

Bury Unitarian Church



All the blessings of the field
All the stores the gardens yield
All the fruits in full supply
Ripened 'neath the summer sky

Calendar for October 2020

"Where the Bee sucks"



Camera club picture

Welcome!

Welcome to this October edition of the Bury Unitarian Church *Calendar*.

With so many changes taking place all the time, you might be particularly interested in the 'What's On' section in the centre pages: obviously, most of what we're doing at the moment is still 'virtual' but it's all still important and adds to the richness of our life as a community.

You will find some details of upcoming changes to our service times, and of some new arrangements for the services in-person. There is also news from the building itself, from various church committees, our now-regular 'Bygone Times' section, more interesting thoughts about hymns, and lots of snippets of news from our members. The *Calendar* has always been a rich and important part of life at Bury Unitarian Church, and I am grateful to everyone who's gone before and kept it going.

You are, as always, very welcome to send me anything you'd like included. Even though we can now meet in person in a limited way, a lot of us have still chosen to remain at home, and we'd love to hear your news. I'm always open to suggestions for new things we could add, though I should warn you that if you ask for something to appear, you may be invited to write it yourself!

How you receive the *Calendar* might change from this month: if you're not a church member and it normally comes by post, that will continue. If you are a church member but aren't currently joining us in church, you will still get it lovingly shoved through your letterbox. But if you are coming into church for the service on the Sunday of publication, then you will find your copy on your chair I hope the new system doesn't cause too much confusion.

With love,

Kate Brady McKenna

Letter from the Minister:

Dear all,

Welcome to Autumn! I don't know how you are feeling about the way time is working at the moment: someone said recently that the days are going slowly, but that the months are going fast, and I mostly agree with that, except for those times when it's the complete opposite!

Of course, the days are now shorter: I am writing this on the equinox, the day when there is the same amount of daytime as there is night time, but by the time you read it the earth will have tilted a bit and there will be more hours of darkness than there are of light. That can seem gloomy, sometimes, and perhaps particularly given the time in which we're living, but it is a part of a glorious natural cycle of light and dark, warm and cold, long and short. I am continually awed by how this thing, which happens every single year, without fail, can still seem so important and magnificent and sacred to us all. We all notice the seasons, and we all notice the turn of the year, however many times we've experienced it.

And it's not just the seasons which are changing. Around us, it seems, everything is in a state of flux and it can be really unsettling. I wonder what is stable and balanced in your life just now, though? There are still patterns to our lives, just as there are patterns to the season: they may seem trivial (the bins go out on Wednesday, and we worship together on Sunday) but they are the things which hold us to some sort of pattern in the midst of turmoil.

The way we, as a community, can worship has changed as well, of course. At the beginning of September, we started meeting again in person, for services in the worship area. It is very different from how worship used to be: there can only be sixteen of us (plus the worship leader and a steward) in the building at one time; we wear face-coverings throughout; and we cannot join in singing together. There is much that we miss. But it has still been a joy to be gathered together despite the restrictions.

Rest assured, though, that those of you who are unable to join us in person, or who have chosen not to for whatever reason, are still just as involved in our church life and our worship life. We will be continuing to offer the services-at-home and the Zoom service until such time as there are no restrictions on gathering together, however far away that might be.

It may be, of course, with continued restrictions on meeting others, and as the infection rate continues to change, that we have to stop meeting in person again. I pray that this doesn't happen, and that we can continue to meet up safely and sensibly, but if it does happen, I promise that we will keep you informed. We have shown that we can continue with our church life despite huge restrictions, and if we have to take a step back in order to reduce risks, I know that we can do so with good grace.

You'll see later in the *Calendar* that I am taking some time off in October: I will not be working from after the afternoon service on Sunday October 4th until the morning of Friday 23rd. I am very grateful to the various people who have offered to cover some of my work in that time, including Betty Kenyon and Susan Mitchell for leading worship, and the Revd. Shammy Webster (from Stand Unitarians) for providing pastoral cover. I do have plans to go away for a few days, although of course the Covid situation may change those plans, and will be spending the rest of the time at home, possibly doing some of those jobs that I've been meaning to do for months, if not years! I won't be checking my work emails or the manse answerphone though.

I hope that this month brings good changes, and a sense of autumn mellowness.

