. Although there had been some hiccups in arranging the night as the planned headliner Roger Wilson was struck down by illness, and then *Looma* were missing one of their players to a back injury. In spite of this there was a full sound comprising Tim Garland on guitar and cittern (a ten stringed lute-like instrument) and vocals, Orcadian Liz Logie on accordion and vocals and Mark Theobald on harmonicas and vocals. Re-arranging their sets at the last minute with consummate professionalism to cater for the loss of guitarist Bob Gilmour, they concocted a wonderful mix of ensemble and solo numbers which kept the audience's toes tapping and enthralled everyone. Their promo material describes their music as "acoustic roots and folk music from the swamps of Louisiana to the Swedish midnight sun, and everywhere in between." And it didn't disappoint. We were treated to heart rending self penned love tunes, earthy blues mouth harp mashups and romping accordion waltzes. The tunes were diverse in origin from local to British isles and much further afield. Many people commented on one particular favourite a fusion of Yiddish traditional tunes "Myen ruen platz" and "Yovanke yovanke". Tim's delicate cittern work on this number rang out through the perfect acoustics of the chapel evoking a sultry evening in Eastern Europe. We had blues from the deep South in the form of "Lost John" which Mark skillfully arranged weaving it into and out of other blues numbers. Liz treated us to Mountain of Women, and Mary West's Waltz which ripped along at a great pace. A touching moment was Tim's rendition of his own

love song to his wife "Never let me go". Simple melody underpinned by deft fretwork and couched in the luxurious sonorous cushion of the whole ensemble. The evening was well attended and the bar ably manned by Jude, Nicky and Mike did a roaring trade in wine and local beer from the Charnwood brewery. After costs incurred by the chapel, the band were pleased with the takings they made which happily means they will be only too happy to come back and play in our wonderful venue again.

Lessons we have learnt are that in this digital age printed materials don't do as well as word of mouth or Facebook advertising in attracting people, we are probably best to limit tickets to around 50 as the bar can get very busy and we should explicitly encourage people to get up and dance if they want to as some can be overawed by the chapel setting. All these things we will take forward as we hope to develop our program of music in the future and encourage the city to become aware of and use our magnificent restored building.



Huw Casson

SOME THOUGHTS ON COMMUNION TRAYS

Last time our minister-to-be, Arek, was visiting we had a look at the vestry together. It is currently cluttered with raffle prizes, boxes of literature, plates and audio equipment. I will be having a sort out on May 17th to get it tidy and polished up for June. I am hoping to make the beautiful patterned Victorian sink in the far cupboard accessible . Even if it cannot be used, it would be nice to show visitors.

Arek noticed something in the glass fronted cupboard which I had seen before but not known the purpose. We possess 3 communion trays two with silver handles and one brass. It must have been a long time ago that they were used, as I have never heard mention of them.



A little investigation of the hallmarks show that they were produced in 1904 by the company T Land and Sons of Trafalgar Street, Sheffield. If we were to purchase them now, a very plain wood tray would cost between £75 and £100. Glass communion cups are £40 for 20, stainless steel £44 for 12.



Such are the advances of modern technology that one can purchase prefilled grape juice cups with bread wafer at 500 for £145 off Amazon. However we are committed to avoiding the use of single use plastics for environmental reasons.

I think I have seen something similar to this walnut bread plate (cost £45.) in the Garden Room. It made me ponder on the concept of Communion in Unitarian Universalist worship. It is mentioned in the leaflet “Your first time at a Unitarian service? – what to expect “. Bury Unitarian Church mentions a July communion service on their Facebook page. There seems to be more of a tradition of Communion in congregations in the USA, indeed some mention is made of a legal requirement to do so. I quote from an article by Transient and Permanent referenced at the end.

“We’re talking here about the traditional Communion based on the New Testament, a rite that brings people and God together and binds the community in memory and appreciation of the values espoused by Jesus. At the church in question, Communion is held annually on Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday. Maundy Thursday was the day that Jesus actually took bread and wine while gathered with his disciples and invited them to consume them in memory of him, indicating that they were symbolically his own flesh and blood.”

And some other perspectives:

“As an Army Chaplain Candidate who is a UU, I do perform a Universalist Communion service for soldiers. I find that it supports the religious needs of soldiers who are not UU, but is still rather radical by opening the communion to any and all who wish to participate. I have never done so in a UU church, even though I have gotten the occasional request. Whenever I have brought it up (twice) the negative reaction has been strong.” Why? It is a powerful ceremony, with powerful associations. So powerful, it is hard to see the deeper Universalist message within the Universalist communion. If anything will bring up hurt filled Christian memories, it is communion.”

“The most controversial thing I did at the Chaplain School was perform a Universalist communion. My colleagues simply were flabbergasted at the idea of a communion where the table is open

to anyone and everyone. “As the table set by Jesus was open to all, all are invited to participate in this service of communion.””

