



Brighton
Unitarians

July 2018 Newsletter

Sunday Services

Please note: services are at 11 a.m. All are welcome.

We would be grateful if you would switch your phones to airplane mode before the start of the service.

01st July - Jef Jones (BUC Lay Leader)
Pianist Joe Ward

08th July - Francis Clark-Lowes (BUC Member)
Pianist Maurice Rigby

15th July - Jef Jones (BUC Lay Leader)
Pianist Pamela Nickels

22nd July - Stephen Crowther (Hastings, Lay Leader)
Pianist Kathy Pitt

29th July - Jef Jones (BUC Lay Leader)
Pianist Stuart Deeks

Quiet Reflection 7-8 pm, 12th July

Welcome from Jef

Welcome everyone to our Newsletter for July 2018.

As you will see below we've had some very serious news about our building. We have spent so much time and energy over recent years fund-raising and applying for grants in order to restore our portico. We were successful and work started in the spring. However we've been advised that the pediment is in a much worse state than expected and the additional work must be carried out. This will cost us an extra £64,000.

In spite of this major set-back we're determined to secure our building. Already our remarkable fund-raising team are planning all kinds of new initiatives. If you have any ideas to contribute please do let us know and if there is any way you can increase what you give to the church on a weekly basis at services or by monthly standing order it would be very

much appreciated.

You'll also see below advance notice for an all night Peace Vigil being planned for World Peace Day on September 21st. This promises to be a beautiful and profound event, an opportunity to witness for peace in our church. Join us on World Peace Day for a candle lit vigil in our sacred space.

Building Work on the Portico

Work on the iconic columns and steps at the front of the building started in March 2018, thanks in great part to a grant received from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other grant-giving bodies. BUT last week, having unpicked the existing structure to the portico, the structural engineer discovered that the pediment requires much more work than had been originally envisaged. Crucially, work has to carry on as it is not possible to leave the structure in its current condition.

As a consequence, the Church has to raise an additional £64,000. This is devastating news for us. However, we are determined that the building will be repaired and will continue to be open as a place of worship and a community venue for future generations.

Fund raising events will be planned and the Church will look to its community and friends for their help and support.

Quiet Reflective Circle

On the second Thursday of each month we gather for candle lighting and quiet reflection. This starts at 7pm and lasts no longer than an hour. There will be readings, time for candle-lighting, stillness and a few simple closing words.

If you've been having a busy week, and could do with some stillness, do come along. If you're looking for a time and place to reconnect with your spirit, do come along. If you'd like to sit quietly in a sacred place, please do come along. All are welcome!

From the Lay Leader

Our member Brian Bell recently led an excellent service for which his theme was the Spirit of Sussex. As well as addressing this topic himself he invited our member Sophie Wilson, the writer Justin Hopper and myself to speak to this too. My contribution is below.

There was once a shallow, sunlit sea that stretched across half the earth. It was a rich marine habitat, alive with all kinds of sea-creatures. Yet the most populous life form in those warm waters was algae; single cell creatures whose microscopic, calcium shells sank to the seabed for millions of years and formed the white chalk on which our city and large parts of Sussex now stand.

That limestone, visible in the lovely white cliffs of Sussex, might seem like the very

foundation of our land. However, deeper even than those 34 million years of white chalk is a yet older layer of red chalk. We don't see it because it's so deeply buried. It is, however, exposed in other parts of the world - notably at the very base of the rock stacks just off the Isle of Wight known as the Needles. This red chalk was deposited about 100 million years ago and is sometimes called *sanguine* for its blood colour. Leonardo Da Vinci liked to draw with it. Within that red chalk layer there is a particular strata and I'm rather fond of its name which has the sound of a suitable bedrock for our city of diversity and dissent; the Paradoxica Bed.

I didn't really like Brighton very much the first time I came in January 1980. I'd imagined a wonderful seaside town with long, golden, sandy beaches and I found instead shingle. And wrecked on the shingle there was a cargo ship, the Athena B. The shingle was consequently covered with dead rats. I was twenty one and a bit judge-y and I added Brighton to the long list of things I was against.

Many years later I visited some friends here and found on the shingle a fossilised sea-urchin. Fossils have always fascinated me and I took this one, with its ancient pentagon structure, as a sign. In that moment I decided to move to Brighton.

When I think of our very particular part of Sussex I think of its layers of geological and human history and I give thanks to the universe for the lavish and original story that leads to the Brighton of June 2018.

I think of the green valleys that the first human beings to arrive here must have encountered; the forests and grassy plains they shared with the mega beasts of the ice age- mammoths, rhinos, horses and elks. That landscape is preserved in the Black Rock Formation behind the Marina and from it we know that the first people here were Neanderthals; remains of their distinctive tools have been found there. They were not of course the dim and brutal cave-persons we used to imagine. They were intelligent, they made tools and beads, they buried their dead and some of them mingled with some of us. We all have a small amount of Neanderthal DNA.

The Neanderthals didn't last long once we modern humans arrived. That arrival of the first modern humans was only the first in a series of waves of immigration and change. There have been Celts, Romans, Anglo Saxons, Vikings and Normans. Of course those pulses of change have been interspersed with periods of stability. For a long time Brighton was a small fishing community, and then another invasion - this time the incomers were some very fancy people in the form of a Prince Regent and his pals.

