

Bury Unitarian Church



Calendar for May 2020

Welcome to the second edition of the Bury Unitarian Church calendar to be produced during the Covid-19 lockdown.

When last month's calendar was produced, I don't think anyone had any idea how long the restrictions on our lives might continue, but I think we now know this will all be a lot more drawn-out than we would like.

So this edition is, again, really different from what we're used to. We normally have rotas of all the jobs and responsibilities that keep the church running so well; and details of upcoming events, meetings, and social gatherings; and news from the congregation: all that seems like it belongs in a whole different world!

But we are still a community and this lockdown doesn't change that: continuity is more important than ever, and thank goodness we already have such a good calendar to act as a way to keep us in touch.

This month's calendar includes a lot of material sent in by members of the congregation, and I am really grateful for this. Several of you have sent messages to your friends: if you would like to do so next time please just let me know. And we also have some creative work in this month's edition: again, if you would like anything included (even when we're back to meeting up in person) I will be very happy to put it in a future edition.

You'll also see that there is a chance to take over as the editor of the calendar: it's an enjoyable job, if time-consuming, and it's a very good way to keep in contact with everything that's going on: the editor generally hears things first!

Please let me know of anything you'd like in the next Calendar, whether it's greetings, your own creative work, an announcement, or a poem or reading that appeals to you.

Minister's letter

Dear all,

It seems unreal that it is so long since we have all seen each other in person: as I write this we have just had the sixth consecutive service-at-home.

I genuinely miss you all, very much, and I know that you are missing each other as well. I do pray for each of you, individually, every Sunday morning during the service. At the end of the prayers I say each of your names and for a few seconds I imagine your faces and do what the Quakers call "holding you in the light". It struck me this morning that when I picture each of you you all tend to be smiling, and talking to someone in church, or chatting to me at home. I like that I picture you smiling!

I am so much looking forward to the time we will be in church together again, but like you, I know that this can't happen until it is safe. Hard though it is to be apart, it is what we have to do to protect ourselves and each other. It is the right thing to do.

And it's more than just the right thing to do, it's our sacred duty. As a people of faith, it is our job to do what we can to make the world better, and for once, we have very clear guidance on how we can do that. It's not easy, but it is straightforward, and I know that you're all doing it. I don't think it's over the top to say that the future will thank us for what we're doing now.

And there are definite plus points to the way the world is right now. People are being gentler, and more appreciative, and we're all thinking more about what we're doing, and I think that means we're appreciating it more. And the earth has definitely noticed the difference: the skies are clearer, the birdsong is louder and more vibrant, and we are seeing that the way we act

has a very clear impact on the world we live in. Abi has written a poem expressing this, and it's included in the Calendar.

There is a lot we can learn from this time, and I hope and trust that we will learn it. I don't want to 'get back to normal' when all this is over: I want to make a new normal, with some of the things we've discovered in the last few weeks. This time is hard, and painful, and sad and scary, but it is also peaceful, and gentle, and prayerful and sacred: those are things I want to hold on to when the restrictions are lifted. And I want to remember, then, how much we miss each other now, so that we can hold on to that love for one another more tightly.

You all remain in my prayers, and I leave you with another beautiful poem (recommended by Di Scaife) about the good things which are happening.

As always, I send you my love.

Kate.

And people stayed home . . . Kitty O'Meara, 2020.

And people stayed home
and read books and listened
and rested and exercised
and made art and played
and learned new ways of being
and stopped
and listened deeper
someone meditated
someone prayed
someone danced
someone met their shadow
and people began to think
differently
and people healed

and in the absence of people
who lived in ignorant ways,
dangerous, meaningless and
heartless,
even the earth began to heal
and when the danger ended
and people found each other
grieved for the dead people
and they made new choices
and dreamed of new visions
and created new ways of life
and healed the earth completely
just as they were healed
themselves.

Obituaries

We record, with sadness, the deaths of the following people.

Alf Howson, aged 95, of Gorseley Clough Nursing Home, died on April 17th, 2020. Alf had been in failing health recently; he was a long-term member of our church and will be remembered with affection for his cheery, affable manner and his friendliness.

We have received the following note from Alf's daughter Deborah:

Good afternoon Roger and Anne, thank you so very much for your email and kind words it is greatly appreciated (I have passed it onto John and the rest of the family)

Dad passed very peacefully in his sleep, sadly we could not be with him under the current circumstances but he was not alone one of the nursing staff Alison was holding his hand at the end and I had sent him a voice message with some Glen Miller music, not sure it would have registered with him but it felt like I had had the chance to say goodbye. He was in no pain or discomfort which is blessing, it was his time.