With love,

Rev Kate Brady McKenna

Presidential matters:

Last month, I hoped for a quieter time; I should have known better! During September, I have conducted two Zoom services: one for Belper, and one for Kendal; such services are rather different from live church-services; they are shorter, for a start, and too much "talking at people" leads to a lack of concentration, after a while, which means that the "talk" needs to be separated by other worship-elements. I enjoy choosing my music for my services, rather than leaving the choice to a church-organist or pulpit-supply secretary; I can select music which highlights my theme, which is an advantage; at Belper, for example, in a service about Memories, I played the Bob Hope/Shirley Ross rendition of "Thanks for the memory"---a bittersweet song of reminiscences which recall the fabric of a life shared. You'll find it on You Tube.

I was recently asked, in a way that presupposed the answer, whether I had been very busy; when I replied that I had been, this brought forth expressions of great surprise. I explained that I had various duties at Bury, with the Lancashire Collaborative Ministry, and with the Presidential Team. I keep in regular touch with Celia and Sue, and the messages that pass between us vary from the profound to the trivial! Recently, the password on our special account expired, as it does regularly, about once every two months; at that point, we have to contact Essex Hall, to request a new one; of course, we can never remember the new password; mine is written down, in several places, but always manages to be lost when I need it! Such is life!

This month, I have spent a great deal of time reorganising October; I could see, beforehand, that it was going to be a heavy month, with 10 engagements altogether, and I thought it best to begin to plan well in advance. But what should I plan? Were engagements going to be cancelled outright, transferred to Zoom, or actually be held? Services would be different, depending on whether they were actual or virtual. In the end, nearly everything will be

virtual, but negotiations have been lengthy and time-consuming---and are still unfinished.

Roger and I attended the September service at Ainsworth, and enjoyed it very much; we are back there, in October, when I conduct their Harvest Festival for them. We participate in Zoom services, on most Sundays, and, on September 20th, were delighted to listen to the service at Padiham, conducted by their former minister, Rev. Jim Corrigan. One great advantage of Zoom is that it's easily possible to join other church-services, conducted by different leaders, and, as not all services are held on Sundays, at 11 am; a greater choice is available.

As mentioned elsewhere, we have been holding actual services, every Sunday afternoon, this month; this, of course has added to Kate's workload, as it has to be taken into account. She is working very hard, on our behalf, to supply various forms of worship, to cater for everybody, and I do thank her most sincerely for all she is doing for us. Ade, too, is being kept busy, supervising the premises and stewarding services; thank you to him, too. The fact the we are able to be open at all is due to several people: those who make the decisions, and those who oversee the practical arrangements; thank you to them, also. In time, we hope to be able to relax some of the more severe restrictions, but a great deal will depend on what the government allows, and the present figures are not encouraging. We must be patient for a while longer, it seems. It has been good to see people at services, throughout September, and I hope that this will continue. Whether or not we have met recently, Roger and I send you our love and warmest greetings; we are trying to keep in touch, as much as possible, and, one day, we will all be able to be together again, I feel sure! Look after yourselves.

Anne.

Notes from the church building:

The church has got its glad-rags on and many of us have already stopped by to admire them. It's been a wonderful experience to have people back in the building, doing what the building was designed to do; to provide us with a space for worship and community.

But the glad-rags took a lot of time, and obviously needed to take precedence over the accessories, the little details that need to be taken care of so that the glad-rags can shine. Much like the right hat can set off the look of an outfit, good maintenance can ensure a building has everything in place to work as it should.

There have been a lot of detailing jobs in the church building that have had to be put on hold this year and that is starting to change now. It seemed inconsequential to paint the pot-cupboard, or to refit the woodwork around the electrical box upstairs, or to fix the outside lighting when there were major works that needed to be done so that we could open the church again.

But those details do need taking care of, because as the building comes back into use (even if we are presently using it only for services), it's important that the rest of it is ready for when we need it otherwise. It needs its accessories, and we are working on that. The building has its glad-rags on, and we should be proud of that. In the coming months though, the church will have its hat on too, and that's something to look forward to, even if it is just to set off work that's largely already been done.

Ade Brady.

News of our community:

Geoff Stephenson:

Geoff has been unwell recently, and at the time of writing he is staying at Killelea for rehabilitation. Once a care package is in place and some adaptations have been made, Vera is very much looking forward to his return home. Vera can't visit Geoff at the moment, due to Coronavirus restrictions, but she speaks to him frequently. She is getting good support from their family and from church members.

We send Vera and Geoff our love and hope that Geoff makes a good recovery.

