

Warwick Unitarian Chapel, High Street Warwick. November December 2021

John Keats wrote of Autumn as a *Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness*, though actually describing late summer more than the season we are now in. Have times changed with the breakdown of our twenty-first century climate? Certainly, Autumn this year has often been very beautiful, full of wonderful colour both in the foliage on the trees and in brilliant sunsets (and probably sunrises too but that must be someone else's story!) though we have had our share of wind and rain too. But the nights are drawing in now and the same leaves clutter the pavements and threaten our safety as we slither on a thick wet mush. This has been a year of cautions to Keep Safe and Take Care – and that is just as valid now for yet another reason! Meanwhile Covid still stalks the streets too and yet too many seem to take it less seriously than before as they feel a sense of security behind booster jabs even as our statistics count among the highest in Europe. We all hope for a peaceful Christmas in the old style, not a repetition of last year's isolation.

In the Chapel we have reverted to our usual service layout in an oval round – but more spaced out than before as an acknowledgement of the ongoing risks of infection. And we are singing hymns again, but from sitting down rather than standing up as we hope there will be less vigorous breathing that way. How good it is, though, to be joining together in the active, participatory parts of our worship again after so many months, though we remain grateful to our pianist Peter for having led us so patiently through silent contemplation of the many hymns that reflect our Unitarian beliefs.

Christmas is traditionally a time to 'let rip' enjoying well known carols (though there are pitfalls in the Unitarian rewritings of one or two of the best known carols!) This year we are not holding our traditional Friday Carol service but have instead asked Gavin to lead us in a pre-Christmas service on Sunday December 19th that will incorporate some of the traditional readings and carols we are used to enjoying at this time of year. We are holding that service on December 19th, the last Sunday before Christmas, starting earlier than usual, at 4.00 p.m., so we have time afterwards for a seasonal mince pie with our cup of

tea (or glass of sherry) as we wish each other the Best of the Christmas season. Do please invite friends and relatives to join us for this Christmas Celebration.

Then the Chapel will not open again until January 9th, in the New Year as we turn our thoughts to the future and look forward to a better 2022.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have not been holding lunchtime services on Fridays. Having consulted the congregation, we have decided to have one a month and we will start this up again in the New Year. Offers to lead any of these short services of worship would be gratefully received by Elaine. More details will follow.

Our contributions to the Food Bank after the Harvest Festival service were very gratefully received, though the need for support for the banks is endless at the moment and will be particularly keen at Christmas. The Afghan Refugees were also very grateful for the generous cheque that we sent to Welcome Home Warwick and Leamington. They are still struggling to settle in but feel very supported by the kind donations of local people who have provided them with clothes and provisions to help after they arrived with so little. Actual cash is even more appreciated now as they try to stand on their own feet and need to purchase more domestic items and services, so our cheque was well received.

I finish on a sad note, reporting the untimely death of our lovely builder Paul Bidmead. He carried out many tasks recently for us both large (like dealing with our façade and gable end) and small (like suggesting the cause of and a solution to apparent water penetration on the chapel walls). His good nature and cheerful disposition will be very greatly missed in the area.