Please pass on our thanks to all and we wish you all well, keep safe.

Deborah

Mavis Duerden, aged 92, a member of our Padiham congregation, died on April 11th. Mavis was a very keen member of The Women's League and, with her late husband, Norman, a staunch supporter of NELUM. She was a kind, generous person, with many interests, including the theatre. She died in

hospital, following a period of ill-health. Her funeral took place on April 28th, at 2.40 p.m.

Rev. Daphne Roberts died at the Aarondale Nursing Home, Aspull, on April 1st. She and her late husband, John, originally attended Bank Street Chapel when they moved to Bury; both of them subsequently trained for the ministry. Daphne served at Manchester Failsworth, Liverpool Hope Street, and Liverpool Gateacre; she was also a Past National President of The Women's League. Her funeral was held on April 15th; a memorial service, including the scattering of her ashes, will be arranged at Chorley Unitarian Church, where she was a member, later in the year. Throughout her life, Daphne was a stalwart of our denomination and its churches; she remained strong in spirit to the end of her life.

To the families of the above people, we extend our sincerest sympathies. We will miss those we have lost, as will those closest to them, and we will remember them in our prayers and thoughts; may they rest in peace.

Anne Mills.

Outside support available:

Bury Community Hubs: Help offered by Age UK

If you are 70+ with health-conditions, live in Bury, and need support with the Coronavirus lockdown, ring 0161 253 5353.

The national Age UK Advice Line is 0800 678 1602, and this is open from 8 am to 7pm, every day of the year.

If you would just like to have a friendly natter, call Silverline at any time of the day or night, on 0800 470 8090. Best wishes to everyone,

Anne.

You can also contact the Samaritans on 116 123.

News of our members.

We send love and congratulations to **Lorraine** and **Pete** on the birth of their second child, Ethan Ellis Hunter, on April 1st, weighing nine and a half pounds.



We also congratulate Howard and Jean Maden on becoming grandparents for the fourth time, Hope on becoming a big sister, and Max and Eloise on becoming cousins again.

We can't wait to meet Ethan!

I have recently been in touch with Lis Wilkinson, **Molly Ratcliffe**'s daughter, who has sent the following message:

"Mum continues to amaze us all; she is as well as can be and is as upbeat as possible. She clearly misses the human contact, and we struggle to get through on the phone, although the staff at Burrswood are very accommodating when we do. At times, she has, understandably, been down but it's not long before she is her usual positive self, using her favourite phrases of "there's always someone worse off than yourself", and "it will be all right on the night!". Her legs have been infected once more, but, yet again, she is defying the odds, and they seem to be on the mend. Mum is up and about with the help of her rollator and is now eating meals in the dining-room.

We are very grateful for the continued contact via letters and phone-calls and the numerous good wishes from everyone at church. It's very comforting to know that mum is in your thoughts. Mum loves the church and has taken much pride over many, many years in being part of the Unitarian community. You have given her such comfort and support at the most trying (and happiest) of times; this was very obvious when mum was so very poorly over Christmas-time. Thank you all. We will let her know that you have been asking after her.

Once again, thank you Anne for your message; hopefully, when we are through this, we could get mum back to the odd service at church.

Do take care and stay safe,

Best wishes,

Lis."

Dorothy Roberts has moved from Spurr House to Elmhurst, not far away in Unsworth. She is settled there, and comfortable. Shirley Horrocks visits regularly, as do Roger and I.

Quita Brooks, formerly of Ainsworth Unitarians, now living near her family in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, sent Easter greetings; she sends best wishes and is thinking about us. I will send a reply, shortly.

I have been writing regularly to Dorothy and Molly, whilst their care-homes have been closed, and I sent Alf a card, on behalf of us all, once he had moved to Gorseley Clough.

Anne Mills.

Worshipping together

It is really pleasing when I hear that people are enjoying taking part in the services-at-home. I know some of you do them at 11.15 on Sunday mornings, and some of you do them at other times: whenever you are doing them it is nice to feel that there is still something we can all do together.

If you know anyone else who would like to join in, please let me know.

I know that some of you have asked if you can contribute to the cost of printing and posting these services: there is no expectation that you should do so, because there is always a cost to providing worship, but if you do wish to, please make an extra donation in your envelopes when we meet back in church.

If there is a hymn you would particularly like to have included in one of the services, please tell me and I will try to make it happen.