Ade and Paddie:

I know that many of you heard that Ade (and our Schnauzer, Paddie) were attacked by a dog whilst out walking three weeks ago. Ade needed a tetanus injection and a week of antibiotics for a nasty bite on his arm, and Paddie needed antibiotics for bites on his tail and ear. They are both absolutely fine now, and Ade is really grateful for all the concern shown when it happened (and both Ade and Kate are very grateful to the NHS, who were magnificent, of course).

Terry Brady:

Many of you have asked how Terry and Marguerite are following Terry's cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment: his latest surgery showed no sign of cancer in his lymph nodes, so he is now clear. He has a follow-up appointment soon, and then won't need to be seen for a year. Marguerite is well, and they are grateful for your concern.

Other news:

We rejoice with those members of our church family whose own families have grown in both number and joy recently, and we send them our love.

John and Margaret Fitzpatrick

At our recent meeting on Zoom of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, John Fitzpatrick broke the momentous news to us that he and Margaret have decided to relocate to the Birmingham area to be nearer to their daughter, Joanne, and their grandchild. I am sure that everyone will join us in wishing John and Margaret the smoothest possible move and every happiness in their new home.

Both John and Margaret have made enormous contributions to the life of our church over a long period of time. John has been the church Treasurer since 1998 and a Trustee since 2001. Those who have served on the Finance Committee will know how well prepared John has always been for meetings, producing an annual estimated budget listing expected income and outgoings and quarterly up-to-date accounts and keeping an eagle eye on bills, which always creep upwards. He has been a very sure pair of hands.

Margaret was for many years a stalwart of the Efforts Committee, and has acted as its Secretary and as its Chairman. More recently she has dealt with lettings and overseen the popular book shelf in the lounge. And on countless occasions they have acted as stewards, opening and closing the church for evening meetings, sometimes at very short notice.

John and Margaret will be missed in our community, and we shall need to find volunteers to take over their roles in our organisation. Please consider whether you could help by volunteering to fill one of the jobs that their departure will leave vacant. The role of Treasurer is especially important, and ideally the new Treasurer would work alongside John for a few months before going it alone.

Janet Thatcher

Minister's holiday

I will be on leave (or taking days off) from after the service-in-person on Sunday 4th October until the morning of Friday 23rd October (when I will be in the vestry and available for conversations in the worship area).

Details of services in my absence are elsewhere in the *Calendar*, and I thank the people who are taking them: it is particularly difficult to arrange worship in person at the moment, and I am very grateful to Betty Kenyon and Susan Mitchell for offering to do so. Covid permitting there will be a service in the afternoon of both the 11th and 18th October, and you will be sent details for Zoom services (from other churches) nearer the time.

Unless anyone is willing to host them, there won't be a Zoom coffee morning on either Saturday 10th or Saturday 17th.

I will not be reading church-related emails during my time off, and I will not be checking the answerphone, but if you would like pastoral support from a minister, Rev. Shammy Webster (minister at Stand, and known to many of you) has very kindly offered to provide this in my absence. You can contact her on revshamster@virginmedia.com or 07791 721295

Pastoral conversations with the minister:

You will no doubt know by now that people who can work from home are being encouraged to do so, and this means that for the foreseeable future my 'vestry days' will have to stop.

However, I know it might sometimes be very important that I am able to speak with you in person, so I will still be able to arrange to see you, in the worship area, socially distanced, if you need to discuss something and the telephone or Zoom don't feel as though they would be appropriate. I will need some notice, of course, in order to make sure we don't clash with someone else working in the building, but we will be able to arrange something, I'm sure.

Worship in October

Sunday October 4th:

11.15am: Zoom worship

2pm: worship in person to celebrate harvest, led by the minister

Sunday October 11th:

Am: Bury will not be offering a Zoom service, but you are invited to join Newcastle and Stockton Unitarians for worship led by Anne Mills. Details will be provided soon.

2pm: worship in person, led by Susan Mitchell (stewarded by Roger Mills)

Sunday October 18th:

Am: No Zoom service from Bury. Kate is trying to arrange an 'exchange visit' with another congregation, and will provide you with further details when she can.

2pm: worship in person, led by Betty Kenyon (stewarded by Peter Whewell).

Sunday October 25th

11.15am: Zoom worship

2pm: worship in person, led by the minister.

