



The Frambridge Chronicle

**News from the Minister & Congregation of the Unitarian Meeting House,
Bridge Street, Framlingham**



Dear Friends, **The Christmas Season** reminds us of the persistence of Hope even in a time of darkness. At this time of the year we all become aware of the shortening days which can be something of a challenge. For some people the lack of light during the weeks leading up to Christmas can make one's mood subdued: we long for the long bright days of summer. As in everything, we are required to accept that nothing stands still.

In the dark of winter can we find the hope that Christmas brings? It seems to me that this hope is rekindled in us by a conscious choice to be aware of the needs of others beyond ourselves, and to respond.

Many charities have appeals at Christmas time. Whilst we are preoccupied by acquiring presents to give to family and friends, charities hope that we will also demonstrate our generosity by contributing towards the care & support of those in greatest need. In our country alone there are people who exist on the streets without shelter, in need of food, medical aid and opportunities to re-train, regain the confidence & self-respect to rebuild their lives & in time rejoin society; there are families with young children continually struggling with poverty which hits hardest at this time of the year. In addition there are thousands of elderly, vulnerable & lonely people all in need of the care charities selflessly provide.

We cannot ignore the plight of the continuing flood of refugees from the troubled Middle East who, in the greatest movement of peoples since WW2, have risked their lives to cross the sea and traverse Europe in search of safety – they have nothing. To have nothing is a terrible plight shared with the millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa who do not have access to the barest essentials for survival such as clean water or the climate to produce their staple food crops. These people often struggle to co-exist in countries being torn apart by various warring factions who show neither mercy nor respect for life.

Faced with the enormity of the world's problems we can wonder if there is any point in generosity. “*Am I giving to charity simply to salve my own conscience?*” we may ask ourselves.

It is vital to be clear that generosity really matters: we should never lapse into cynicism. The fact is that our contributions to charities do incalculable good: lives are changed for the better in ways we may never know or fully understand.

Christmas should be a time when we make the conscious choice to commit ourselves to the cause of hope in the midst of darkness. We don't need to let theology get in the way here but simply recognize the universality of the Christmas Story. Whatever our beliefs, we cannot fail to be moved by the vulnerability of the infant born in a stable, tended by Mary & Joseph; an archetypal image of caring we all recognize as relating to that which we nurture within the spirit of our own humanity.

We might reflect that in these dark weeks of winter we are offered the chance to keep alive the light of hope by remembering the vulnerable and by showing generosity. ‘Salvation’ is not a word much used in Unitarian circles - it is our connections & compassion which truly save us. Loving generosity is inevitably its own reward, awakening us to our full humanity.

May generosity be a light which kindles hope and sustains us through these dark days as the joy of Christmas approaches.

Rev Matthew

Please Note: The Minister's **rest days** are **Thursdays & Fridays** except in case of a pastoral emergency

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| Services 29 November & throughout December 2015  | |  |  |
| Date | Time | The Unitarian Meeting House Bridge Street Framlingham, IP13 9AJ | The Unitarian Meeting House Churchgate St., Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RH |
| 29 Nov | 11 a.m. | <p>A Fifth Sunday opportunity for Frambury Congregations to come together at the Unitarian Meeting House in Bury St Edmunds and</p>  <p>ALL are invited: if you have a recording that is special to you please bring it along.</p> | |
| 6 Dec | 3 p.m. |  |  <p>Christmas Carol Service</p>  |
| 13 Dec | 4 p.m. | <p>Waiting Expectantly - A Service for Advent</p>  |  |
| 20 Dec | 11a.m. |  | <p>The Case Against Fatalism</p> |
| 24 Dec | 5.30 p.m. | <p>Carols by Candlelight</p>    |  |
| 27 Dec | 4 p.m. | <p>A Quiet Service for a Quiet Time</p> |  |

Regular events in the Meeting House during December:

- Café Connect every Tuesday 10 – 12 noon all welcome, Fair Trade refreshments and conversation
- FRAMLINGHAM COUNTRY MARKET will be held every THURSDAY 0900 – 1130

CHRISTMAS EVENTS:



BURY St EDMUNDS:

- Tuesday 8 December 12 noon for 12.30 @ our Bury St Edmunds Meeting House
The BSE Congregational 3 Course Christmas Lunch @ £16 per head followed by spontaneous Christmas Entertainment, another wonderful opportunity for East Anglian Unitarians to come together! Booking is essential, contact Richard Hegerty 01284 727739 or email: richard.hegerty2@outlook.com

FRAMLINGHAM:

- Thursday 24 December 5.30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service of Carols by Candlelight. Please let Matthew know if you would like to read, perform a musical item or can help decorate the Meeting House and contribute towards seasonal refreshments. Tel 01728 621409. *Thank you*

Deadline for the next edition of *The Frambridge Chronicle* is **Monday 7 Dec**