Presidential matters

First of all, may I thank everybody for the beautiful bouquet of flowers, the accompanying card, and the kind messages I received from the congregation, on April 9th! What a wonderful surprise! Circumstances dictate changes, these days, and the first inkling I had of my delivery was a brief email from Kate, instructing me to look on my doorstep! By the time I did, she was long gone! I was delighted with my flowers and messages, as I have been by individual cards and congratulations; I'm both touched and pleased by the thoughts and the gestures, and very grateful. Ten days on, the flowers still look well; their cream and lilac colours, fresh against the accompanying greenery, remind me, every time I look at them, of the generosity which prompted them. Thank you again!

The cancellation of this year's Annual Meetings meant, inevitably, that the traditional election and installation of the GA President and Vice-President could not take place. Celia Cartwright and Sue Woolley suggested that we should hold an alternative installation ceremony, at Bury, and plans were in hand---until we were overtaken by events. The general closure of all churches meant that the nearest-date official engagements were cancelled, too; more cancellations have followed, and I do not, realistically, expect to take up my official duties before June, at the very earliest, and probably much later. Celia, Sue and I have suggested that this year should be a fallow year, with all three of us carrying out such duties as there are, between us, by arrangement. So far, there has been no word from the GA Chief Officer or the Executive Committee, as to their decision, and no official announcement. I feel that I am a Minister without Portfolio, just at the moment---very much in limbo!

Those who have the technology, and the courage to use it, will, by now, have encountered Zoom, an online system, whereby individuals may meet together, in small or large groups, for business, religious or social purposes.

Last week, the GA's Annual Meetings Panel presented us with three days of lectures, discussion-groups, meditation-sessions, and acts of worship; this was, by its nature, arranged at short notice, as well as being experimental.

I emailed round as many people as I could, at church, and I hope some people were able to take advantage of what was on offer. I found the sessions I joined very informative, on the whole, and a lecture by Alistair Mackintosh, on the subject "The Way Forward is Spiritual", was brilliant!

Kate was one of the participants in the Closing Devotions and acquitted herself very well; I imagine that it was quite a nerve-wracking experience!

Despite the restrictions we're currently living under, I'm far from idle; there is still church-business to which to attend, and other groups with which I'm involved also make demands on my time. I would like to claim to be a Zoom expert, but, although more experienced than I was, a week or two ago, I still haven't been able to work out how to unite sound and vision, without the audio part breaking up---or down, entirely. (Answers on a postcard, please!) I was invited to write a service for the Sheffield churches, to be used on April 26th, when I was booked to conduct a service at Upper Chapel; my service, now completed, has been sent to four ministers, so it remains to be seen how many of them decide to use it. A similar service has been requested for another church, for an Anniversary Service, in June, if I'm not able to conduct the service in person. I find that this requires rather a different technique, as it must be composed for one or two people to read to themselves, or speak quietly, rather than being delivered by one person, to be heard by others; also, as it is shorter than a normal service, its message has to be more immediate, and its content very relevant to the current situation.

You will all know, by now, that we are to remain closed until the end of May, at least; we cannot risk our own health yet, or that of others, and we have to wait until the Government decides to lift the restriction on church-services. At the moment, funeral-directors are reluctant to allow funerals in churches, so these are taking place at crematoria, with low numbers (no more than ten, at the time of writing), with close family, only, in attendance. Churches are offering to conduct memorial services, when they can, to offer comfort and consolation; later in the year, I hope to attend such a service for Daphne Roberts.

Our cleaner has now completed the extra work she was asked to do, so our premises are as germ-free as we can make them. The only person who should enter the premises on a regular basis is Ade, as he is required to inspect them three times a week, for insurance-purposes. If you need access, please discuss this with Kate, Ade or Roger; thank you.

I am trying to keep in touch with as many of you as I can, whilst we are closed; I do miss being at church, on a regular basis; I miss the services, the people, the socialising, the events---and even the meetings! I send every one of you my warmest greetings and my very best wishes, in the hope that it will not be too long before we are able to congregate once more; and, most especially, I wish you all good health in the coming weeks; look after yourselves and keep yourselves safe.

Love,

Anne.

Congratulations to Anne Mills, who is currently part of the ‘presidential team’ for the GA. Had circumstances been different, she would have been installed as the President last month, and we send her our love as she embarks on what will be a unique presidency!

A message from our property manager:

Greetings friends,

In my time at the Church I have been a big fan of its understated beauty, for me at least, it's a shame the Exchange building is built with the same brick that ours is, because at a single glance from the road our beautiful, beautiful modernist church can look as if it's just a slightly more exciting add-on to the less ornate, brutalist office block that sits behind it. But if you look at our church, really look at it, you'll come to the same conclusion I have, I'm sure. Our building is a most beautiful building.