Church flowers:

The church flowers this month would have been sponsored by the following people:

4th October: Marian Price, in memory of Margaret Ince.

25th October: June Clarke, in memory of Jean and Garry.

We send our love to Marian and June.

Services in person

At the time of writing we have held three services-in-person in the church building, and it has been a joy to see the building loved and used again (I am very grateful to the HARP team for everything they have done to keep the building in such good shape over the past six months.

Unless government advice or safety concerns say otherwise, we will continue to hold services in person.

You have already been asked about dates you would like to attend, and I have made very careful note of your requests. So far, we have not had to ask anyone not to attend on any given Sunday, though I can see this changing in future weeks: I hope that you will be understanding if this happens to you. I will work very hard to make sure that the 'disappointments' are carefully and fairly managed.

If your wishes for October have changed in any way, please let me know so that I can do what I can to accommodate them. Maybe you want to come on a week you didn't previously, or maybe you want to cancel a week you have said you'd like to come. Or maybe, of course, you have changed your mind altogether about coming to church or not. All of these options are absolutely fine!

If you have expressed an interest in coming on a particular week, I will be contacting you on the Friday before so that you can confirm whether you still wish to come: knowing in advance means that Ade and I can lay the room out properly, and also that if anyone is on the 'waiting list' they can be offered a space.

One day, I feel sure, we will be able to be relaxed about church attendance again, but in the meantime please bear with what we have to do to keep everyone safe!

Kate Brady McKenna

What's on in October.

Saturdays 3rd and 24th October, 11am:
Zoom coffee morning (mtg no **839 0159 0623**)

Sundays 4th and 25th October, 11am for 11.15 start:
Zoom worship (mtg no **849 7456 6116**)

Sundays 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th October, 2pm:
Service-in-person (please only attend if you have been invited).

Monday 28th September, 11am

Reopening review meeting.

Sunday 4th October, 3pm:

Ainsworth Unitarian Church Harvest Festival.

Wednesday 14th October, 7pm:

Zoom Book club (mtg no 885 0522 3984)

We will be discussing *Holiday Home*, by Elizabeth Noble.

Monday 19th October, 7pm:

Zoom Camera Club (mtg no 832 9647 8073)

Monday 26th October, 1030am (tbc):

Worship committee meeting

Monday 26th October, 2pm:

Finance committee meeting

Looking ahead:

Change in service time from 1st November

From Sunday 1st November, our in-person services will take place at their old time of 11.15. Strict social distancing and safety procedures will still be in place, and you will still need to book in advance as there seems to be no prospect of a relaxation of these rules.

We will be continuing to hold the Zoom services until it is safe for everyone to be in church together, and these will be at 2pm.

Remembrance Sunday

We will be holding a service at the war memorial at 1055am on Sunday 8th November, and the poppy wreath will be laid by one of our adult members and a member of the junior church. Please let myself, Anne Mills or Betty Kenyon know by the end of October if you intend to be at this service, and if you would like to attend a service in church immediately afterwards, so that we can make arrangements (please bear in mind I am unavailable between 5th October and 23rd October).

After the service Kate and Ade will be laying poppies on the war graves at Holebottom.

Christmas

Please keep an eye out in the November *Calendar* for details of what we might be able to offer on Christmas morning. This is still very much under discussion and we will be consulting with the congregation.

Re-opening

Sunday, September 6th, was momentous, as we re-opened our church for worship, after 6 months of lockdown---an unexpectedly lengthy period! At the time of writing, we have been able to worship together (if slightly apart) on three occasions, and it has felt incredible. It is impossible to explain how different it feels to sit in the worship-area again, with other members of the congregation, despite all the changes that have had to be introduced and maintained, and how comfortable it is to listen to a service conducted by Kate, in person. The atmosphere, after so many weeks of reading services at home, or attending Zoom services, has been a pleasure to experience---uplifting and quite emotional.

This was not worship as we know, or knew, it; this was not "back to normal". We waved to each other, across the space, and we managed a little conversation, afterwards, at good social distance, in small groups, outside. What it gave a few of us was the opportunity to enjoy a service together, and to remember those who, although part of our church-community, were not present, on that occasion. But it was a time of greetings, warm welcomes, and joy; we were, after many weeks, open, and together again---and that was well worth celebrating.

