

Bury Unitarian Church



If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

February 2021

Welcome!

Dear all,

Welcome to the first edition of the Bury Unitarian Church *Calendar* for 2021, and a (rather late, perhaps) happy new year to you all.

As usual, you will find a list of services and events in the centre pages: you may wish to pull these out to keep on a notice board once you've finished reading the rest of the *Calendar*.

As ever, I'm really grateful to everyone who's sent things in for this edition – and I'm especially pleased that we have a contribution from Freddy, who is a member of our Junior Church.

You will also see that there is a formal notice about the church AGM, which will look different this year: please try and take the time to read this carefully, and make a note of all the dates.

I really hope that you enjoy the *Calendar*, and that in these times where we can't be together, it helps to bring a sense of community and togetherness.

Kate Brady McKenna.

The deadline for entries for the March edition of the *Calendar* is Tuesday 23rd February, at around teatime: this means it can be distributed with your services on or around Saturday 27th.

By the time the March edition comes out, it will be pretty clear that spring is advancing fast. I wonder if you have anything you'd like to submit on the subject of spring? Maybe you have a memory, or a favourite poem, or a prayer?

And, of course, if there's anything else you'd like in the *Calendar*, just let me know!

Letter from the Minister.

Dear all,

Firstly, I wish you as happy a 2021 as can be. I know that it hasn't started with the news we all hoped and prayed for, and we are still in a fairly tight lockdown. And I know that we are all missing our friends and family, and each other. There is a lot of uncertainty about how things will progress, and a lot of anxiety about the speed with which the virus is spreading.

But still, I wish you a year which has happiness in it.

And there are little pops of happiness and hope springing up: every time I hear that someone has received their first vaccination (or in at least one case, their second vaccination) I do a little cheer. Quite a lot of the congregation have already had theirs, and I'm hoping that it won't be too long before more of us have.

As you will know by now, the Church Officers and myself have decided that the safest and most responsible course of action is to keep the church building closed for at least another month, and to look at the situation again at the end of February.

This means that there will be no services in church on Sundays 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th February.

It is really sad to have to make this decision. Like most of you, I absolutely long for the time when there are no restrictions on how we can worship, and when everything is less strange. But at the moment, with the infection and mortality figures so high, and the NHS under such strain, it really is the only decision we could make.

I am really grateful to the church officers (Anne, Betty, John, Roger, and Susan) for supporting me in making this difficult decision. I know that when we discuss it again at the end of February we will do so with all the many factors in our minds, and that we'll do so lovingly and with good intent.

I am also grateful to everyone in the congregation for being so understanding and accepting of all the changes (including closures of the building) that have happened over the last ten months. I know that it's been really hard for everyone, but none of you have ever made me feel as though you blame me for the decisions, and you've always been cheerful even whilst you've been disappointed.

And, of course, we have no idea what happens next, or how long anything will take. And that's really hard to live with. Please know that if you ever want a chat – however serious or silly – that's what I'm for! You should know by now that I don't believe in "mustn't grumble", because I think grumbling occasionally is really good for us. I also know that this whole business is having an effect on our mental health, and that things can genuinely seem too much sometimes. I am not a mental health professional but I am a minister and I am here to listen to you, whatever the situation is. Sometimes just expressing how you feel can really help.

Of course, although the church building is closed, the church itself is still busy. Whilst the building is closed we are holding a Zoom service at 11.15am every Sunday, and it is surprisingly easy to join that by telephone. I am also continuing to make sure everyone gets a copy of the Sunday service every week, so that those who want to can join in on their own at home or with a friend on the telephone. We still have our virtual coffee morning, book club, and camera club, and you're welcome to join those, as well. And I know, of course, that many of you are also working hard to make sure that none of us are left without contact: I am always hearing of someone phoning someone, or emailing them, or dropping them a card, and it genuinely warms my heart when I hear of those things.

These things will pass. Spring is very near.

As always, I send you my love.

Rev Kate Brady McKenna.

Presidential matters.

As I suspected, December and January were busy months. On November 29th, we attended Newcastle's zoom service, which Rev. Ralph Catts conducted; it was excellent, and all praise to Ralph for working so late into the evening, as he was transmitting from Melbourne. The wonders of modern technology! Earlier that week, I led worship at Belper and found the members, once more, a friendly, receptive group. December 4th brought my own brush with technology; I was asked to supply a 10-second video-clip as a contribution to Cross Street Manchester's "Anthems for Advent" event---a wonderful collection of readings, music and prayers---all in aid of charity. Suffice it to say that my brief piece took two hours to sort out, but all was well, in the end!

On the following day, Kate and I took part in a chat-session which involved a hook-up between Newcastle Unitarians and The North Shore Unitarian Church in Chicago; this proved interesting and informative; several other congregations from different parts of Europe also joined in, so we were truly a cosmopolitan gathering. On December 6th, I was invited to offer Greetings from the GA to the East Midlands Union, at its Annual Meeting; this was combined with its Christmas Service and turned out to be a beautiful, joyous occasion, attended by over 120 people; it was a pleasure to spend time with them all.