We had so much planned for our beautiful church before the pandemic overtook our little world. The building was ever so close to a major electrical overhaul, we were eyeing up a repair to help with the leaking from the flat roof, and new more powerful electric door arms had been agreed for an easier entry in to the building.

None of this is happening now of course, throughout Britain, our manufacturers are closing, our suppliers have shut their doors and our contractors time has been taken up by answering only the emergency calls of our housebound countrymen, in keeping with the government guidelines.

These works, and the people performing them, are understandably absent then, as are we. It seems odd to say it but the building isn't really missing the contractors, or their much needed works, but it is missing us, I know I've said it before, but it feels more like a building and less like a church when we're not all in it.

If there's one thing I've learned of late, it is to appreciate Kate's insistence that the church is so much more than a building, a church is its people; and it certainly was the beauty of the congregation that brought both Kate and

me here to Bury. The spiritual warmth we both experienced when we visited for the first time, and on all of our subsequent early trips was truly magical, and it's something that needs to be appreciated, that the beauty of our church is not just in the architecture of the building, it is absolute. We are a marvellous church.

The manufacturers and suppliers will reopen and the contractors will return, they will perform their work and we will again, have a building to come to, but when we turn up to our first service back, our church will breathe life back into that beautiful building's heart.

Adrian Brady

New books

Audrey Longhurst, who takes care of book-sales at Essex Hall, has asked me to mention the two new books which The Lindsey Press launched, in April. They are "*Life's Journey*", by Rev. Daniel Costley, which deals with Unitarian Rites of Passage, and "*Seeking Paradise*", by Rev. Stephen Lingwood, which tackles the thorny subject of how Unitarianism can survive, in modern society, how it can achieve growth, and how its theology needs to define itself and adapt. Rev. Jo James reviews Stephen's book in the current edition of *The Inquirer* (April 18th), and Daniel's was reviewed by the late David Arthur. Each book costs £12.00 plus postage and package, from Essex Hall. Anne Mills has received complimentary copies of both books, which will, eventually, be donated to the church collection; please let her know, if you would like to borrow either of them.

Anne Mills

A poem for the pandemic, by Abi Elliott-McGuffie

Amidst our uncertainty our fear, a hope
Mother Earth heals herself
at last she breathes
As our lungs collapse
Oh the irony
Did we not hear her cry
Crying for our attention
Will we hear her now when brought to our knees?
Powerless and at the mercy of an invisible oppressor
How she's turned the tables now!
And how we squirm.
Get up off your knees are you man or mouse?
Shaken but here is our chance to right the wrong inflicted upon her.
Unable to change our lot now
Wisdom would call us to change ourselves
That Mother Earth might hold out for her hope.



Thanks

During our period of closure, the role of our Minister has changed considerably, as she has been obliged to alter her normal routine and adapt to lockdown circumstances. We owe Kate our appreciation and gratitude for all the relevant, appropriate services she has devised for us, emailing them where she could, and posting them out, as necessary; she has even hand-delivered them, on occasion, when the vagaries of our current postal-system threatened to disrupt our routine! We have all received tealights, so that we have candles to light, during each service, and every mailout is accompanied by a ministerial letter of greetings.

Every member of the congregation is telephoned weekly---and some more regularly, where there is a need. The Junior Church children received their own calendar, last week, and there are plans for future issues. Offers of help for those who require it are frequent. In this way, Kate is ensuring that we remain united as a congregation, even though we are unable to meet together, just now. Those of us who observe worship, each Sunday morning, at 11.15 a.m; feel a sense of unity and commitment to each other, and it is an excellent yet simple way of remembering each other.

Thank you, Kate, for caring.

Kate is now preparing to edit, print and distribute her second church calendar; she has taken on this job, temporarily, after the resignation of Pam Gilbert. Thanks to Kate for her efforts---and many, many thanks to Pam for all her hard work as Calendar Editor during the past 13 years (and more!) We do appreciate everything she has done to assemble an informative, newsy booklet, bright and attractive in appearance, and available on time, every month. To Pam, we give heartfelt thanks for a job extremely well done; we are most grateful for all her hard work and efficiency.

Thank you, too, to every member of the congregation for helping to keep communication-channels open; phone calls, emails and letters keep us in touch and lessen the separation. As we enter a second period of lockdown, let us take strength from each other, knowing that none of us is forgotten.

