

# Bury Unitarian Church



**Happy Mothering Sunday to all!**

Flowers represent springtime and growth, and symbolise life, fertility, beauty and purity, and of course, our own mothers.

# March 2021

## Welcome!

Welcome to the March 2021 edition of the Bury Unitarian Church *Calendar*.

Firstly, I must apologise for the difficulties some of you had with last month's edition: those of you who received a copy of the Inquirer and your collection envelopes in the same package may have had to pay excess postage. It was entirely my fault (although I measured the parcels carefully I clearly didn't weigh them carefully enough), and I apologise. Please do not be too shy to ask me to reimburse the extra costs. In the centre pages of this edition you will find the 'what's on' pages, and they include details of our tentative plans for reopening the church building. Please read these carefully!

If you are a church member, you will also find (enclosed but not stapled in) a copy of the formal notice of this year's AGM, and a voting slip. These are fully self-explanatory, and are on coloured paper so that you can't miss them.

If anything is missing, or if you get charged for extra postage, please let me know!

I hope that you find this edition useful and interesting: as always, please know that I actively welcome submissions!

*Kate Brady McKenna (editor).*

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

The first Sunday in April (4<sup>th</sup> April) is Easter Sunday, and we hope to be able to meet in person on that day. If you have anything with an Easter theme, or on the theme of returning or reviving, I would love you to submit it for the Calendar.



## **Letter from the Minister.**

Dear all,

This month marks the first anniversary of the first lockdown. It's really hard to imagine that this time last year, I wrote my pastoral letter and clearly had no idea of what was coming only three weeks later. At the time I wrote that, we were battling against storms Ciara and Dennis, and the Coronavirus was something which was happening very far away.

What an awful lot we've all been through in that time. The people we were then would hardly recognise the people we are now, but I like to think they'd be very impressed by us. If we'd known, a year ago, that we'd still all be at home now, we wouldn't have imagined ourselves coping with it.

But I think everything is beginning to look a lot more positive. More and more of us have been vaccinated at least once, and some of us twice. Although infection figures in Bury are still high, they are dropping nationally.

Schools are going back in early March, and we wish our young people and school staff well as they venture back. It is my fervent hope that this return will go well and that there will be no further spikes in infection.

You will see elsewhere in the Calendar that the Church Officers and I have been having discussions about when to open our own church, and our current hope (and our plan) is that we will have our first service-in-person on Sunday April 4<sup>th</sup>. By that time, the schools will have been back for a little while, and we will have an idea of how that has affected the figures.

And, of course, that day is Easter Sunday: what better day could there be for gathering together again, and for celebrating renewal and rebirth?

Of course, that service will still be limited both in numbers and in what we can do, but I am very hopeful that it will be the start of a more positive journey forward.

I am looking forward to so much about being able to gather in person, but what I'm currently missing the most, and most looking forward to being able to do again, is singing the Lord's Prayer together. I have always loved that moment in our service, when we are all acting as one and joining in something familiar and comforting and beautiful. On the day when we can do that again – and that's a day I can now imagine a bit more clearly – I will be very comforted and content indeed.

In the world outside, Spring is definitely happening. Everything is starting to show buds, and I've seen snowdrops, daffodils, and crocuses growing wild. Down the Walmersley Road there's a gorgeous bank of purple crocuses on the side of the road, and it's quite hard not to feel cheerful on seeing that. I've started to think it's time to tidy the garden up a bit: by the end of this month not only will the clocks have changed, but the equinox will have happened (which means the days will finally be longer than the nights again), and the lockdown rules should have changed enough so that we can have friends to visit in our gardens. Shortly after that, we should be able to worship safely in our church building again.

We are not out of the woods yet, but there is cause for optimism as well as hope.

I know that I say it a lot, but I am so proud to be a part of the community of Bury Unitarian Church. This year has been long, and it's been tough, and I know that for some of us it has been harder than for others, but our community is not broken. Our community is strong.

Let's keep our eye on the hope and optimism that I hope we're sharing. We know it won't be a straight and easy path, but there is light to look to.

This is passing.

As always, I send you my love.

*Rev Kate Brady McKenna.*

## **Presidential matters.**

The last month has been fairly quiet: cancellation, rather than booking, has been the order of the day, as regards official duties. At the end of February, I shall lead worship at Newcastle Unitarian Church, on Zoom, taking care not to cause any copyright-problems; this is becoming an important issue, as churches record services and transfer them to You Tube or similar platforms; indeed, we shall probably have to seek information as to where we ourselves stand, in the near future. During the last few weeks, Roger and I have visited Ipswich twice, to join their service; on the second occasion, we were fortunate to hear Rev. Cliff Reed preach---an extremely polished, professional service and sermon, entitled "Interesting Matters". Another Sunday took us to Mansfield, where Rev. Maria Pap gave us a very warm welcome, as well as conducting an excellent service on "Smuggling"; the members were very friendly, too, and we have been invited to return, which we'll be happy to do. Other Sundays have seen us visit Padiham and Bury, and I shall be spending the next week or so putting together my Zoom service for Mothering Sunday, at Bury; I'll be looking for readers for March 14th---be warned! Other than services, I've exchanged emails with our Chief Officer, about arrangements for the GA Annual Meetings, and this has led to telephone-conversations with Bob Janis-Dillon, our new Congregational Connections Lead, about my experience of attending, and leading, worship at our various churches. The "Leading change in the congregation" course is demanding, in terms of time and thought, but I hope it will prove useful, as we emerge from lockdown.