Sunday, December 13th brought the Ainsworth Christmas Service, which I had been asked to conduct, in person; we kept being told that Christmas, 2020, would be different, and my service was definitely not altogether traditional; a tribute to Dorothy Roberts was included, as were 70th Birthday greetings to Shirley, but everything fitted together, and the overall atmosphere was one of seasonal cheer. In the afternoon, we joined another hook-up service---this time between Padiham, Dublin, Cork, and the Fourth Unitarian Church, in New York. The Lancashire Collaborative Ministry held

its special Christmas Service, on the afternoon of the 19th; all the NELUM churches were invited, as well as many others, and at least 70 people attended and enjoyed an excellent service; my contribution was to deliver the final reading, which I was happy to do. The next day, off-duty, for once, I was able to attend services at Padiham and at Bury, both of which concentrated on the nativity, and how it might be interpreted, metaphorically.

Bury had decided not to hold a service on December 27th, so we zoomed to York, to join their "Serendipity" Service, at which those present were asked to bring a reading, or similar contribution; you can read one of the poems elsewhere in this issue. To mark the New Year, we returned to York, on January 3rd, for Rev. Stephanie Bisby's first service as their Minister; I had previously written to her to congratulate her on her appointment, and I do wish her all the very best in her ministry.

I was invited to join Padiham's new Discussion Group, on January 14th, to introduce the evening's topic: Debt; a good conversation ensued, and the LCM Minister, Rev. Shannon Ledbetter, later formulated a Debt Statement, which, hopefully, will receive an airing on Radio Lancashire, in the near future. I was back with Padiham and the LCM, on January 17th, to lead worship, when I took as my subject the idea of "Circling Years"; the service was well-attended, and I was complimented on its thought-provoking qualities.

I congratulate Kate on the quality of her Christmas services in 2020, especially, many of which had to be conducted mainly online. Her Christingle Service, on December 13th, was a joy to attend, as we decorated our oranges and tried to work out how to keep our candles alight without setting everything else on fire! Christmas Eve's Communion Service was moving and reverent, and very much in keeping with the mood of the moment, as was the Christmas Day Service; we celebrated, but with

restraint, and looked forward to improvements during 2021, especially nearer to the Christmas period. I was particularly impressed by our crib scene, last December, as it was differently arranged so as to flow down the steps of the dais, with Mary and Joseph moving closer to the stable, as we approached Christmas-time. Many thanks, once again, to both Kate and Ade, for all their hard work producing services, each week; Christmas is always an extremely busy time, and they thoroughly deserved their break, afterwards. Attendance at Sunday services increases by the week, and we are attracting more visitors as we go along.

Sadly, the Christmas-period brought Lockdown 3, and, although churches could have stayed open, we took the decision not to do so, because of rising figures and the contagiousness of new strains of the virus. We opened on January 3rd, but not after that, although the situation is under review. Again, we are surrounded by uncertainty, and I am informed that the GA Annual Meetings, consisting of business-matters only, will take place online, this year; the date is probably going to be April 24th; details will be forthcoming soon.. On a more positive note, vaccinations are taking place at a great rate, in our area, and I hope that we will all receive them before much more time has passed. Roger and I have both received our first jabs, which is encouraging news: "light at the end of the tunnel" is a popular phrase, at present. By the time you receive this calendar, the nights will be a little lighter, the spring will be a little closer, and our hopes may be a little higher. We both send our love and very best wishes to everybody; keep warm, and keep well!

Anne Mills.

Notes from the church building.

Under certain conditions, cracks appear. Now that is a rather obvious statement really, actually quite bland and meaningless to some degree, of course cracks appear under certain conditions... but, what conditions? The answer to that question can tell you an awful lot about what you have to do next.

Because under certain conditions, cracks appear, the property manager is doing a running battle with cracks along the downstairs hall. It's not a difficult job, just time consuming and annoying. It's all very straightforward, and repairable though, especially at the moment, now that he doesn't need to worry about getting rid of the rather acidic smell of paint a week before a service.

The conditions that pushed the cracks into the building have been happening over a long period, in the case of our building, they are the slow march of two inevitable things; water and time. A tiny bit of tender care here and there can be something that can make a very real difference, but only after you can see that the cracks are there.

Under certain conditions cracks appear, and everyone involved in the church deserves to take a bow, because the one thing that hasn't happened since the pandemic began is the sort of cracks in the church, in the community, that would genuinely reflect the enormity of what has happened to the world this last year.

A lot of this has been due to the Minister in particular, but we must not forget the trustees, the church officers, the church council and the various committee members doing their best to predict what cracks would appear before they appeared, and working from there to stop them from forming. From the distribution of paper based services, to online services, from the contact made between members to keep in touch over the phone, from the meetings that still take place, now in the living room rather than the church hall, all of this has kept the community together; with no major damage forming, and that's really something for everyone to feel proud of.

Ade Brady.

2020, from 2021: The minister looks back at services during a pandemic.

My first sermon of each new year normally includes a rundown of what we did the previous year. I list our services, our activities, and our successes. That didn't feel right for our first service this year, so I'm including some of it here. Some of this will be repeated in my annual report to the AGM, which will, of course, contain more details as well.

Most years we hold 51 Sunday morning services in the church building. This year, because of lockdowns, we only held twenty-five services in the church (two of them were on the same day). For all but ten of those, we could only have a maximum of sixteen members present. We couldn't sing hymns, we couldn't join in spoken prayer except in a murmur, and we couldn't gather for tea, coffee, or chat, before or afterwards. After the lockdown in March, we had no organ accompaniments until November. After what we didn't know was our last unrestricted service together, on 15th March 2020, our services were not the same as we were used to.