Beginning around the mid-eighteenth century a Jewish community developed in Brighton and as the city grew there were Quakers and eventually Unitarians. Some of these must have included the original artisans of our neighbourhood; the carpenters, tanners and candlestick makers of the North Laine. It was perhaps this combination of dissenting Protestants and a significant Jewish population that led to an ethos of independent thought.

For the key to the soul of our city is surely that habit of creatively questioning the norm; our city's sense of itself as a centre of difference. It was embodied in nineteenth century by someone like Louisa Martindale, active at first in the

Women's Cooperative Movement and later as a suffragist. Among the many things she campaigned for was a woman's right to preach. It was embodied too by Mrs Nye Chart, owner-manager of the Theatre Royal and the first woman to manage a major theatre in the UK. She endowed one of our stained glass windows.

So over the last few hundred years Brighton has become a place for activists, artists and actors, a zone of defiance and differentness. Today that spirit burns most especially fiercely in the queer community, many of whom migrated here from around the country and from abroad in the last century. The queer community was hit hard by HIV and discrimination in the 1980s and early 90s but it is resilient and fabulously variegated to this day.

More recently there has been another invasion- of a certain style and attitude. I'm talking about all those creatives, all those hipsters, and all that coffee! And holding all of these adventures together let's not overlook a load of folk born and bred in Brighton - people who love Brighton because it is their hometown and they are committed to it.

So the spirit of Brighton is made up of layers, layer upon layer of individual souls.

Foraminifera is a type of amoeba whose tiny remains are found in the chalk. I wonder what kind of ancient, diaphanous spirit has it bequeathed to our city? And what can the soul of a great lumbering woolly mammoth be like? Not far from our church Neanderthal children must have played. What did a little Neanderthal girl dream of? What ceremonies and sacrifices did the first modern humans perform? What kind of mystical conversations did the Jews of Jew Street, just round the corner from our church, have with our Unitarian ancestors? What spirit do we inherit from the Quakers buried just over the road? Or the Indians soldiers wounded in the First World War and nursed in the Pavilion. All those men who died of AIDS? And the homeless men and women who live and die on our streets and the Syrian refugees struggling to build their lives here. What kind of depth accrues in a place of such brilliance and originality, a place of such despair and loss?

We live with this great rich heap of history and culture and spirit called Brighton. Perhaps we might sometimes take a moment to give thanks for it and reflect on what a precious and demanding thing it is to be responsible for its present. Those of us who are lucky enough to live here today are responsible for its environment in the most generous sense of the word; its economic and physical structure and its emotional and spiritual environment. What gift, what a challenge.

Jef Jones

Request for Items to be Recycled

Our member Anne, who brings the beautiful flowers for our services, is continuing to raise money for good causes. She is requesting contributions in the form of items you might usually throw away or forget about. If you have any broken watches or jewellery, necklaces and chains, odd earrings and cufflinks, obsolete

keys, coins and old glasses please bring them to the church. Plastic milk bottle tops, used postage stamps and old or new postcards are also welcome.

There is a container in the Vestry marked Items for Anne. Anne herself says "All the goods I ask for have seemingly no value - but they are treasures and I have fun exchanging them for money!"

Snaps on the Steps

If you would like to have one of Tony Tree's images, either of yourself or any of the activities he has photographed in and around the church please let us know. (Email Marion on buc@brightonunitarian.org.uk). Tony has very generously agreed to supply copies as required with a donation to be made to the Church Building Appeal Funds. Suggested donation is £5.00.



July

06th: Violinist Corinna Hentschel and pianist Giulio Poggia with a programme that will include Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata.

13th: Uproar at lunchtime: A selection of operatic arias ranging in mood from flirtation to the edge of madness, from Leitrim's own star soprano and Glyndebourne chorister Deirdre McCabe, with Joe Ward on piano.

20th: Pianist Matthew McCombie presents a programme of music by Chopin featuring the second piano sonata and "heroic" polonaise.

27th Jazz pianist Joss Peach returns to BUC with his wife Josie and daughter Poppy; Josie Peach; saxes, clarinet, Poppy Peach; guitar, vocals. The trio will perform a mix of instrumentals and songs from various styles rooted in the jazz tradition.

No lunchtime concerts in August.

Doors and coffee from 12 noon.

Concert 12.30 – 1.15 p.m.

Tickets £3.50 on the door.

Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 30th June

Summer Concert Nick Andrews & Friends
Free donations to "Brighton Tables Tennis Club"
Programme
Bach Jesu Meine Freude, Lobet Den Herrn
Parry Songs of Farewell

Saturday 7th July, 11 a.m.

A Service of Blessing for those who have been affected by sexual abuse.
This annual hour long service will be led again by Stephen Crowther, Lay Pastor and Rev Michael Hydes, MCC.
It will feature readings, music, prayers, a time of silence & quiet reflection and a candle lighting ritual.
Open Communion will be offered to all: you do not need to be a member of any church or faith group in order to participate.
For further information, please contact Stephen on mob: 07791120387 or email: srcrowther52@hotmail.com

Friday 21st September (World Peace Day). There will be an all night peace vigil in the Brighton Unitarian Church. Look out for more details in the August newsletter.