Kate and I have been extremely busy preparing for our forthcoming Congregation AGM; it is no easy task to hold this virtually, using only letter, email and phone, but we hope it will be successful. Please do respond to the various papers you receive, this month, and, in particular, send in your votes; we need at least 25 returned votes from church-members, in order to be quorate on the notional date of the AGM (March 28th), otherwise our

work will have been in vain; every response is important, and every vote will count. Please help us!

At the time of writing (February 23rd), we have been told about our "roadmap" out of lockdown, and we are hoping that it will not be too much longer before we will be released from many of the restrictions that have prevailed during the past year. It has been most unfortunate that we have been unable to meet, all together, since then, and I do apologise to anyone who may have felt excluded by Zoom; we have tried to do our best, in difficult circumstances, and our main aim has been not to risk the health of our members. Kate, in particular, has been very active in her efforts to provide everything we need: services, pastoral support, calendars, information, and additional sessions of all kinds, and we need to be aware of her hard work, and appreciative of it. In thanking Kate, I also thank Ade for all his work, both in supporting Kate, and in looking after our premises.

I sincerely hope that it will not be long before we can open our church fully and permanently, but we must be patient for a while yet, it seems. My garden and my daily walks remind me that Spring is well on its way; vaccinations are in hand, and many of us are waiting for our second injections now. Roger and I send our love and best wishes; we continue to work hard on behalf of you all, and we look forward to the day when we will be able to join together, at church, as we were accustomed to do previously.

*Anne Mills*

## **Notes from the church building.**

If the main priority of the congregation was in saving money, a large part of the downstairs hall would now be painted a pastel mint shade of green. We don't need to concern ourselves with this however, and we should reflect on the privilege of knowing that, as a community we don't have to deal with the sort of jarring change that saving a few pounds on every can of paint could produce. It's a good thing that we can afford to match the colour of the paint we already had in the hall without really having to think about it too much and that's a really good thing.

Another really good thing is that I have discovered that painting is a meditative act, perhaps as is pruning a bush or any other simple repetitive task. To do it successfully, you only need a few motor skills and whatever part of your brain that isn't required for contemplation.

And it's amazing what you can contemplate while you are painting. I have mostly started each painting day by thinking of how the brush feels in my hand and how the paint squeezes off onto the wall as it is directed by the physical extension of my body that the brush naturally becomes. This led me at first to recall the work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who proposed the concept I have explained above, only in his case, the tool was a hammer. I spent quite some time marveling at the holistic nature of the brush and I, existing essentially as one thing, with no actual need for me to think continuously or even rationally about having to make the strokes straight on the wall or even to dip my brush in the paint.

One day I recalled the movie 'The Karate Kid', remembering fondly the scene in which Mr. Miyagi teaches defensive martial arts techniques from such simple and seemingly unrelated processes as waxing a car and painting a fence. I spent some time considering the other practical applications of

the process used in painting. It was a peaceful day of theorising potential symmetry in action.

Another day, as I started this same process, I was reminded of a song by Peter Gabriel who similarly found, in the simple act of mowing his lawns, that same sense of peaceful transcendence I have experienced (and there are many references to mowing lawns and to lawnmowers in Gabriel's early lyrics for this reason). I spent some time pondering on how maintenance as a ritual process works, and why it's so important. In my case I suppose it was like a song of praise, not to God, but to our building.

I am glad I wasn't forced, by any concerns of cost, to paint the hall in mint green; explaining the new colour to the entire congregation would have been difficult to say the least, and I'm not so sure it would suit our precious building. I think too, that having such concerns as these during the process would have changed for me, the painting of the hall itself; and that would mean I might not have been gifted a new and altogether refreshing meditative practice.

*Ade Brady.*

### **Receipts for 2020 collections.**

Receipt-slips are in the process of being distributed; if you have not received yours by March 8th, or if you have queries about your contributions, please speak to Margaret Pollard. Money for Collections can still be sent to Anne Mills, but please note that, if you do not qualify for Gift Aid, cash will be preferred to cheques; thank you.

## **Towards reopening**

The Church Officers and the minister have had discussions over email about when and how to open the church for worship in person.

You may have already read that we are really hoping to be able to open for worship on Easter Sunday (April 4<sup>th</sup>).

If we are able to open then, it's very possible there will be two services: we know that a lot of you will want to be there with us, given that it will be both our first service in months, and the Easter service.

Kate will be in touch with you with more details nearer the time.

Let's pray that our hopes will be fulfilled!

## **Midweek meditation services**

We've now held four of these meditation sessions, and although the format is changing each week as we discover what people want and like, they are settling into a nice calm pattern.