Anne

A message from NELUM

We do not know when or how this present situation of lock -down and social distancing will end but it may well be some considerable time before we can meet again. We do not yet know what our losses will be or what the new normal may be like. We do know that our gains are many, in community spirit, kindness, courage and appreciation. N.E.L.U.M Officers have been looking beyond the end of this time to when we can be together again. When this time comes we feel it would be appropriate to organise an event where all our Churches and Chapels can meet together. Our thinking is around a service of thanksgiving. A service that would begin with a minute of silence to remember all those within and beyond our movement who have lost their lives. There could be prayers, readings and meditation to inspire us for the future. Uplifting hymns chosen by congregations for their special meaning to us. Concluding with a minute of applause for all those whose work and dedication has brought us through the crisis. Following the service we may share a meal together as a community of faith.

It is hoped that all churches and chapels would want to attend so it would be a great gathering, we hope, the biggest for many years.

We intend to ask that all expenses are covered from NELUM funds.

Beryl Allerton

Sponsorship requested: a message from George Scaife:

Due to the coronavirus restrictions and the fact that I would rather cycle along the Canal tow path (Boy car racers can't get me there), I recently bought a Turbo trainer that I can fasten by bike into it and do some realistic training. So good so far!

David Warhurst recently had an article in the Inquirer relating to the hardship that the Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow was encountering do to the restrictions in place.

Put the above information together and what you get is a fool offering to do a distance ride on my turbo trainer to help raise money for the Centre. It would be a crying shame if we could not do something to ensure its survival.

I am aiming to do at least 500 kilometres and hopefully get to 1,000 kilometres before the end of May. Not on the same day or even in a week. Damian and I were hoping to get a charity ride in this summer but events are not going our way. We will get together in the future.

I shall be opening a Just Giving page and instead of filling in a paper Sponsorship you just go on Just Giving to make a donation.



This hopefully will be going nationwide and make a suitable amount for the Nightingale Centre.

I shall be getting the details sorted out within the next few days and let you all know how to make a donation.

Keep safe and healthy. George.

Messages from the congregation:

Missing you and looking forward to the day when we'll all be together again.

Love,

Barbara and Allan.

Hope you are all safe and well and hope it won't be long before we're all back at church with friends.

Jean Brookhouse.

Hope you're all bearing up to this isolation. In Holcombe, this morning again the sun is shining and the sky is blue but one can't feel happy. Bad things are happening but also many good things amongst which is a realization of the commitment of the key workers in our society, many of whom are often taken for granted. Our neighbours are supporting us with shopping and good humour albeit from a distance. And the Internet is proving to be a wonderful invention along with the mobile phone!! Let's hope we can get back to life again as soon as possible.

Pam & David

The sight of beautiful cherry trees in blossom has reminded me once again of 'our' tree – gone physically, but certainly not forgotten. We also may be apart right now – but similarly not forgotten. Sending love and wishing you all as much peace as possible in these strange times.

Val x

I would like to send my love and best wishes to everyone at church – stay safe and we'll soon be back together.

Love from

Sue & Graham McMullen

Miss you all and send my caring thoughts that you are all managing to keep well. Keep it up

Love

Connie

“They said a mask and gloves were enough to go to the supermarket – they lied, everyone else had clothes on!” Oops!

Keep smiling everyone and stay safe and well,

Marian x

Just a hello to all my lovely friends at BUC and a big thank you for your support through this difficult weird situation. I do hope you are all managing to keep positive most of the time and know that we are all there for one another till we can once more be together as a family.

Susan Mitchell

All members of the congregation are in my thoughts at this difficult time, praying for their safe keeping and looking forward to seeing everyone, as soon as we are able.

Love

Karen x

Dear friends, I hope you are all keeping well and finding something to appreciate in these times. Like most of you I'm sure, I've had plenty of jobs to do but in between times I've watched, waited and breathed a little bit easier. From buds and flowers will soon come fruit, each to be enjoyed in their own time as one day becomes another.

Keep breathing and it won't be long before we walk into the day we're all looking forward to, the day when we can hug our friends.

Until then, I send my love

Abi xx

Betty Kenyon has been sending lovely illustrated emails to the congregation, with her love and best wishes. If you'd like to see these messages, just ask Kate, who will find a way to get them to you.

Margaret Pollard sends her greetings via this poem:

God Knows:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

Minnie Louise Haskins.

If you would like to send a message to your friends at church in the next edition of The Calendar, please just let Kate know and it will be added.

Editing The Calendar:

If you would be interested in editing the monthly Calendar, please speak to either Kate (who is temporarily editing it) or to Pam (who put in many years of truly excellent service).

The deadline for the June 2020 edition of The Calendar is Sunday 24th May.

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