But whilst we couldn't meet at all, and whilst we couldn't meet in the way we wanted to, we 'gathered' in other ways. From the first week of the first lockdown, everyone received a copy of a service each Sunday, which they could read through at home, or read through on the phone with a friend. In mid-June we started using Zoom so that those of us with access to the internet, or who were able to join by telephone, could worship together in the same 'virtual' space. When we worship on Zoom we can see and hear each other, and we can stay for a chat after the worship is over. We have held twenty-eight Zoom services, including a Christingle service and an online communion.

Some of us have taken the opportunity to visit other churches' Zoom services, and the minister encourages this.

It has been quite the year. Our usual ways of worship have been thrown up in the air, and if we think back, this was very strange and quite frightening at first. But we have adapted magnificently.

When things start to feel 'normal' again, let's not forget how it felt to worship during a global pandemic, and let's not forget to be proud of how we did it.

Foodbank: an update.

You may remember that just before Christmas burglars broke into the Foodbank in Radcliffe and more-or-less emptied their stocks. This was an absolutely horrible thing to happen, particularly at a time when the need for food parcels is so high.

But within less than a day of me letting you all know what had happened, several of you had brought me bags full of food to pass on; several of you had made arrangements to go to the Foodbank yourself with supplies; several of you mobilised your friends and family and, in one case, arranged for an extremely generous donation from another Foodbank; and several of you had arranged to donate money so that I could go shopping on your behalf.

About a third of the money we received was used to buy food, and the rest was paid into the Foodbank's bank so that they can use it as they need to.

We couldn't deliver all the food we bought immediately, because thanks to everyone's generosity, including our own, the Foodbank actually got overrun with donations and asked us to hold off a while. This is a truly wonderful problem to have.

I know that since this incident some of you have continued to make regular donations direct to the Foodbank, and I know that this makes a huge difference to them: despite the incredible generosity everyone showed when they were burgled, the need is ongoing.

Someone has been arrested for the burglary and is awaiting trial. I hope and pray that they are dealt with in a way which brings feelings of justice all round.

I am really pleased and proud – though not surprised – by everyone's response to this horrible situation.

Thank you.

Kate Brady McKenna.

Church meetings in December and January.

Finance committee, 7th December.

At this meeting we discussed the search for the new treasurer; fire safety; the electrical system; the role of lettings officer; the financial reports and our financial standing; the Traidcraft stall; the benefits of having a Premises Manager and the way this works; membership and quota payments; the condition of the former cemetery at Holebottom; charitable donations; Christmas presents for the organists and cleaners; and the weekly collections and how these could continue to take place.

The next meeting will be on Monday 8th March at 2pm, and will take place on Zoom.

Worship committee, 11th January.

At this meeting we discussed the Memories Book, which is ready to be circulated, and decided to create another one dealing with our lives during the pandemic (see another article in the *Calendar*); this year's GA meetings; worship over the last few months (see another article in the *Calendar*); our young people and the fact that although we are unable to provide much for them at the moment they are all safe and well; training courses; virtual visits to other congregations; sharing contact details of congregation members; contact between ourselves and the National Unitarian Fellowship; membership numbers; church flowers; the website, Fairtrade; a new midweek Zoom session starting in February (see another article); and room bookings.

No date was set for a future meeting.

These are, of course, very brief headlines of the meetings: if you would like further details, please just ask.

Kate Brady McKenna,

Church treasurer.

As matters stand, at the moment, Roger and Neville are gradually taking over some of the Treasurer's duties, supported and encouraged by John. This daunting task is a somewhat difficult process, because none of them can meet together, so communications are limited to emails and telephone calls. The Minister and the church-officers are extremely grateful for the efforts of all three people, as they strive to keep our financial wheels turning, in the short-term. It will take some time to work out what needs to happen, and how this should be achieved, so, if a problem arises, please be patient; circumstances are complex. We would still welcome help from church-members; if you feel you could assist, please contact any of the three men concerned. Thank you, again, to Roger, Neville and John; your work is greatly appreciated.

Anne Mills.

Collections.

Whilst we are not meeting together for services, at the moment, it is still possible to contribute to the running of the church, by sending money to Anne Mills; cheques or notes are preferred to cash, please. By the time this calendar appears, everybody involved in the envelope-scheme should have received this year's envelopes; if you have not, please speak to Anne or Kate. Margaret Pollard will be sending out receipts shortly; apologies for any delays, but we are not operating under normal conditions!

Anne Mills.

Church contact details.

Kate will be contacting everyone individually very soon, to ask if they would like their address, email address, and possibly their date of birth made available to the rest of the congregation. There is no obligation to say yes when she asks!

Kate Brady McKenna.

Book Club.

Members have been meeting, approximately once a fortnight, on Wednesdays, to discuss a variety of books; on December 30th, we considered "The 39 Steps", by John Buchan, an action-packed adventure, which was generally enjoyed, even if it strained credibility a little too far, occasionally!