If you'd like to join us, you are very welcome.

If you've been previously and have suggestions to make, I want to hear them!

## **Communion Services**

I'll be offering a virtual communion service on the last Sunday of the month, starting on March 28<sup>th</sup>. This will take place after the main Zoom service, and won't affect the after-service chat time.

Further details nearer the time.

*Kate Brady McKenna*

## **Church contact details**

Kate has not forgotten that she intends to contact you all asking for your permission to share your address, phone number and/or birthday with the rest of the congregation, she just hasn't done so yet.

She hopes to do so sometime this month!

*Kate Brady McKenna.*

## **Kate's time off**

I will be taking time off from Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> until Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March (inclusive).

Anne has kindly offered to lead worship for us on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March, and I'm particularly grateful for that as it's Mothering Sunday.

I will make sure that one of my colleagues is around to provide pastoral care if anyone wants to speak to a minister while I'm off, but (fairly obviously) I won't be going away, so if there is anything you feel might be an emergency, please don't hesitate to contact me.

## **Days off**

I don't have a regular day off, because in the current climate it would be impossible to choose one. I do try to let people know if I know in advance that I'm managing a day or days off in any given week, but I can't always plan it in advance.

But, as I said above, it's not like I'm going anywhere right now, so if you need me, contact me!

*Kate Brady McKenna*

## **Book Club.**

We meet next on Wednesday, March 17th, when "The Mysterious Affair at Styles", by Agatha Christie, will be discussed. In February, we read and talked about "A Tale of Two Cities"; some of us had read this in our youth; others had meant to read it for years but "never got round to it". Most of us found it rather wordy, with heavy-handed humour and several overly-sentimental episodes, but those who persevered enjoyed it and could understand why the French Revolution occurred when it did, and with such violence. The "Cranford" interest continues, and it turns out that Margaret Pollard's grandmother took part in the same production as Val Chamberlain's grandmother; it's a small world! There are lectures about Elizabeth Gaskell's writings, during February and March, organised by The Gaskell House, which some members will be attending. All are welcome to attend our meetings; for further information, speak to Anne Mills.

## **Camera Club.**

The next meeting will take place, by Zoom, on Monday, March 1st, at 7 p.m; other meetings are scheduled for March 15th and 29th. All are welcome; further information, including joining-details, is available from Janet Thatcher. Members usually spend the first few minutes of each meeting, sharing and discussing their own and others' photographs; calendar-photo's have to be chosen, each month, too. Camera-settings' details will continue to be discussed, during March, and it has been proposed that Ade should offer some further tuition on GIMP techniques.

*Anne Mills.*

## **Leading change in the congregation.**

Since I last reported on the above course, we have experienced three more sessions; the format, each time, remains the same---something which could be varied to produce greater interest, I feel. We have explored the differences between Managers and Leaders, both of whom we need, and both of whom should work together, in harmony. We have spent time thinking about our congregation, in terms of its past, present, and future, and about some of the problems experienced along the way. One of our strengths is that we have sufficient funds behind us, so that we do not have to worry unduly about money; however, falling numbers in the congregation cause concern, as is the lack of key-personnel willing to offer to take on necessary tasks. Problems are relatively easy to define; solutions are much harder! In the future, we may need to introduce changes, without causing too much upset to the congregation. We have learned that there are different types of problems, to be tackled in different ways, and all these need much thought and preparation, This has made me think afresh about how we, as a congregation, operate, for this understanding is crucial to finding solutions which succeed and satisfy all parties---a hugely difficult task! Ideas arising from the course are thought-provoking, as well as challenging, and the demands upon the participants are high. Having passed the halfway stage of the course, I am looking forward to what is called, in modern parlance, "the over-arching HOW" to reveal itself, so that I shall see clearly the way onwards! More next month! Anne.

*Anne Mills.*

## **News from Ainsworth**

With great reluctance, Shirley has felt obliged to cancel the service scheduled for March 7th. The next service, hopefully, will be held on Easter Sunday, April 4th, at 10.30 a.m; when Paul Hubbard will lead worship.

*Anne Mills*

## **News of our community.**

### **Vera Stephenson**

Some of you will have heard that Vera was burgled recently. She has asked me to let you all know about this, because she is very concerned about it happening to other people.

The offender pushed past Vera into her house, and then pushed her again as he was leaving. He did take money, but he has also left Vera (understandably) shaken and anxious.

This happened very shortly after Geoff was admitted to residential care, and I know that you will join with me in offering prayers, and whatever practical support we can, to Vera, at such a very horrible time for her.

*Kate Brady McKenna*

### **Gillian Peel**

Those of us who remember Gillian will be sorry to hear that she is currently in Manchester Royal Infirmary, for stem-cell replacement treatment, and feeling rather poorly. She expects to be in hospital for some time, before going back home. I have sent a card to Gillian, on behalf of our congregation, wishing her well and a speedy return to health.

