



## **BELPER UNITARIAN CHAPEL**

**A Community with living  
and loving spirituality  
that engages both the  
Heart and the Mind**

### **NEWSLETTER**

**FEBRUARY-MARCH 2025**

## *The Diameter of the Bomb*

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters  
and the diameter of its effective range about seven meters,  
with four dead and eleven wounded.

And around these, in a larger circle  
of pain and time, two hospitals are scattered  
and one graveyard. But the young woman  
who was buried in the city she came from,  
at a distance of more than a hundred kilometers,  
enlarges the circle considerably,  
and the solitary man mourning her death  
at the distant shores of a country far across the sea  
includes the entire world in the circle.

And I won't even mention the crying of orphans  
that reaches up to the throne of God and  
beyond, making a circle with no end and no God.

*Yehuda Amichai*



*One assumes that the bomb was in Gaza, but in reality it  
could have been in Jenin [WestBank], South Sudan, Congo,  
Yemen, Mexico, Myanmar, Ukraine, Lebanon, El Salvador - or  
any one of dozens of places in the World where armed,  
violent conflict still occurs.*

**IN MEMORIAM : It is with much sadness we record the recent death of Mr Richard McLachlan 81years of Darley Abbey, Derby.**

Richard was the son of the Rev. Dr. John McLachlan ( Unitarian Minister ) & Grandson of Rev. Herbert McLachlan Principal of The Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester.

His Brother Peter McLachlan was a leading political peace activist of National Repute who was a founder member of the Northern Ireland Peace People. Peter tragically died from cancer in 1999.

Richard had kindly served our own Chapel as an active Trustee since 1991 only retiring from that role last November.

I first met Richard back in 1975 at the opening service of the then new Derby Unitarian Chapel. At the Derby Frairgate Chapel Richard remained a loyal and committed member serving as Sunday Organist & Chapel Treasurer.

Richard also held the position of having been “ President “ of our District Association East Midland Unitarians in the late 1980s. From his love of choral music brought the delight of belonging to three Derby Choirs !

Our Chapel Chairman David Burton represented Belper Unitarians at a special Service held January 26th 2025 at Darley Abbey Parish Church where all three choirs gave appropriate contributions.

We convey our love & deepest sympathy to Richard’s wife Diana & family .

**AS EACH DAY ENDS**

As each day ends, May I have lived  
That I may truly say  
I did no harm to humankind,  
From truth I did not stray.  
I did no wrong with knowing mind,  
From evil I did keep ;  
I turned no hungry soul away  
I caused no one to weep.

Rest in peace Dear Richard thou Good & Faithful Friend. **David Burton**

## **Message from Your Student Minister**

***“Your task is not to seek love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it”***

***– Rumi.***

With the busy-ness of the festive period behind us, and the new year starting on the path ahead of us - as I write this in January - it feels rather poignant to write a piece on the year as a whole too. I am mindful of the practice of a word for new year by the Humanist writer, Tim Atkin. My words for this year (I am stretching this to 2 words) are hope and change. With whatever else we might have going on; I am always inspired by the resilience of our collective fellowship - I can really feel the love and support we have for each other. It is this that gives me hope for the year ahead. In terms of change, everyone will undoubtedly face and experience change in the year; some for the good and some not so - but - I feel I want to be proactive in embracing the change that comes my way and I hope you feel to do the same and if you can't know I am here to support you.

I know there are cliches about love, particularly around valentines day - but it genuinely a time I encourage people to spend with their loved ones; and for those who have noone - to foster new connections with friends (for love comes in many forms). Anyone who reads this, including anyone who may be feeling hopeless, or lonely from having no one - please know that I am here for you and we are here for you too, in the spirit of loving connection, always - and then the doors of our chapel; you will be embraced in that same loving spirit by our fellowship.

No sooner are we in February does it seem to turn into March - so it may be a somewhat predictable progression that we move from Love to the concept of Spring. These are fleeting moments within the journey of the year. When the world wants us to move ever faster; it is even more important I think for us to slow down, even just for a beat, at this time of year; where we feel and know love in the fullest sense of the term and no truer is this than for the spring season itself as the beauty of the natural world slowly starts to reveal itself make itself known - taking time to pause and see it's emergence - to my mind there is no greater divine connection within ourselves than witnessing and feeling this friends.