January 13th brought a conversation about Elizabeth Gaskell's "Cranford", a delightful comedy of manners, with both poignant and humorous scenes; we discovered that Val Chamberlain's grandmother had taken the lead in a dramatised version of the novel, at Bank Street Chapel, in December, 1929; the Women's League had acted it, with help from The Shuttleworth Sunshine Club, and The Bury Times had written an article, full of praise, about the performance [*ed's note: see article*]. The Elizabeth Gaskell House, in Manchester, is presenting a series of talks, during February and March, which some of the members wish to attend; a DVD of the BBC dramatisation, belonging to one member, is to be lent out to interested parties.

The last meeting in January took place on Wednesday the 27th, when Neville Shute's "A Town Like Alice" was the chosen novel. We have discovered an online site, the Gutenberg Press, or Project, which allows access to free copies of certain books for those who do not own the book or the Kindle version---an excellent find!

Dates and books for future discussions have not yet been finalised; if you would like information about February's events, please contact Anne Mills. Everyone is welcome to join in!

Anne Mills.

Stop press: the next book club meeting will be on Wednesday 17th February, and we will be discussing A Tale of Two Cities, by Charles Dickens.

Camera Club.

Meetings continue to take place, every fortnight, and the February ones will be held on Monday the 1st and Monday the 15th, when the subject of Camera-Settings is due to be discussed. Members continue to select and supply beautiful photographs for each issue of our calendar, including its cover, and are also planning to assemble a folio of pictures to complement the Memories of Lockdown articles which Betty and Val are hoping to collect from members of the congregation. All are welcome at the meetings; please contact Janet Thatcher for details, if you are interested.

Anne Mills.

Leading change in the congregation.

Kate, Val, Roger and Anne are currently pursuing the above course, which is held via Zoom on alternate Monday-evenings; this started in January and will run until the end of April; it looks like being a very demanding series of sessions, with reading and homework required between one meeting and the next. We are hopeful that what is learned during these four months will be of great help to our congregation as a whole, once we are able to reopen the church fully and permanently; we will then need to assess where we are, and what we need to do, in order to move forward---a necessary process, but an interesting one. I will update everyone, each month, about what has been taking place.

Anne Mills.

Worship in February 2021

There will be no services in church during February 2021.

Sunday services:

We will meet on Zoom at 11.15am every Sunday morning, and you are welcome to join us over the internet or by Zoom.

Log in details are the same for every service:

Meeting ID: 849 7456 6116

Phone numbers: 0203 901 7895; 0131 460 1196; 0203 051 2874; 0203 481 5237; 0203 481 5240

Midweek reflection, sharing, and chat.

We are starting a new session midweek, initially every Tuesday evening at 7pm. *The timing is subject to change depending on what suits people!*

7.00pm – 7.30pm: reflection and a chance to share.

7.30pm – 8.00pm: chat.

You are welcome to either part of the session, or to both.

Log in details are the same every week:

Meeting ID: 812 3292 6975

Phone numbers: 0203 901 7895; 0131 460 1196; 0203 051 2874; 0203 481 5237; 0203 481 5240

Congregational AGM 2021

This is a preliminary notice that our Congregational AGM will take place on March 28th, 2021; the formal notification and full details will appear in the March Calendar. We need a quorum of 25, so this means that the meeting will be conducted by post and email (unless we are able to meet in person). Zoom will not be involved.

The meeting falls into 3 sections. First: Reports from various members of the congregation; these must reach Kate by February 20th, so that she can assemble a booklet and send it out on the following weekend, when the March Calendars are also distributed. Second: the election of the church-officers; nominations for these posts must reach the Church Secretary by March 14th, so that details can be distributed and the results announced on the date of the meeting; if you wish to nominate or second a person for a post, please secure permission first; only church-members may stand, nominate or second. Third: proposed changes to the church administrative and committee structure need to be ratified, so that details can be inserted in the church-rules.

Any Other Business should be notified to the Church Secretary, in writing, in advance, by March 14th; the church-officers will then decide how these matters will be treated; please do not submit AOB unless it is strictly necessary.

This process will be cumbersome, but, with goodwill and co-operation on all sides, it should be possible.

Anne Mills: Church Secretary

What's On, February 2021

- Monday 1st Feb:** Camera club: camera settings. (Zoom ID varies).
- Tuesday 2nd Feb:** Midweek Reflection, sharing, and chat.
(Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)
- Saturday 6th Feb:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 7th Feb:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)
- Tuesday 9th Feb:** Midweek Reflection, sharing, and chat.
(Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)
- Saturday 13th Feb:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 14th Feb:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)
- Monday 3rd Feb:** Camera club (Zoom ID varies)
- Tuesday 16th Feb:** Midweek Reflection, sharing, and chat.
(Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)
- Wednesday 17th Feb:** Book club, discussing *A Tale of Two Cities*
(Zoom ID 885 0522 3984)
- Saturday 20th Feb:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 21st Feb:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)
- Tuesday 23rd Feb:** Midweek Reflection, sharing, and chat.
(Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)
- Tuesday 23rd Feb:** Deadline for articles for the March *Calendar*.
- Saturday 27th Feb:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 28th Feb:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)

Church Information

Minister: Rev. Kate Brady McKenna
0161 460 3363 / 07751 240886
revkatemckenna@gmail.com

Church address: 1 Bank Street, Bury, BL9 0DN

Church phone: 0161 761 3785

Website: www.bury-unitarian-church.org.uk

Facebook: Bury Unitarian Church

Church officers

Chair of trustees:	Susan Holt	07876 716563
Chair of church council:	Betty Kenyon	01204 887222
Chair of congregation:	Anne Mills	0161 762 0943
		5, Arley Avenue, Bury, BL9 5HD
Church secretary:	Anne Mills	<i>as above</i>
Church treasurer:	John Fitzpatrick	0161 764 6374.