### **Quita Brooks**

I received a card from Quita, recently; she was writing from the "Langtoun" on a spring-like day; it was a pleasure to see the grass again, after 6" of snow, and bitterly-cold weather. Quita is enjoying receiving our calendars and applauds our efforts to keep everyone in touch; she sends best wishes to us all and hopes that we are enjoying brighter days. Many thanks for to her for her kind words and best wishes.

*Anne Mills.*

## Special memories

**March 8<sup>th</sup>:**

Vera Stephenson wishes to remember Barbara and Joe Ashworth

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

Kathryn Jackson, Sally Broadhurst and their family will be remembering Jean Jackson.

We send our love to Vera, and to Kathryn, Sally and family.

If you have a date you would like remembered in the Calendar, please let either Janet Thatcher or Kate know. These are the sort of dates for which you might have donated flowers before the pandemic. We don't ask for a contribution: this is a chance to remember those who you would otherwise have remembered in church.

Once we are meeting more freely again, we will, of course, resume our practice of naming the people and events which the flowers are marking each week.

Let us pause in our reading, now, and hold in our prayers and our thoughts all those in our community and beyond who are in need of our love: let us hold a moment of prayer for those who have been ill, at home or in hospital; for those who have faced shocks and upsets; those who are bereaved or concerned about their loved ones; and those who are simply tired and in need of support.

*Kate Brady McKenna*

## **Worship in March 2021**

**There will be no services in church during March 2021: we hope to be able to worship together in person again from Easter Sunday (April 4<sup>th</sup>): please watch this space and keep an eye on your weekly letters.**

### **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 phone.

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.**

Our midweek meditations continue every Tuesday at 7pm. After a short time to introduce ourselves and check in, we have a guided meditation on a theme which changes from week-to-week. After the meditation you're welcome either to leave during some music, or to stay for some quiet conversation.

We ask people to try to arrive a few minutes early, to be ready to start at 7pm.

If you would like to join us for this but the time doesn't suit, please speak to Kate: things can be flexible!

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

## **Bury Unitarian Church AGM 2021**

Members will have received a formal notification of the Congregational AGM to be held virtually on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

You will also have received a voting paper, an agenda, and all the relevant reports.

**If you did not receive this information, please contact Anne Mills (but blame Kate Brady McKenna!)**

We will not be holding the AGM in person this year, but your involvement is still very important.

Please make sure to read all the paperwork as carefully as you can, and please make a point of voting on all the relevant points: you can vote on paper, by email, or by phone.

### **Reopening**

We are hopeful of being able to open for in-person worship on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> April.

Assuming we can go ahead, there will be two services on that day. Timings and other information will be available nearer the time.

Kate will contact you towards the end of March to find out your wishes for attending worship in April: it will be a little while until we can simply turn up at church without booking in advance.

## What's On, March 2021

- Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March:** Camera club: camera settings. (Zoom ID varies).
- Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March:** Midweek meditation (Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)
- Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)
- Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March:** No service at Ainsworth
- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March:** Midweek meditation (Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)
- Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)  
Mothering Sunday service, led by Anne Mills
- Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March:** Camera club (Zoom ID varies)
- Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March:** No midweek meditation
- Weds 17<sup>th</sup> March:** Book club, discussing *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, by Agatha Christie. (Zoom ID 885 0522 3984)
- Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)
- Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March:** Midweek meditation (Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)
- Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March:** Deadline for articles for the April Calendar.
- Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March:** Online coffee morning. (Zoom ID 839 0159 0623)
- Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March:** Morning service. (Zoom ID 849 7456 6116)
- Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March:** Virtual Communion (details to be confirmed)
- Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March:** Camera club (Zoom ID varies)
- Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March:** Midweek meditation (Zoom ID 812 3292 6975)

## Church Information

Minister: Rev. Kate Brady McKenna  
0161 460 3363 / 07751 240886  
[revkatemckenna@gmail.com](mailto:revkatemckenna@gmail.com)

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

Church phone: 0161 761 3785

Website: [www.bury-unitarian-church.org.uk](http://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	as above
Church treasurer:	John Fitzpatrick	0161 764 6374.

Charity reg no: 1078570

## **News from the denomination.**

### **GA Annual Meetings 2021**

In 2021, we are going to hold an AGM online on Saturday 24 April 2021 to cover the business and decision-making for The GA. This will include debating and voting on the range of motions put forward by the community. Usually, the 160 congregations which make up the General Assembly gather together once a year for our Annual Meetings: three days of worship, decision-making, and community building. In 2020, the pandemic meant that we were unable to gather together safely so instead held an online gathering called 'Being Together'. Beyond 2021's AGM, we will be creating a range of other online gatherings, spread over the months ahead. We expect this year's Annual Meetings to contain about four hours of 'business' across multiple sessions with breva in between, on Zoom. Voting on motions will take place online through a different programme. Delegates will receive full instructions on the voting process in advance. We welcome everyone to attend as participants, not just those who have voting-rights. If you have never been to our Annual Meetings, this is a chance to take a look at how our national governance works. You need to register, and it will be free to attend. We'll be putting online registration up nearer the time. Everyone will need to register in advance by 3 April 2021. No bookings will be taken after this date, even for delegates or voting-members. As with the normal meetings, we will need to check voting eligibility and create voter lists, but will also then need to send login details to those people in advance to allow them to vote, as well as making papers available. On 24 April, the focus will be on AGM matters only, and we won't be trying to squeeze in other events.

