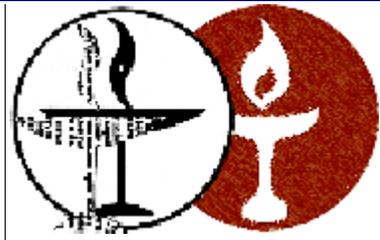


Ipswich Unitarian



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Religious Buildings in Britain

The Times newspaper recently analysed the registered places of worship in Britain and found that between 2010 and 2016 an estimated 168 Church of England churches and almost 500 Methodist and Catholic places of worship have closed. During the same period almost 600 Pentecostal churches and more than 260 Islamic institutions have opened. The register comes under the Places of Worship Registration Act. The list of buildings registered as places of worship in the UK in 2016 lists 11 new Scientologists; 2,012 Pentecostal; 213 Hindu; 1,263 Muslim; 87 Buddhist; 607 Evangelical; 256 Sikh; 366 Jewish; 7,629 'Other Christian'; 8 Baha'is; 923 Jehova's Witness; 3,224 Baptist; 3,558 Roman Catholic; 362 Friends/Quakers; 830 Salvation Army; **226 Other**; 7,267 Methodist; 1,530 United Reform.

Apparently the Church of England is exempt from registering, but the total number of their churches is likely to be around 15,700, and an average of 28 churches are closing each year. Unitarians are not listed separately, and so I assume are included in the 'Other' category. (continued on page 4)



Lewis Connolly with his wife Cat after his first service as Minister – Sunday 6th March

Lewis Connolly – the first month ...

It has felt like a month of firsts. My first Unitarian Easter, first experience of the bonnets and the chocolate laying chicken, and now my first experience of the General Assembly's Annual Meeting. I write this in the lobby of the conference centre, before everything kicks off. It will be very interesting to get a better grasp of the true breadth of the movement, through worshipping together, hearing talks, and networking with others, getting to know what everyone else is up to.

Part of the purpose of this year's GA is to consider the direction we want to move in, in the light of organised religion's ongoing decline. We are in a unique position, not constrained by dogma, and in theory capable of adapting in more creative and fluid ways to the challenges of the 21st century. As we move deeper into 2016, it will be necessary for us to consider afresh what we as a congregation can do to make meaningful connections with others in Ipswich. Of course there is no magic formula; growth happens through relationships, the connections we make with other groups and people. *Lewis Connolly*

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Extraordinary Meeting of the Eastern Union –

Our Ipswich congregation hosted this meeting which had been called to consider a proposal to wind up the Eastern Union, followed by a discussion of how best to network our congregations in East Anglia. The meeting was well attended with participants from all congregations in the Eastern Union. The meeting was chaired by Alan Ruston and attended by Robert Ince from the G.A. Executive Committee. The motion *'This EGM votes to suspend the EU from 1st April 2016 for a maximum of 2 years.'* was passed. During the two year period, it can be revived if four congregations request it. If not reactivated at the end of two years, the remaining funds of the Eastern Union will be transferred to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. In the meantime, with the exception of the past five years, the records of the Eastern Union will be deposited in an archive.

It may well be in future that informal networking will enable us to interact with our fellow Unitarians either by joining in with their events or by a congregation organising an event for everyone.

Report from Shirley Fieldhouse (retired EU secretary) and Linda King



Some of the people attending the EU EGM meeting

Birthdays – happy birthday in April to– Kate Gray on 5th; Morag Blue on 6th; Rev Cliff Reed on 12th; David Forsdike on 19th; Sheila Seal on 21st; Violet Bernard and Rosemary Hamilton both on 26th.

In memory



A service of memorial and thanksgiving for the life of Michael Charles Carr, one time member of the congregation, was held in the Meeting House on 16th March 2016

The service was conducted by Rev. Clifford Reed, Minister Emeritus, with Robert Waller at the organ. Ron Caird, a piper (above), provided musical accompaniment to the hymn *Amazing Grace*. Our condolences go to all the family.

Services in April – (all at 10.45)

3rd – Lewis Connolly – on Beatrix Potter and her Unitarianism

10th – Ray Seal

17th – Lewis Connolly

24th - Lewis Connolly – Anniversary service and Lunch

Unitarian Focus on Seeing – UFOS

We invite photographers to bring (or send) a photo on a particular theme to the last service of the month. For April the topic is *'Made by Me'* and for May is *'Made of Iron'*. All photos are displayed at the Meeting House.



Easter bonnets

It is a tradition at the Ipswich Meeting House for us to wear Easter bonnets on Easter Sunday, so here is a selection of bonnets with the chicken basket containing chocolate eggs held in the foreground by Pippi.