Charity reg no: 1078570

News of our community.

Molly Ratcliffe:

I had news of Molly, recently, from her daughter, Lis Wilkinson, who writes:

"Mum chats about church in every conversation we have. Even today, she commented on the poinsettia and did say that it had come from church; thank you; it is so much appreciated.

Mum is remarkably well, and her physical health is better than it has been for a long time. The cellulitis is clear for the moment and she has even put on weight, much to her dismay! However, her memory is limited; she can recall our names and knows when I mention her friends. Mum really does miss her friends.

I managed to see mum twice before Christmas, for which I was very grateful. However, there have been a few cases of COVID on Dunster Ward, at Burrswood, and therefore no meetings are allowed, at the moment. We are trying to organise a phone-line for her room, but it's proving to be an arduous task, for one reason and another. If and when the line is arranged, would it be possible to pass on her number to others at church?

Thank you all for your messages and visits; they are a lifeline to Mum.

Please pass on all my best wishes to the congregation; I wish everyone well at such a difficult time. Lis."

Anne is keeping in touch with Molly and her family; watch this space for details about the promised phone-line!

Anne Mills.

Several of our members have been ill, or in hospital, or experienced grief and sadness over the last few weeks and months, and for some this is ongoing. I know that you will join me in sending them your love and prayers.

Kate Brady McKenna.

News from Ainsworth

The Ainsworth January service could not take place, and, on account of the pandemic, February's, on the 7th, has now also been cancelled; it is not yet known whether the March 7th service will be able to go ahead; if it does, it is due to be conducted by Abi Elliott-McGuffie. More information when we have it.

Anne Mills

News from the denomination.

General Assembly meetings 2021:

The General Assembly meetings, normally held in person over three days, will be held over Zoom this year, on Saturday 24th April.

Further details of how this will work, and what we need to do to prepare, will follow in due course.

Denominational website:

The GA have updated and redesigned the website. If you would like to see the changes please visit www.unitarian.org.

Kate Brady McKenna.

Midweek reflection, sharing, and chat.

Starting this month, there is a new Zoom session for our members and friends.

The session will be split between reflection and sharing (a chance to talk about how we are, and how we are really feeling, without the pressure of a normal 'chat' session), and a casual chat.

The sessions will initially take place on a Tuesday evening from 7pm: from 7pm til 7.30pm there will be a short reflection followed by a chance to share, then from 7.30 til 8pm there will be a chance to chat.

You are welcome to join for either of both halves of the session.

The time and date are not fixed! If you would be interested in the session but the time doesn't suit you, please let me know and things can change! If you like the idea but think it could be refined, let me know that too – I want this to develop into something people want and will find nourishing.

Zoom log-in details are in the centre pages of the Calendar.

Church Zoom account: personal use.

As you will know, the church has a paid-for Zoom account, which means that our meetings are not limited to the forty minutes allowed on a free account.

If you would like to use the account for meetings with your family and friends, please just let Kate know and she will let you have the log-in details. Obviously, church use will have absolute priority, and we would ask you not to block-book sessions or book sessions too far in advance, but within those restrictions, any church member is very welcome to use the account.

Kate can provide details on how to schedule, open, and run meetings, and how to use a few of the more advanced features.

More memories please.

At a recent meeting of the Worship Committee Betty Kenyon shared the Memories book she has been putting together to celebrate the church's 300th anniversary based on the contributions of members' writing, pictures and mementos. It really does promise to be a splendid record of life from Dec 2019-Dec 2020 and we can't wait until we can all enjoy the finished item when we eventually get together again.

However, as we now know, life developed in completely unforeseen ways as the Covid 19 Pandemic spread and restrictions were introduced which affected our church and all of us individually. Here was another volume of very special memories waiting to be collected! We have copies of all the services, pastoral letters, and Calendars but it would be wonderful to have some personal reflections from our congregation in order to capture the detail of our responses to the Pandemic as a record for the future.

So the Committee would like to invite YOU to share a short memory of any aspect of your experience during the last 9 months which would be collected and shared with the congregation. Please do have a go – short, long, funny, serious, one event or a few, handwritten or electronic copies - remember you can't be wrong here- you are the expert on what life has been like for you.

Anne and I offer the following examples, one 'a day in the life' of a random day and the other, a specific experience of 'attending church' during the pandemic.

Val Chamberlain.

[Ed's note]: Anne and Val's pieces are on the following two pages. If you would like to submit something, please either email it to Val at valchamberlain@btinternet.com or post it to Betty Kenyon at the church address (Bury Unitarian Church, Bank Street, Bury, BL9 0DN). Anything you submit will appear in the memories book, rather than in the *Calendar*.

January 12th, 2021: submitted by Anne Mills for the Pandemic Memories book.