Anne Mills



Church collections – important information from Anne Mills:

Once we begin live Sunday services again, we shall start to accept collections once more; all such payments will be welcome, as this is a valuable source of revenue, which has been lacking since lockdown began. As it will not be possible to collect during services, this will have to be done by using a special Collections Box in the foyer, so that people can leave their contributions as they arrive or leave church. Anne Mills will be dealing with this task, for the time being, until Margaret Pollard feels able to take over again. All hygiene precautions will be observed; please try not to touch the collections box; just drop your donation in; thank you.

Those wishing to contribute should place their donations in an envelope (which can be the church collection envelope, or any other); cheques are preferred, but, if this is impossible, notes will be accepted; no coins, please! The total amount should be written clearly on the outside of the envelope. All cheques must be made out to Bury Unitarian Church, so that they can be paid into the church-account. Anyone who will not be attending church, just yet, but would like to make payments, may send cheques to Anne, at her home address (rather than to the church).

Please note: those who are registered for Gift Aid should continue to pay as they have done previously. The donations of those who are not registered could have Gift Aid applied on amounts up to £30, so someone who is not registered and is contributing, for example, £60, would be better to submit two cheques of £30 each than one of £60. If you need further information about this, please contact Val Chamberlain.

It may take some time to collect money in, using this method, but we should soon be able to settle into our usual pattern.

Thank you all for your co-operation.

Growth Initiatives

On September 8th, four of us (Kate, Janet, Roger and I) attended a webinar, led by Professor John Bates, Chair of New Unity; his subject tackled the problem of each church's strategy for the future and was both positive and helpful. The course was backed by a goodly range of materials, and a video, which we should be able to use, in the future, for whatever we decide to organise for ourselves; once we can all meet in person, this will be pursued, but that time is not yet; at present, we should give the subject thought and be prepared for later action.

Two follow-up sessions were offered, for a much smaller group of eight congregations, but we have not yet been informed as to whether we have been selected.

I also circulated, during September, an offer from The Wood Green Trust, which offered to sponsor churches which proposed suitable initiatives leading towards growth; this will involve a great deal of thought, planning, and hard work; applications needed to be submitted by the end of September.

Anne Mills

Update on Church Strategy Workshops.

Following the workshop described by Anne, above, Betty Kenyon and I attended a follow-up session, in which representatives from six Unitarian congregations discussed our strategies: we were asked to identify our mission (why we're here); our objectives (where we're going and where we want to go); and our goals (the measurable effects we want to see).

It was a rich and demanding session, and there will be another follow up in a couple of weeks. I am not sure yet who will be attending that session, but I'm sure that once we have (between us) attended all the sessions, there will be a lot of valuable material to think about and feed back to the rest of the congregation.

Kate Brady McKenna

Church meetings last month

As well as several very important meetings discussing reopening the church for in-person worship, there have also been Worship Committee and Finance Committee meetings this month, both held over Zoom.

At the Finance Committee meeting on 7th September the big discussion was about John and Margaret Fitzpatrick's upcoming move away from the area and the impact this would have on the church as a whole. Other topics of discussion included fire safety; copyright licenses, the new Wi-Fi in the church building; the church accounts; the costs and benefits of both the cleaner and the property manager; electrical work in the building; and the old burial ground at Holebottom.

As well as losing a treasurer when John and Margaret Fitzpatrick move away, we will be losing the lettings officer, and both John and Margaret were thanked for everything they have done. We still need to find a new treasurer, but the administration of lettings will now become part of the work of the property manager.

At the Worship Committee meeting on 16th September we agreed that from 1st November we would move the service-in-person to the old time of 11.15am, and that we would invite our regular organists to attend to provide piano interludes for worship (we are still unable to sing in worship, unfortunately). Arrangements were made for worship cover in Kate's absence, and it was agreed that there would be no Zoom service from Bury on those dates.

There was also discussion of Remembrance Sunday and the Christmas services. There will be a virtual Carol Service on Sunday 20th December, at which we will sing along to last year's Carols by Candlelight. Plans are still to be made for Christmas morning. Further details of all of this will be made nearer to the time and in consultation with the whole congregation.

Both the Worship Committee and the Finance Committee will meet again on 26th October.

A prayer from last month:

Let us pray not for certainties and sureness and facts, but for the strength to bear uncertainty, unsureness, and wondering.

Let us pray for peace of mind in these turbulent times. Let us pray that we can become aware enough of the things which are constant that we can bear the things which are not.

Let us pray for patience, that we might endure these times of unknowing and not become frustrated.