All That Jazz

There was a full house at Saint Peter's on the Waterfront on 4th March for the monthly jazz session including four of us from the Meeting House. We were wonderfully entertained with the songs and music of Hoagland ('Hoagy') Carmichael by the Chris Ingham Quartet with the man himself (piano/vocals), Paul Higgs (trumpet), Rev Andrew Brown (yes the very one on bass!) and Russell Morgan (drums). Chris with his soft, almost whispering voice caressing the microphone seamlessly fed us tit bits about each song, piecing together the life of Hoagy Carmichael. It was foot tapping from start to finish. Someone commented how strange it was to be at a jazz concert and not to see everything through a cloud of smoke. Maybe it is a while since they have been to a jazz concert and times have changed!



The Chris Ingham Quartet – with Rev. Andrew Brown on the left.

Synchronised meditation

On MARCH 21 James Twyman was at a Donald Trump rally, and millions of people sent prayers of peace not only to those present, but to the entire US. His message is meant to plant the seed and to start getting all of us excited about the possibility of a massive, prayerful response to the strange happenings in the election for US President. He plans further peace meditations.

Check out www.jamestwyman.com

East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group.

The next meeting will be at 11.30am on Tuesday 10th May at The Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds. The chosen subject for discussion will be 'Visual Arts'. This includes anything creative. For further information please speak with Paulette, Riena or Linda.

Dates for your Diary –

Tuesday 5th April – Trustees meeting

Friday 8th April – see below

Friday 8th to Sunday 10th April – British Association for Local History conference at UCS Waterfront Building, Ipswich (a photo of our Meeting House features on their leaflet for this conference)

Saturday 9th April – concert of music with harp, keyboard and voice at the Cambridge Meeting House to raise funds for the Medaille Trust (which helps people who have been freed from human trafficking)

Thursday 14th April – Harmonic Concert at Framlingham MH by Ramivana – 7 pm.

Friday 15th April – Cambridge Welcomes Refugees – 4.30pm in the Guildhall, Market Square – fundraising, fair and panel discussion with music in the evening

Saturday 16th April – Celtic Spring - 6pm – an evening of music and poetry at our Meeting House organised by Robert Waller.

Sunday 24th April – our anniversary service and shared lunch – all welcome.

Thinking of Mark

Mark Hawes, son of Sandra and Malcolm, will be having a serious operation in Switzerland on Friday 8th April. Gerrie, his sister, has asked that we hold him in our thoughts especially on this day and bring positive energy and focus to him.



Religious Buildings in Britain – cont.

It seems from this report that the trend is for the traditional Christian places of worship to close and for the number of those of other faiths to be growing. It is suggested too that there may be many more Pentecostal churches – or gatherings of people who worship in this way in homes and houses – than are registered.

Our Unitarian website records that there are 170 Unitarian chapels, churches or meeting houses across Britain with 4 congregations in Scotland and 20 in Wales. In our Eastern area of the UK there are 7 active congregations. I have no numbers of churches closing although in the recent past our meeting house locally in Bredfield has closed.

Worldwide there are Unitarian congregations in 33 countries.

So this is a series of numbers which perhaps only tell us a little of the story. People are still looking for a place to worship or to find a faith, but perhaps what they are looking for is changing? Maybe this gives us an opportunity to inform more people about what Unitarianism means, to advertise our open, free thinking and tolerant approach to faith? If people are looking for something different, then we can certainly make a claim to be different from the mainstream and maybe that will meet the needs of more people than we think?

Tessa Forsdike



Our children's box being used by Amélie on Easter Sunday.

Thank you to all who have contributed photos for this newsletter.

Unitarianism

Unitarianism is where we proudly own the heresy label.

Boldly disavow the centre-ground and the respectable.

Brazenly stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow misfits and rebels.

Unitarianism is a place to grow, to unfold, to stretch out.

Fearlessly and joyfully ferreting and shuffling our way down new paths.

Wilfully declaring our unified oneness, in spite of our spacious uniqueness.

Unitarianism does not dream of imagined pasts, or wallow in the mire of lifeless custom.

Foolishly we will play the jester to point the way towards a world of unshackled souls.

Profusely striving as dreamers do, towards a world of liberty and happiness.

For in this space beyond assumption, beyond the centre, we live, we strive, we have our being.

A poem written by Lewis Connolly

Ipswich Unitarian Newsletter –

For contributions to this newsletter, please email them to Tessa at - ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or post them to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS before the copy deadline for the next issue of Wednesday 27th April.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive this regularly by email, please just send us a request. Do feel free to pass on copies to any interested person.

To contact our secretary Riena Jackson, ring 01473 210064/email - mjack76748@aol.com

Thought for the month –

"Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." - George Bernard Shaw