For a change, I woke to sunshine and blue sky, this morning, after a grey, wet day, yesterday. It was almost like the first day of spring---except that the maximum temperature was only 3 degrees! Tesco shopping, this morning, surprised me; the shelves were full, the store wasn't very busy, and, for the first time in weeks, nobody was without a face-covering! Some people were wearing visors, rather than masks, so maybe the message is getting through---at last! Why has it taken so long? During my trip, I sanitised my hands in Tesco, again in HSBC, and again at church; back at home, I washed my hands with anti-bacterial handwash, so I felt completely gelled up! Boris is in trouble---for riding his bike from Downing Street, and ending up some miles away; was he supposed to ride round in ever-decreasing circles, I wonder? Our walk, late morning, took its usual route, although we kept to the roads and paths, as the woods have become very muddy, slippery, and treacherous underfoot recently. We sat on a form, by the Lido, right in the sun---lovely and warm---we could have lingered much longer. Great excitement, this evening, as Roger has his appointment for his first Covid jab; our doctor's receptionist left a message, yesterday, to say there was a slot, if he wanted it; of course he did! But he's only 76, and we know of plenty of people in their 80's and 90's who haven't had their vaccinations yet; maybe he was just in the right place, at the right time, and willing to take whatever was on offer. It really feels as if we're progressing, and as if there's light at the end of the tunnel, as people keep saying. I don't think he'll be on the national news, though! Stay safe and well, everyone.

Submitted by Val Chamberlain for the Pandemic Memories book.

I used to be a fan of the weekly BBC programme Tomorrow's World in the 1970s as Raymond Baxter introduced examples of science and technology for us to marvel at. One example that sticks out in my mind is his introduction of a telephone attached to a mechanism that allowed you to SEE the person you were speaking to and another prediction that one day we might have computers small enough to fit in your pocket!

Fast forward 50 years and I had an experience of a church service that would have sounded just as improbable even 1 year ago never mind 50! Sunday 27th September was a beautiful sunny early autumn day. I felt torn as I had several things I wanted to do – some shopping for food I'd forgotten the day before, take a longer than usual walk to revel in the gorgeous weather and attend the church service via Zoom. This facility had been quickly developed and used since June by our church, sometimes instead of and sometimes as well as, services- in -person depending on the pandemic restrictions in force at the time. So I decided to walk along the local stretch of the Leeds Liverpool canal to pick up the item in Chorley AND to try to attend the service at the same time. As 11.15 approached I searched for a convenient spot and spread out my kagoule underneath me and settled down at the side of the canal. It really did feel like magic as the welcoming faces of Kate and other members came into view, slightly surprised but enjoying the background of a vivid blue sky and sparkling water, especially when the first piece of music was most appropriately 'By the Rivers of Babylon!' I got some rather strange looks from passers-by and plenty of sniffs from dogs (but luckily nothing more than sniffs!). Unfortunately my battery ran out and I didn't quite get to the end of the service.

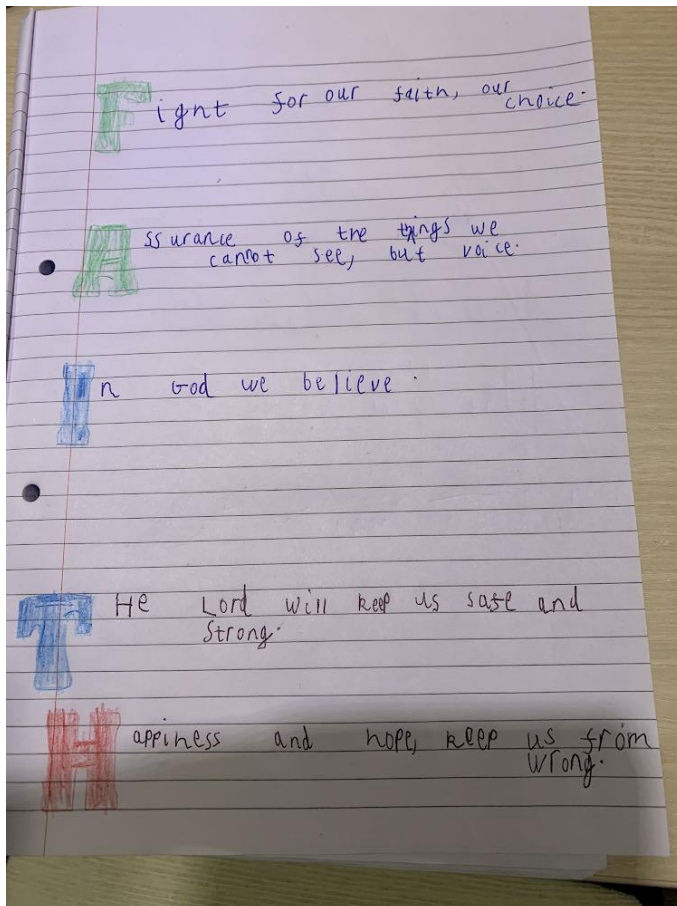
Perhaps not even Raymond Baxter could have foreseen a time when one could attend a local church service from almost anywhere in the world thanks to the magic of the combined technology of a phone with a camera and a computer which would also fit in your pocket.

Some words on 'faith', by Junior Church member Freddy.

Freddy, who many of you will know, recently sent me a picture of an acrostic he had made on the subject of 'faith'. We had an interesting discussion on how you can believe in something you can't see, and I've told Freddy that I might do a sermon on this sometime.