Let us pray for hope, that we might look forward to the happy day we are praying for, the day when we will all be free to meet as one again.

And let us pray for faith, that we might feel held, supported, and loved by all those – human and spiritual – on whom we are relying in these days of uncertainty.

Let us pray for those who are ill, those who are dying, and those who are experiencing loneliness and fear.

And let us pray for all those who are working hard, courageously, and lovingly to support and comfort those amongst us who need it the most.

Amen.

Camera Club:

Members are continuing to meet regularly; the next meeting will take place on October 19th, at 7 p.m. As many photographs as possible are to be taken, to be shared and discussed at the meeting, with a view to choosing a picture for the November Calendar cover, so "Remembrance", as a theme, will be borne in mind. Details about meetings are available from Janet Thatcher.

Anne Mills

Book Club:

We met twice in September; on the 2nd, we had a good discussion of Jojo Moyes' "The Giver of Stars", which we had all enjoyed, and, on the 16th, we again shared pieces to be read and discussed. Our next meeting will be held on October 14th, when we shall read and discuss a short story: "Holiday Home", by Elizabeth Noble. At the meeting after that, for which the date is yet to be decided, we will discuss "Treasure Island", by Robert Louis Stevenson. Meetings begin at 7 p.m; and last for about an hour; further information can be obtained from Anne.

Book sales

The book sale shelves in the lounge are currently groaning under the weight of generously donated books. If you would like something new to read, please let Kate know what sort of thing, and she will get something to you. We can worry about the money later!

Unitarian Women's League:

Message from National President Joyce Ashworth

Although little has been happening in the way of activities I send my warmest greetings to each and every one of you along with this message.

It is a beautiful morning as I start to pen this message. I am 'mask free' and enjoying the act of inhaling the refreshing morning air. The birds are singing and I am absorbing wafts of perfume from a potted lily at the side of me – "starburst", bright pink and crowded with flowers. It is as if the gardens are flouncing their final exuberance before autumn's inevitable decline

Living in Rochdale we have been plunged into a further partial lockdown, I wonder how your congregations and community group have fared? We have now lost six people with close connections to Rochdale Church, two of which were Women's League members

I wonder if any of you have been brave enough to venture on some kind of holiday break. I have briefly thought about it and longed to do so, but promptly abandoned the idea. Perhaps this will be a possibility when schools return and hopefully crowds diminish as we edge into autumn. This is the time when trees, in particular come into their own, reflecting the changing season with such magnificent, colourful foliage.

So what of Women's League news, you might ask! As you can imagine, with the current restrictions on movement and activities I have little to report except cancellations and the sending of condolence messages. Disappointing for everyone at Bolton Bank Street has been the necessity to postpone their Women's League Branch centenary celebrations, planned for mid-September, Hopefully they can mark this milestone appropriately at some future date. The difficult decision has also been made to cancel the Triennial Meeting,

which was to be held at Whalley Abbey in October. It was distressing to learn that with no activities envisaged during this year, employment for the staff at the Abbey was about to be terminated.

Since my Spring message to you I have, on your behalf, sent messages of condolence to 7 families including the families of two ex Presidents of the league, Meryl Edgley and Sheila Godfrey. What a sad time this has truly been for all of us but I trust our heartfelt messages have proved a source of comfort for all those recently bereaved.

I will close now with the very slightly adapted words of Henry David Thoreau, "Live each season as it passes; breath the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and surrender yourself to the influences of each".

Yours in affection and friendship,

Joyce Ashworth, National President

Ainsworth Services:

Ainsworth Chapel held a successful service on September 6th, which it was a pleasure to attend.

On October 4th, at 3pm; Anne Mills will lead Ainsworth's Harvest Celebrations. Everybody is welcome, so please come and join us; there is no need to book in advance, but strict safety and hygiene rules will operate. Please contact Shirley Horrocks, if you have queries.

Anne Mills.

Anne Mills

Church memories

Pam Oxley's account of her truancy from Sunday School (tut, tut!) reminded me of a sin of mine (extra tutting!) At one period, at Bank Street, Junior Church took place at 11 a. m; when the children joined the adults' service for the first 20 minutes; they were then free to depart, and expected to leave their collection, on their way out. My sister and I (I'm fairly sure that this was her idea, but my memory may have let me down, on this point) decided that, if we kept our collection, and if we walked home, we would have spare money for sweets from the shop facing Kay Gardens. This ploy was very successful, for a while---until we were discovered and had to confess our guilt. One Sunday morning, we were the only two Junior Church members present, and, as it happened, our parents were the first adults to be offered the collection-box, later. At lunch, that day, questions were asked in the house, and we were left in no doubt about the error of our ways! Severe punishment resulted, and we were left to reflect on the discomfort of the sin of being found out! We might not have heard of Nemesis, but we certainly knew how it felt!