May the best be with you, your families for this time of connection with each other and with the natural beauty around us.

**Kieren Mardle-Moss**

## SHOPLIFTING

The Crime Survey for England and Wales has shown that in the 12 months to June 2024, there were 469,788 recorded shoplifting offences compared to 365,173 the previous year. This is an increase of 29%.

Are we a nation of shoplifters? Are there half a million of them walking in our streets? - We must remember that the number of offenders is much lower than the number of offences, because many offenders commit more than one offence. On the other hand, there are many offenders who are not caught, so the total of all offenders may be much higher. My conclusion - we don't know how many actual offenders there are, but it could well be in the hundreds of thousands.

To look at it another way, how serious an offence are we discussing? How wrong is it? What value do retailers place on one small item, among the thousands of items they handle every day? Most of us know that it is a sin, but surely, only a very little one? A bit like telling a white lie to avoid hurting someone's feelings? Of course, it isn't just one item. Collectively, millions of items disappear. But the typical customer doesn't see it that way. They say "What harm was there it that? 'Twas a small, insignificant thing. Don't make such a fuss!"

Every Sunday, when we go to the Chapel, we welcome everyone, regardless of what they believe. So could it be that, amongst the Unitarians, there are people who believe that shoplifting items of trivial value is not a serious matter? My instinct is to reject this view - I find that I want to believe that Unitarians are serious, conscientious, thoughtful people inclined to be honest with their human contacts inside and outside the chapel. I have no evidence or research to back up this belief. Indeed, one thing I know about Unitarians is that they have no creed and no set beliefs, so why am I sitting here devising a belief for them? Why do I want them all to believe that shoplifting is wrong?

I think the answer to my dilemma is to be found in our history. Non-conformists were ejected from the Church of England because they could not agree to the use of a compulsory prayer book, or sign up to the 39 articles of the anglican christian faith, particularly the articles about the Trinity and Original Sin, but it didn't mean that at the same time they threw away all the Christian principles that they had known and adhered to in their lives before the ejection, such as loving one's neighbour, caring for the sick and needy and so on. I think that we should admit that we still have these beliefs today. That we want to leave this earth, hoping that we have made it a better place for our fellow creatures than we found it.

## THE ACCIDENTAL ATTRACTION OF UNITARIANISM

In West Michigan where we lived during the 1990s after I took my first teaching job, we found it difficult to make friends. We found it hard as well to find babysitters for our young children during those few times when we went out. It didn't take too long for us to figure out that in the Dutch Calvinist settlements of Ottawa County where we lived, people's activities centered on the activities of their Dutch Reformed Churches. That was where they made friends, socialised, and found child minders, among other things. As non-believers we were shut out.

I don't remember how it happened, but we heard about a Sunday presentation in Muskegeon, just 10 miles up the Lake Michigan coast from us, at a lay-led Unitarian Church. I hardly knew what a Unitarian was at the time—something to avoid probably. But, after having spent an hour with them, it turned out that the people seemed a lot more like me than the angry Calvinists a few miles away in Grand Haven where we lived.

The presenter that Sunday was a professor of Philosophy from Western Michigan University. He spoke on the discovery of the precession of the equinoxes in 188 BCE and the impact it had had on how people viewed the cosmos, their cosmologies, and culture—what later came to be called “religion.” People back then, at least those who thought about the bigger picture, came to think that a much more powerful god controlled the universe than they had imagined previously and it was this god's awesome power that was demonstrated in the precession of the equinoxes. It was upending the astrological houses!

The presenter passed out a scholarly article that had been recently published in *American Atheist*, entitled, “How Jesus Got a Life” which elaborated on the precession topic and the development of supernaturalist thought over the next few centuries. In addition, in his address the professor talked about a book that had recently been published, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World* by David Ulansey. The presenter linked the precession article with the Mithraic mysteries study in a very effective and stimulating way that made me thirst for more.