In case the words don't come out very clearly on a small page, Freddy's acrostic says

Fight for our faith and choice; **A**ssurance of the things we cannot see but voice; **I**n God we believe; **T**he Lord will keep us safe and strong; **H**appiness and hope keep us from wrong.



By-Gone Times (number 8): The Inquirer.

December 1897

Periodicals on sale in the Library at Bank Street Chapel

Young Days 1d per month, 10d per year

Christian Freeman 1½d per month, 1/- per year

The New Kingdom, 1d per month

Positive Aspects of Unitarian Christianity ten lectures, 6d

Religion and Life nine essays, 6d

Five Controversial Lectures on, Why I am a Unitarian, 6d

The Helper for 1898, 2/6

Church Calendar 1d per month, 10d per year

The Inquirer, 1d per week: it was first published in 1843 at a cost of 1d per week. (It is now published every fortnight)

The Inquirer is the oldest Nonconformist journal still published in Britain. It was first published on 9 July 1842.

It was founded, as a Unitarian Christian Newspaper, by Edward Hill and was then, and for many years, published weekly.

The cover price was 6d – worth a lot more today! *[ed's note: 6d in 1840 was the equivalent of £1.51 today, which is about what a copy costs now!]*

In its 163 years, The Inquirer has had twenty editors, many of them also Unitarian ministers.

The first, the Rev William Hincks, went on to be Professor of Natural History at Cork and then Toronto. The position was held for the longest period, from 1855 to 1888, by the Rev Thomas Lethbridge Marshall. The first woman editor, between 1927 and 1932, was Laura Ackroyd. Rev John Allerton was editor in early 1970's.

With the exception of Gavin Walker, who is a Quaker and edited the paper for a time between 2003 – 2005, all the editors have been Unitarians.



The present editor is Colleen Burns M.A. She became editor of *The Inquirer* in 2005. For more than 20 years, she was a daily journalist in the US, working for most of that time for the *Herald*, *The Journal* and the *Post-Standard* in Syracuse, NY. While there, she won a Robert F Kennedy journalism award for her work covering the famine in Somalia in 1993. She has also won

several Associated Press awards and others for her coverage of the Irish peace process, elections in Haiti and for *Leader Writing*.

She came to the UK in 2003 and received a Masters' Degree in Life Writing from the renowned School of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. A Unitarian for more than 15 years, Colleen is a member of the Octagon Unitarian Chapel, Norwich.

An annual subscription to *The Inquirer* costs just £30.

A 'must' for all committed Unitarians!

Please book your subscription with me as I am now our church's *Inquirer* secretary due to John Fitzpatrick's projected move to the Midlands. Thanks, John for holding the fort for so many years!

Betty Kenyon.

Many of you will have found a free back-copy of the *Inquirer* with your Newsletter: we hope that this piques your interest! If you didn't, and would like to, please let Betty or Kate know.

Cranford links – past and present.

I believe our Book Group were reading Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Cranford' at a recent meeting, and thought the following items might be of interest. 'Cranford' has been chosen as the theme for the latest exhibition at Elizabeth Gaskell House in Manchester. Like so many events the opening of the exhibition will have to wait until the end of the restrictions. Meanwhile however both the House and the Elizabeth Gaskell Society have a number of online events which you may enjoy.

Full details of this and other illustrated talks from the Gaskell Society
<https://gaskellsociety.co.uk/events/>

27th Jan 7-8pm Cranford for Beginners £4.00

3rd Feb 7-8pm Cranford's illustrators £4.00

24th Feb 7-8pm Chocolate Box Cranford – an Idyll? £4.00

If these dates are not convenient, the talks are recorded and often made available for free at a later date on the web page: <https://gaskellsociety.co.uk/blog/> There are some fascinating talks here which include lots of references to Unitarians. The introduction to the December talk, 'Christmas with the Gaskells' ran as follows 'Despite the fact that Unitarians did not recognise the divinity of Christ, Christmas as a time of peace, love and family unity was still special for the Gaskell household.'

However, we do have a Cranford link closer to home. In 1929 Bury Unitarian Chapel's Women's League presented a dramatized version of Cranford to great acclaim as reported in the following extract from The Bury Times. The clipping has been kept in our 'precious items' box in the family as our Grandmother, Gertrude Allen played the part of Miss Matty.

Val Chamberlain

Bury Times December 7th 1929

"Cranford" at Bank Street.

Brilliant Production

If Mrs Gaskell could have witnessed at Bank Street Schools on Wednesday evening the scenes from her famous novel "Cranford", presented by the Unitarian Women's League, she would have been very happy and contented; happy, because they would have yielded her exquisite pleasure: and contented because she would have known that her work was living after she had passed to the Great Beyond. The writer remembers standing beside her grave, and that of her husband, the Rev. William Gaskell, who so earnestly laboured at Cross-St Chapel, Manchester, one beautiful autumn evening, in Knutsford Churchyard, as he also remembers looking from thence to the tower erected in her memory, and which, with its selection from her novels, stands in the village street which she imagined the dainty feet of Mistress Matty and Mistress Deborah must have tripped along. While listening to Miss Pape of Shuttleworth who opened the scenes, describing the atmosphere of faded rose leaves, old world costumes, delicately-woven fabrics and suggestions of things that had passed, one could hardly repress a feeling almost amounting to pain that these things were of the past, that they would never come again, and that as Miss Pape said, things were moving much more rapidly today.