Name concealed to protect the guilty!

[The minister would like to make it clear that she knows exactly who this miscreant is, and is keeping a very close eye on future behaviour].

By-Gone Times
Henry Pendlebury

As the archivist for Bury Grammar School Girls, I have been interested to establish why Henry Pendlebury, our church's first minister, has a window dedicated to him in the Roger Kay hall at the school.

Henry was born at Jowkin farm, close to Ashworth Chapel (C. of E), Norden, in 1626. He attended Bury Grammar School as a boy and went up to Christ's College Cambridge in 1645. It was at Ashworth Chapel that he preached his first sermon as a probationer in 1648 and he continued as minister there until he moved to Holcombe church in 1650.

He was ejected in 1662 from Holcombe Church as in all conscience he could not subscribe to the Book of Common Prayer, along with 2,400 dissenting ministers' country wide.

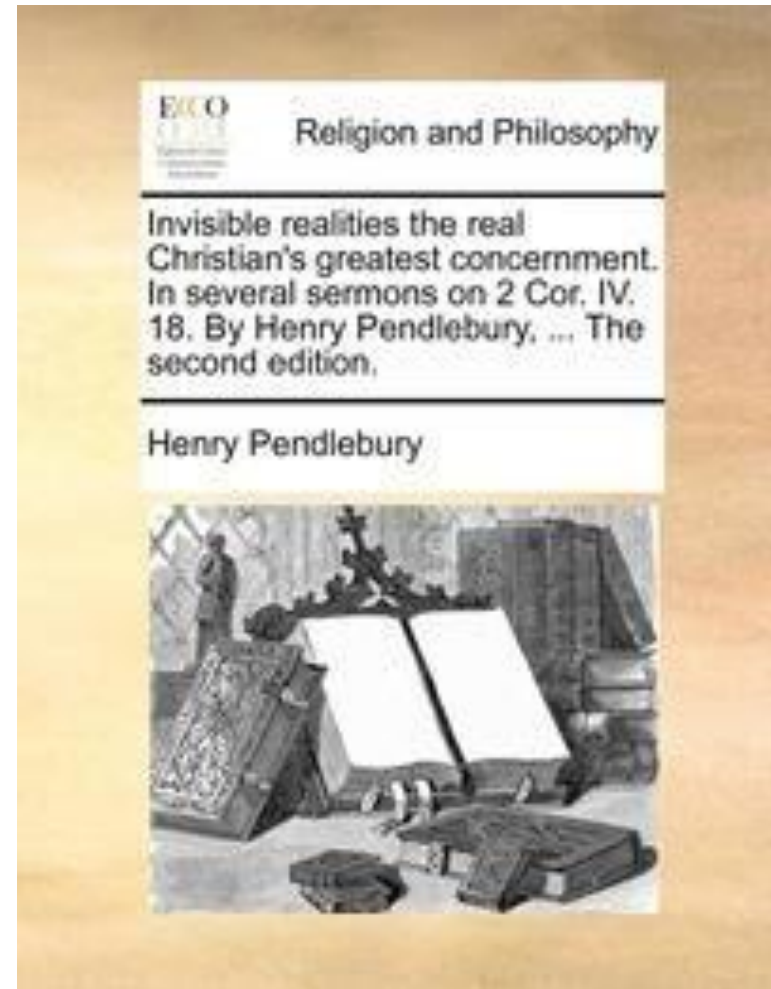
From then onwards Henry preached illegally and secretly in the open air and in private homes. From 1689 services were held openly at Bast House, Walmersley, the home of Richard Kay, the chief lay-supporter of Henry Pendlebury and the true co-founder, with him, of dissenting Protestant worship in the Bury area.

Henry became the first non-conformist minister in Bury in 1672. He died in 1695. Most of his works were originally published posthumously. He was acknowledged as one of the most learned nonconformists of his day.

It was later that many of these dissenting ministers led their churches and chapels into Unitarianism as education became increasingly widespread. They would be troubled by the contrast of their 'orthodox' beliefs in the Bible and Christ to the liberal Unitarianism we embrace today.