I was completely surprised by a scholarly approach to the origins of Christianity; in the few times I had been in a church previously, I had never heard such critical, free-ranging analysis. For me, walking into a place of “worship” was tantamount to entering a black hole where no light emerges. After that, we regularly attended this lay-led group for the thought-provoking perspectives. It was always stimulating. In the ensuing years, wherever we moved, we found a group of Unitarians to get to know.

## **WORSHIP SERVICES - February – March 2015**

Sunday 2nd February 11.00 am	Rowan Beton “Unsung Unitarians”
Sunday 9th February 11.00 am	Helen Brown “Getting to know you - Safeguardings”
Sunday 16th February 11.00 am	Kieren Mardle-Moss Student Minister “Aspects of Love”
Sunday 23rd February 11.30am	Cllr David Burton “Sacred Moments”
Sunday 2nd March 11.00 am	Kieren Mardle-Moss Student Minister “Environmental Sustainability”
Sunday 9th March 11.00 am	Kath & Peter Faulkner “The Joys of Spring”
Sunday 16th March 11.00 am	Kieren Mardle-Moss Student Minister “What is in a word?” “An exploration – Why Words Matter”
Sunday 23rd March 11.00 am	Revd Patrick Timperley Minister of Boston Unitarian Chapel
Sunday 29th March 11.00 am	Sir Peter Soulsby Mayer of Leicester “Who is my neighbour?”

All members and friends of the Chapel are welcome to offer contributions to our newsletter. It could be a 380 word article, a poem or a picture, or something arresting or humorous you have read. Contributions should be in the hands of your editor [contact details on page 8] by Sunday 16th March if they are intended for inclusion in the April-May edition.

## **NAMING CEREMONY IN DECEMBER AT BELPER UNITARIANS**

We attended a most delightful naming ceremony in chapel in early December with just a small group of family members and chapel friends. The parents didn't necessarily want a 'traditional' service and Kieren, our student minister, in discussion with the parents, put together a most delightful 'Water Ceremony' to celebrate Evelyn's arrival into the world and into our family of church friends. There was a hymn, some music - both secular and spiritual, poetry, quiet times of meditation/prayer and some anointing with water. The parents were invited to place rose petals into the water contained in the hand made chalice, but Evelyn had spotted the bowl of petals and watched them being dropped into the water, and made her contribution to the game too by adding plenty more. Despite being a bit grumpy by this time, and making it known, the service proceeded along with the plan.

We were told that the water represents the substance of life and the rose petals represented the beauty of nature and growth in the world. Evelyn's head was anointed, her heart, hands and feet, each representing a different quality for her journey through life. Her parents and her chosen guardians made promises to look after her throughout her life and to support her with understanding and love. The family and friends were also invited to make promises of support for her as she grows and we finished with more music and poetry.

The service was unique – designed in collaboration with the family to be personal and meaningful. Evelyn's parents and family were absolutely delighted with all the arrangements and all the parts of the service. For our chapel too, this is the first naming ceremony in more than a decade, so was very special for all of us.

Many thanks to Kieren Mardle-Moss for all the work and imagination put in to making this event so special and also to friends and family for the love and support offered to Evelyn and her parents.

***Jan Barrett***

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***A TALK BY ADRIAN FARMER on BELPER WOMEN - Friday 14  
March, 7pm  
Sounds interesting - In the Chapel. Help needed with refreshments.***

[www.belperunitarians.org](http://www.belperunitarians.org)

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Belper Unitarians aim to be a loving community of spiritual seekers. We are diverse in our opinions yet united in our common search for truth and our desire to support each other, and sometimes challenge each other, in that search.

We have our roots in those Christian non-conformists who gathered in Belper in the late 1660s following the ejection from the established church as a result of the 1662 Act of Uniformity of belief and worship. The famous industrialist, Jedediah Strutt, had the central section of the present chapel built in 1788 to replace a Meeting House that had been built at the other end of Green Lane in 1721, and which still stands there. Today our present Chapel is a Grade II\* listed building.

We are on the Belper Poetry Trail, displaying on the front chapel railings the poem "To Nature" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

*\*Please contact David Burton to enquire about chapel hire, Christenings, Namings, Weddings/Civil Partnership Ceremonies, or Funeral Services.*