“Pullman Memorial Universalist Church, founded in Albion, New York in 1891, celebrated communion in a special Good Friday service every year since 1896 until 2009. In 2010 the Good Friday service was discontinued. In 2011, I initiated communion again, but now it is a part of the regular Easter Sunday program. “

“I never took communion until I was at my internship site in Quincy, MA.. It worked like this; the congregation would stand in a circle around the sanctuary and then the deacons, (yes deacons) in white gloves would come around and share the bread and the cup (intinction.) In my first ministry I celebrated communion on Maundy Thursday and really enjoyed doing it. Perhaps it was because the folks who showed up were practicing their religion, something so radical.”

“I attend Universalist National Memorial Church in Washington, DC. It is a member congregation of UUA, and, yes, we do perform an OPEN communion with bread and grape juice. By-laws mandate at least once a year on Maundy Thursday, but it seems like we are having it once per calendar quarter.”

James Ford has produced a UU communion service which can be found at this link :

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2009/03/the-divine-liturgy-of-jesus-child-of-mary-joseph-a-celebration-of-communion-for-unitarian-universalists.html>

So Communion has historically been part of Great Meeting heritage. I like the idea that it is not restricted to certain members or those who have confessed a particular faith but is available to everybody. Radical indeed. Never having discussed it before, there may be congregation members who feel uncomfortable with this ritual. And that's OK as well.

One thing is for sure, as a congregation we are looking forward to Arek's arrival and going forward in new ways.

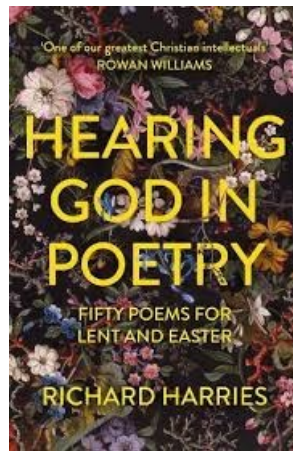
<https://transientandpermanent.wordpress.com/2008/03/05/does-your-unitarian-universalist-church-perform-communion/>

Diane Romano Woodward

LENT POETRY GROUP

This lent Jude Casson organized a wonderful weekly poetry group, allowing members of the congregation to connect and spent some inspirational and contemplative time together. We reflected on poems from Richard Harries's collection 'Hearing God in Poetry'. It's a very eclectic mix of fifty poets from Chaucer and Shakespeare, to Toni Morrison and Roger McGough and covering a very wide human experience. The selection is grouped into themes for each week of Lent and gave us the opportunity to look at one or two a week of our choosing, with Harries's insightful reflections on the poems and each poet's life as a springboard. We reflected on 'Glory in the ordinary' and the transformative power of nature by reading "Tintern Abbey" by William Wordsworth where Wordsworth revisits a location from his youth and contemplates the impact it has had on his sense of self and his understanding of the world. Other themes covered 'Parental love' and 'Being Fully Human' where we read 'Thursday, Eve' by Toni Morrison. Through Eve's voice, the poem reflects on the challenges and burdens of womanhood and reimagines her story with empathy and introspection.

My personal favourite was "Jubilate Agno" by Christopher Smart. This is a lengthy poem in which Smart expresses his gratitude and praise to God while contemplating various aspects of his life, including his cat Joffrey. We are looking forward to another autumn poetry group when the nights start drawing in.



Gabby Provan

DIRECTORY

MINISTER

Arek Malecki
Tel: 0746 2958402
[Email: a.maleki.uk@gmail.com](mailto:a.maleki.uk@gmail.com)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Nicky Drucquer
Tel: 0116 2219685
nickydrucquer@gmail.com

PRESIDENT

Dr David Wykes
'Whitewings',
3 Southmeads Road, Oadby,
Leicester LE2 2LR
Tel: 0116 2710784
Director@dwlib.co.uk

ORGANIST

Mr Robin Lister
Tel: 0787 019 5026

CHAPEL ADDRESS

Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel
45 East Bond Street,
Leicester, LE1 4SX

CHAIRMAN

Dr Michael Drucquer
47, Elms Road
Leicester, Le2 3JD
Tel: 0116 2219685
m.drucquer@ntlworld.com

CARETAKER and LETTINGS

Gary Agate
greatmeetinglettings@gmail.com

CHAPEL WEBSITE

www.leicesterunitarians.co.uk

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Mrs Diane Romano-Woodward
9 Glen Rise, Glen Parva,
Leicester, LE2 1HN.
Tel: 0116 2785820
Mobile: 07962427295
fossilmatron@msn.com



LeicsUnitarians



Leicester_unitarians



The Great Meeting Unitari-
an Chapel, Leicester