## **Uni-Sing!**

Louise Rogers and Myrna Michell started Uni-sing! sessions, in June, 2020, for people who were missing their hymn-singing; they both love to sing and to explore music, as a spiritual practice, and invite anyone who would like to join the group to come along; sessions take place, between 3 and 4 p.m; every Saturday. It is not necessary to attend every session---or even to be able to sing especially well, as microphones are muted for most of the time! The usual format is to start with a short reading; this is followed by a warm-up session, and five hymns from either the green or purple hymn-book; a short (10-minute) breakout group allows informal chat, before the second set of five hymns, and closing verses. Since its formation, Uni-sing! has gone from strength to strength; it now has its own website ([www.ring-of-voices.net](http://www.ring-of-voices.net)), and extra weeknight sessions are occasionally on offer, too. For joining-details and extra information, contact [louise.rogers256@gmail.com](mailto:louise.rogers256@gmail.com); Anne Mills also has details. Everybody is welcome.

*Anne Mills*

## **EC Elections.**

Elections for our Executive Committee are now taking place. Ballot-papers have been sent out to congregational secretaries, who will in turn send them out to members. To find out more, speak to your congregation's secretary. Full Members (Ministers, Lay Pastors and Honorary Members) will receive a ballot directly. Ballots are due to be returned to Popularis Ltd by noon on 23 March. Thank you to all who are standing!

If you have not yet received your ballot-papers and accompanying material, please speak to Anne Mills.

The following two pages are copied from an *Inquirer* article. If the print is too small for you to read comfortably, please let Kate know and she can provide a larger copy.

An interview with **Bob Janis-Dillon**,  
(right) new Congregational Connections  
Lead for the Unitarian General Assembly



# It's all about making connections

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## > How would you describe your new role within the Unitarian General Assembly?

My role as Congregational Connections Lead is to support congregations in their vital work, by helping them share their knowledge and experience with each other. Our movement is congregationally-based, and has been for centuries. This role is an opportunity for us to explore the ways that congregations can learn from each other and support one another. The G.A. has always worked from a 'spirit of mutual sympathy' – as our Object states.

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This role is to help us enhance those inter-congregational connections that give congregational leaders the most support, inspiration and guidance. You might think of it a little like how a synapse functions in the brain – hopefully, with this role, we can create sparks of connection for activity and thought.

## > It's a new position. How did it come about?

This is a three-fifths position, lasting for nine months. So we only have a little time to make it work!

After that, the General Assembly can explore whether they want to continue it, with someone else in the role or with myself. We are trying to make the biggest impact for the movement that we could with our collective resources.

Liz Slade, Simon Bland, and the Executive Committee have given a great deal of thought to how the General Assembly can support congregations in the 21st century. What is the best setup to help our congregations flourish, in this rapidly shifting landscape of communities of faith? There was a clear need for someone to help congregations connect better with one another – aware that our GA staff was never going to 'have all the answers', but among our dozens of congregations, there was an incredible amount of wisdom, mutual support and energy to harness.

## > What experience do you bring to the task?

My 15 years' experience as a congregational minister, in a variety of settings, provides me with some background on how congregational development can happen, and what the challenges and opportunities are. Though this is my first denominational role, over the years I've done a lot

“Even if you're not sure if there's much to talk about, I'd love to make your acquaintance and get to know what's happening.”

of work – and a lot of independent study, into congregational growth, the role of faith in today's society, and the communication of values. Prior to the ministry I worked in marketing for a stint, and also as a membership coordinator at a large congregation. So while I am not, by any stretch of the imagination, a leading expert, I've been involved in congregational support for a long time, and explored and experimented around congregational outreach and development. I'm a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, and how we live

out this stirring towards truth, understanding, and loving the hell out of the world has been a central question of my life.

My guitar-playing skills, sadly, are probably completely unnecessary in this position. If you've ever heard me play guitar, you know that's not as much a tragedy as it sounds.

## > How is your focus different from Simon Bland, GA ministry and congregational support officer?

Simon and I work very closely together. Simon's role is broad-ranging. He supports ministers all along their journey, from before they apply for training, to beyond their retirement, and he helps congregations find the right way forward for their local decision-making – whether that's shaping a future vision, dealing with conflicts, establishing good governance, or accessing funds to revamp their buildings.

He has been a help for many congregations as they negotiate the stresses of pandemic impacts. My focus is a subset of that: I am here to lend support to areas of growth and prospective developments within our movement.

# Bob awaits your call

There are amazing developments happening right now in our UK congregations, so I have plenty to keep me busy. What a great remit, huh?

**> When should congregational leaders contact you? What areas would you be able to help them with? And, what do you want to hear from them?**

I would love to hear from anyone at [bjanisidillon@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:bjanisidillon@unitarian.org.uk) or 07946 187265. My policy is I'd love to hear from everyone, at least once! With 5,000 or so Unitarians I know that is logistically impossible – but I also know people are hesitant to reach out.