As the seven scenes unfolded we saw, as it were, ladies stepping from old-world frames, habited in crinoline, Paisley shawls, poke bonnets, pretty flowing laces, very large and costly brooches, necklets, and bangles, and carrying parasols and reticules that today would be considered old fashioned and of bad taste, but which then were the height of fashion. We saw these ladies paying duty morning calls, drinking tea from dainty porcelain cups and saucers, stepping lightly hither and thither, and while doing so discussing the fashionable intelligence in the 'St James's Chronicle', and having an occasional "dig" at Mistress So-and-So's gowns, language, and ways of conducting herself. We saw these delicately costumed-ladies with their mittens, the prettily-shod feet, and their not unmusical voices, acting even as the women of today, as social climbers, even while professing

their disapproval of such regrettable vanities; and we saw running throughout these pardonable weaknesses, frailties, and impressionistic studies of life and character, a finished courtesy, a refinement of thought, a reverence for high character and breeding, and a regard for the amenities of social and cosmetic intercourse that contrast somewhat unfavourably with the present.

To individualise the names of the ladies showing these things, the admirable way in which they essayed their respective parts, and to describe the room in which they move hither and thither, would require a column of this issue of the "Bury Times." Indeed, one could only wonder at their exceptional elocution, the delightful way in which they infused into their lines that antique atmosphere characterising early Victorian speech, the unaffected way they moved in costumes very different in magnitude from those in which they daily appear, and the unstudied ease and charm with which they made us accompany them to the Knutsford of nearly a century ago, where lies the gentle lady who created the characters who passed before us on Wednesday evening.

While heartily commending Miss Johnstone for the earnestness, conviction, and sincerity with which she has produced these scenes, never a one of which but reflected the atmosphere of the novel, the writer, and he trusts without in any way disparaging the commendable efforts of the other ladies, would pay a warm and well-merited tribute to Mrs Allen for her really beautiful and morally inspiring study of Miss Matty. She was so charmingly unaffected, so very sincere, so essentially pathetic when she opened her little shop, despite the fact that she was the rector's daughter, and so admirably true to character (especially when, in a fifteen minutes' narration, she relates the history of her brother, Peter), as Mrs Gaskell has visualised it in the novel that all must feel very happy that Bank Street Chapel numbers amongst its members a lady of such histrionic abilities. Indeed, the writer has no hesitation in saying, and he believes all who saw the presentation will agree, that these scenes from "Cranford" not only could not be surpassed from any standpoint, but that they reflect the highest credit on all concerned. It is pleasing to know that, by a unanimous request this admirable production will be repeated next Wednesday evening.

Hymn-pondering.

One of my favourite hymns is number 27, in the purple hymn-book: "Dark of winter, soft and still". Its usage is limited to a single season; nevertheless, it is a very serene piece; the words are by Shelley Jackson Denham, and the tune is appropriately titled "Winter Meditation".

*"Dark of winter, soft and still, your quiet calm surrounds me.
Let my thoughts go where they will, ease my mind profoundly.
And then my soul will sing a song, a blessed song of love eternal.
Gentle darkness, soft and still, bring your quiet to me.*

*Darkness, soothe my weary eyes, that I may see more clearly.
When my heart with sorrow cries, comfort and caress me.
And then my soul may hear a voice, a still, small voice of love eternal.
Darkness, when my fears arise, let your peace flow through me."*

The words make it clear that the purpose of this hymn is to offer calm and peace of mind to those who read or sing it. Notice how many words start with soft consonants ("soft and still", "soul", "song", "soothe") or contain long or double vowels ("calm", "ease", "weary", "darkness"). Winter is seen as a period of tranquil reflection, as consolation for past troubles and preparation for the future, whatever it holds. All is gentleness and serenity--apart, that is, from the music and words at the start of line 5, when the mood suddenly, but briefly, changes to one of conviction and rejoicing, which lifts the heart and spirits; we are not left alone to cope with life's problems; we are supported and encouraged by some strength which originates outside us, however we choose to name it. Over to you, now; will you spend five minutes thinking about how the winter months and weather affect you, and what your response to these feelings might be?

Anne Mills.

A brief pageant of English verse: Anon.

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
I'll sanitize the doorknob and make a cup of tea.
I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.
There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Kathmandu
But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think, will you.
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay
I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray.
I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye
Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.
About the woodland, just right now, I feel not free to go,
To see the Keep Out posters or the cherry hung with snow.
And, no, I won't be travelling much, within the realms of gold,
Or get me to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.
Give me your hands I shan't request, albeit we are friends,
Nor come within a mile of you, until this trial ends.

Submitted by Anne Mills.







Nancy Chadwick celebrated her 100th birthday on January 28th. Congratulations, love and best wishes on such a wonderful achievement! As we were unable to mark such a momentous occasion at church, we sent flowers, chocolates and a card from everyone---and, there were no doubt, many individual cards, too. Nancy's daughter organised a family cheese pie lunch, on January 29th, at her request, so the day was definitely celebrated in style.

Happy Birthday, Nancy, from us all!