But it is largely thanks to their courage in their Great Ejection from the orthodox establishment in 1662 that we can worship in freedom today.

However, the mystery still exists as to why Henry Pendlebury should have a window dedicated to him in the Roger Kay hall which was built in 1906 – some 200 years after his death. Any ideas?



Hymn-pondering

It is not often that our purple hymn-book provides specific "occasion" hymns, but number 135 proves the exception; this is a Harvest hymn; it was written by Brian Wren, and is sung to the tune of Stowey, which some of us will know better as the music to "When a knight won his spurs in the stories of old".

Its title is: "Praise God for the harvest".

Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field; praise God for the people who gather their yield, the long hours of labour, the skills of the team, the patience of science, the power of machine.

Praise God for the harvest that comes from afar, from market and harbour, the sea and the shore: foods packed and transported, and gathered and grown by God-given neighbours, unseen and unknown.

Praise God for the harvest that's quarried and mined, then sifted and smelted, or shaped and refined; for oil and for iron, for copper and coal; praise God, who in love has provided them all.

Praise God for the harvest of science and skill, the urge to discover, create and fulfil: for dreams and inventions that promise to gain a future more hopeful, a world more humane.

Praise God for the harvest of mercy and love, for leaders and peoples, who struggle and serve, with patience and kindness, that all may be led to freedom and justice, and all may be fed.

The plan of the hymn is well-organised, with each new idea leading smoothly into the next, and onwards. We begin with a traditional harvest scene, in which farmers gather their crops, ready for distribution; but, by introducing

the ideas of science and machinery, the writer prepares the way for other harvests and other spheres, in different countries. The idea of God-given neighbours will be linked in, at the very end. Verse three moves into a more industrial landscape, where work to recover goods is more arduous, because such goods need to be processed before onward transmission. God's involvement in whatever occurs is, however, acknowledged throughout. The fourth verse moves on again: "science and skill" are the keywords here, as we proceed towards the results of study, research, and creative solutions for a better world. Finally, the last verse brings together the people involved in different harvests of all kinds, all doing their utmost to improve life, by offering a spiritual dimension, towards which we should all aim: one of "mercy, love, patience, kindness, freedom and justice." We can, if we choose, do our share towards achieving such a whole-hearted harvest, and these words are especially relevant in these days of pandemic and lockdown. Will you spare five minutes to read the hymn's words again, really think about them, and decide what your perfect harvest would be? Over to you!

Anne Mills.

Unitarian books

I apologise that, due to space restrictions, I haven't provided details of any Unitarian books this month: I promise it will resume when there is space. If there are any books (Unitarian, religious, or not) that you'd like to talk about in the *Calendar*, please don't hesitate to send me something!

Kate

Who wrote the Old Testament?

One of the congregation recently asked me this question, and asked me if there could be an article about it in the *Calendar*. I'm always open to requests (and I quite like "doing theology" as well), so here goes.

Of course, as a Unitarian my first answer has to be "we don't know". We live in a world which has forgotten that for almost the whole of history all stories and all legends and all scripture has been passed on verbally by storytellers. Whatever some of the more fundamentalist thinkers might tell us, we cannot possibly know for certain who wrote which bits of the Old Testament. My own belief is that most of the stories were passed down from generations, and that most of them (and in particular the story of creation as we hear it in Genesis) were never ever intended to be taken as truth.

Whoever 'wrote' (or invented, or wove, or told) the Old Testament stories was speaking into a world in which people had a much better understanding of the power of story than we do today. We were never meant to believe it literally! Karen Armstrong says "*until the nineteenth century, very few people imagined that the first chapter of Genesis was a factual account of the origins of life*".

But if you look at histories of the bible, and if you look at the internet, tradition tells us that at least the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) were written by Moses around 1300 years before the birth of Jesus. Of course, whether we think this is accurate or not depends on a lot of things, including whether we think Moses was a historical figure or not.

I am sure you could ask this question of all sorts of people and get all sorts of different answers: but mine would be that we cannot ever know for sure, and that we almost certainly don't need to know. What's important to me is that we take what nourishes (or even just interests) us from the Old Testament, and accept it for what it is: a collection of rich and fascinating allegories and story, with much to teach us so long as we maintain the humility and intelligence to know it as allegory.

Kate Brady McKenna

"Bring me sunshine!"



Camera club picture

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