I'd love to hear about the exciting developments happening at your congregation (or group, society, etc.), as well as any dreams for the future. Happy to hear about challenges too – they're always an important part of the journey. Even if you're not sure if there's much to talk about, I'd love to make your acquaintance and get to know what's happening. So please drop me a line and let's arrange a time to chat.

How I can help: most immediately: there's a pretty decent chance I could suggest someone useful for you to talk to, who has done something similar at their congregation (and make the introduction, if need be). It may not sound like much, but I so often hear how people get strength and wisdom from these peer-to-peer connections.

While I won't be able to have weekly, or even monthly, updates with individuals due to time constraints, I hope I can serve as a resource and support when you need help connecting to the wider movement. If you'll forgive a James Bond analogy, I like to think of myself as part 'Q' and part 'Moneypenny' – another friendly voice at HQ, helping connect you with the tools you need to thrive.

**> In what ways will you be sharing best practices?**

It's a hugely important question. The new [unitarian.org.uk](http://unitarian.org.uk) website is live. We also hope to have news soon of a new online platform to connect people and share information – we are just in the process of setting up a tool called Discourse, which is designed to help communities to communicate well online. It will be another step to bring the 'do-ers' in congregations closer together.

Additionally, I post a weekly video or essay, so people can know what I'm up to, and share some of the learnings I've had. This is less vital than the peer-to-peer conversation, honestly, but if you want to follow that, you can find it on the UK Unitarian Facebook page, or on my own personal blog [www.spiritbob.com](http://www.spiritbob.com).

**> What will your success look like?**

Fabulous question. By this summer, if I succeed, congregational leaders across the country will feel a little more empowered to take bold action on behalf of their chapels

and churches, try out new endeavours. They will have a greater sense of the opportunities that are out there. They may have a couple more names in the Rolodex (if anyone still uses those), Unitarian contacts (and non-Unitarian) they can reach out to for inspiration and counsel when they hit a rough patch, who know what they're going through. My success in this role has little to do with my own visibility – and much to do with how supported congregational leaders feel in their efforts to serve community, justice and hope in this new era. And, that will look like congregations that, online and offline, are places of fellowship, transformation and outreach.

**> Is there something you have learnt so far which you would like to share across the movement?**

So much already – check my weekly updates – but the learning I'd like to highlight – that I've been learning time and time again for decades now – is the immense transformational power of congregations. Two congregants in Malvern started up a parent and toddler group a couple of decades back, and from that it grew into a youth programme that has changed the lives of hundreds of people. Congregational leaders in Kent, Devon and London have told me how people who live hundreds of miles away have found a touchstone for their lives in online congregational gatherings.

In Leeds a conversation about our collective struggles led to a weekly mental health group that is a place of solace for many; in Liverpool another passing conversation led to a refugee football team. Let's not tell ourselves we're too small to make a difference, because it's nonsense. Anyone's year is made up of 8,760 hours – a lot of time with which to make a difference. And when we gather in our congregations – in our chapels and virtually – incredible things can happen. The first steps are simply to look around at one's surroundings; to look inward, on one's calling; and to talk about it, reflect together in congregations. From there, it's amazing what can be accomplished.

**> Was it difficult to leave congregational ministry?**

It was really hard in many respects – I love the people dearly. And leaving in the midst of a pandemic felt like I was leaving them in the lurch a bit, even as I know they are in good hands with one another, and will take care of each other as best they can. But I'm a big believer in following your call, and after five incredibly wonderful years at Merseyside, something in me knew it was the right time for a transition. I miss the congregations I served; in their own way, each was a place of miracles, of amazing things happening. But there are miracles happening throughout our movement at the moment, and I'm excited and humbled to be a small part of that.

## **The Unitarians' new website**

If you're a regular visitor to our website, you will have noticed there have been a few changes in past weeks! Our new look has been developed over the last year with the design agency *This Ain't Rock & Roll*, the staff team, and a steering group of volunteers from across the movement. This is the first stage in helping to make our message reach out to and resonate with more people – it's aimed at those who are not-yet-Unitarian. The new website is bright, colourful, and cheerful; why not take a look!

*Anne Mills.*

## **Fair Trade Fortnight.**

FTF takes place, this year, between February 22nd and March 7th. As our Traidcraft Stall is unable to be open, might I suggest to each of you that, during this period, you buy one fairly-traded item, as your contribution towards Fair Trade; most food-stores and shops stock some of these goods: for example: sugar, coffee, tea or chocolate. The purchase, at very small cost to each individual, would make a huge difference to people in developing countries, especially whilst pandemic-conditions still exist; thank you, on their behalf!

*Anne Mills*

## **Do you find this easier to read?**

If you, or anyone else you know of, struggles to read the Calendar, please bear in mind that I always produce at least one copy in large print, and can very very easily produce more. It can be in print even bigger than this

**(this, for instance!)**

Please don't think you would be being a nuisance for asking.

I also record an audio copy every month, so if you know someone who would prefer to listen rather than to read, please let me know.

*Kate Brady McKenna*

## **By-Gone Times (number 9): Hucklow and Young People.**

At Great Hucklow in the 1920s a holiday home for children was built from corrugated iron over a wooden frame. It was intended to last for 5 years but actually lasted for 50! The original purpose of the home was to cater for groups of youngsters from what we now call Inner City areas so that they could enjoy holidays in the countryside.



Above: The Children's Home, boys at one end girls at the other. Not the best of accommodation! These buildings were demolished and then the Men's Home, built in 1930, and Barleycrofts Women's Home, built in 1887, provided the accommodation. The Men's Home is now called the Nightingale Centre.



Original Men's Home.



### Transport to Hucklow

#### Unitarian Young Peoples League (UYPL)

This national UYPL movement started in 1934. By 1963 there were 50 branches in our 300 churches. There were 3 national events during the year: Annual Meeting, September Rally, and Autumnal Convention which was held at Hucklow. During the year each branch had their own programme of events.

There was a national monthly magazine, The Young Unitarian. A national song book was published, which was much used at Hucklow and branch gatherings.

There is a list of past presidents in Hucklow Chapel.

In those far-off days the youth for the events were housed at the Children's Home, later UYPL events were up-graded to the Men's home.



UYPL National Committee 1962



UYPL president and the next president

Quite a few of those photographed are still around; you may know some of them.

Bury had a thriving UYPL group. Those who belonged in the 1950s and 60s have many happy times to remember.

*Betty Kenyon*

## Hymn-pondering.

As a change from the usual hymn to consider, you might like to read the following hymn (and comments), written for Uni-sing! and sung at the February 20th session; you may have heard of the writer!

At Bury, we've frequently used two expressions in our prayers and services, and they are very often in my mind:

"Let us know ourselves joined in community still" and "Apart in body, we gather in spirit".

The hymn can be sung to any LM metre---that's 8.8.8.8. For example, Church Triumphant ("I heard the bells on Christmas Day"), which is my preference, or Ombersley (Lord of all being! Throned afar"). My title for the hymn is "Pandemic".

CHURCH TRIUMPHANT LM

The image displays a musical score for the hymn 'Church Triumphant' in LM (Long Meter) metre. The score is written for two staves, treble and bass, in a key of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a clear 8.8.8.8 metre. The lyrics are not visible in the image.

**Pandemic: lyrics by Anne Mills.**

Apart in silence, and unlit,  
Alone in stillness; thus we sit.  
The tranquil space we used to share  
No longer opened up for prayer.

Together, we will meet again,  
Unite, once more, in might and main.  
Then, with rejoicing, we shall know  
Strange times have passed to long ago.

This we have learned, from our confine:  
Stay strong; be brave; and cease to pine.  
All shall be well; through loving prayer,  
Hope, faith and joy spread everywhere.

*Anne Mills.*

## **A Bigger Bookcase**

*By Marian Cleworth, from Kendal Unitarians' Newsletter*

My bookshelves are just overflowing;  
It's time that I sorted them out.  
Paperbacks pored over, time after time,  
Though dog-eared, I can't throw them out.

I delve into classics and poems,  
and travel-books, ancient and new-  
Those gifts I received for my birthdays,  
And a lifetime of Christmases, too.

A picture-book from Auntie Edna,  
My Bible from Great-Uncle Jim-  
Companions up there, on the top shelf,  
With fairy-tales by Brothers Grimm.

I'm simply not up to the challenge,  
I guess I must try a new tack-  
I'll order a much bigger bookcase,  
and dust them and put them all back!

*Anne Mills, who confesses to being an offender, too!*

## Some artwork by Freddy

Freddy has been busy again this month, and has sent us a 'word cloud' he's made. I wonder how many of the words you can find?

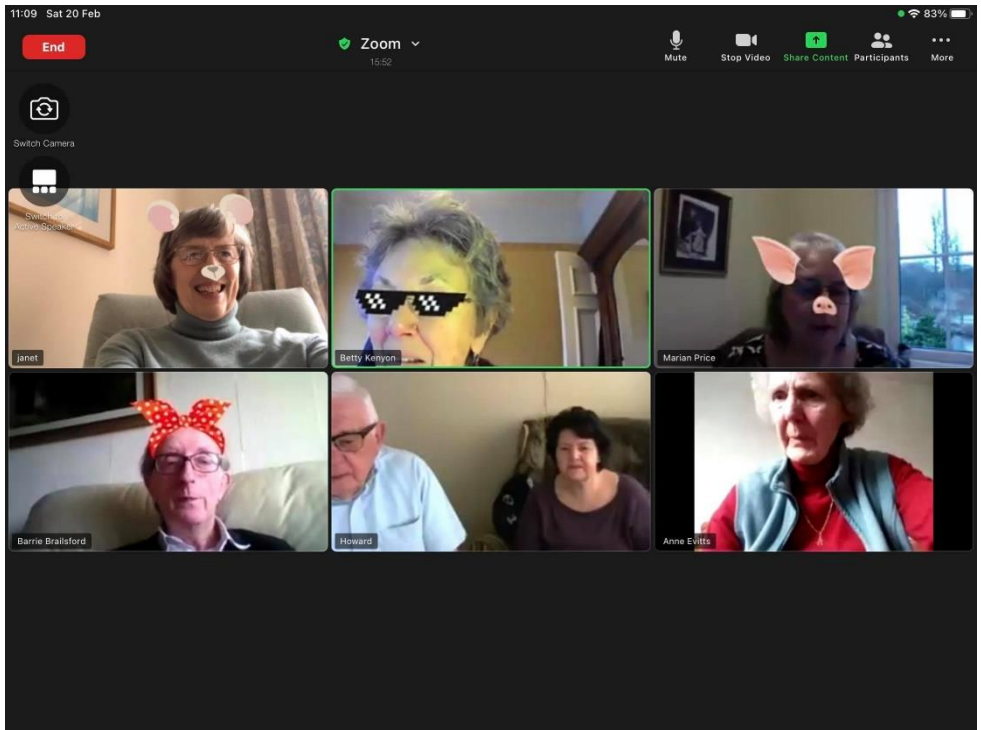


## Coffee mornings

You may have been wondering if the conversation at our Saturday morning Zoom coffee mornings is too high-brow and lofty for your tastes.

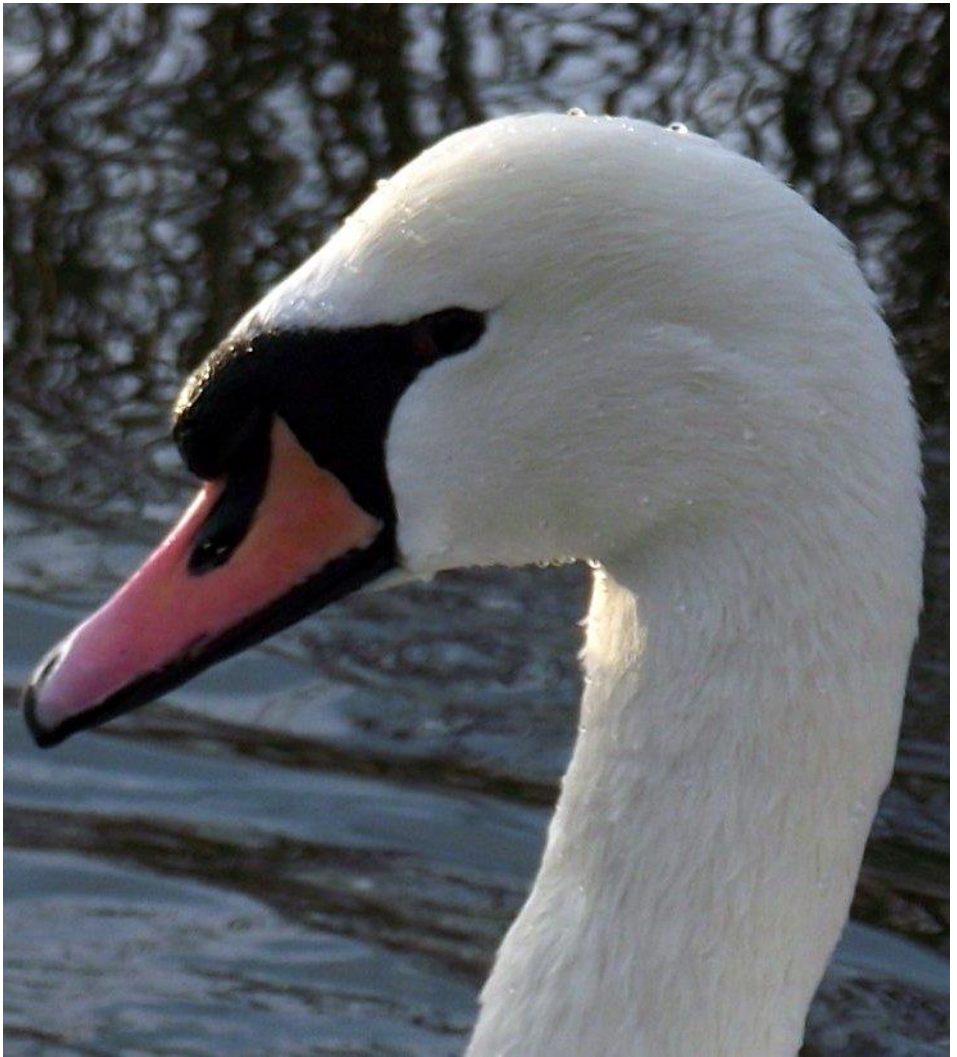
Maybe the picture below will set your mind at rest!

Thanks to Janet for taking the screenshot, and to Anne, Barrie, Betty, Jean, Janet, Howard, and Marian for giving their permission to show this picture.





**A very early spring-flower,  
peeping out of an Arley Avenue garden**



**One of the swans on Clarence Lido**



## **Pigeons from a Rochdale Garden**

**"Here are the birds; the bees will be along shortly!"**