



## *The Frambridge Chronicle*

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

**Some thoughts on "Empire" in the month of the referendum** (Based on part of my talk given at the Bury St Edmunds Meeting House on Sunday 8 May)

Who or what is the real empire today? How could we know it when we see it? Is it the EU perhaps (as some are suggesting)? Well, an unfailing characteristic of real empire is to start unnecessary wars for selfish ends. Wars - quite obviously - cause devastation and cost lives on all sides.

One would have thought that when contemplating involvement in new wars, our British parliament and government (Labour, Conservative, Coalition or whatever) would first establish a cast-iron case that there is genuinely and conclusively no acceptable alternative. But 21st century history has shown that not to be the case.....

Possibly the biggest decision a country can make is to send some of its citizens off to war knowing that numbers small or large are going to get killed and seriously injured. There is talk now I notice of a new intervention in Libya. Would such an intervention meet the test I have described?

If we as a nation are truly free of empire mentality (including not finding excuses for military escapades abroad to impose outcomes on others) then the decision to go to war or not will be genuinely one made by our parliament as *\*our\** representatives - with MPs making the decision based overwhelmingly on the genuine threat to the security of our citizens AND the risk to life of ALL parties, especially civilians. The decision will thus not be about politicians' links to arms manufacturers or indeed to foreign 'allies' - and Britain has many supposed 'allies' outside Europe - who might wish Britain to take this or that decision for their own ends.

The decision whether or not to go to war is perhaps the most vital when we speak of achieving national independence and self-determination in a meaningful sense, because of the cost **in** lives. Let me put it another way....how many times have bureaucrats in Brussels demanded that Britain go to war? Never. They cannot influence our parliament on this - but many other special interests can.

What, for example, did former Conservative Defence Secretary mean when he said last year that Britain's 'independent' nuclear deterrent is 'not independent'? Has any journalist bothered to ask him a follow up question about what he meant?

If we decide the 21st century British tendency towards military adventures does not stem from the European Union can we ask the logical next question "Who is it that, in recent years, seems to keep pushing Britain into military conflict without our politicians apparently bothering too much about likely outcomes?" Whose interests does this serve? I suggest it's no one government or foreign state that does this. It's something altogether shadier and subversive it seems to me...a network of special interests with overlapping, self-serving goals....

As a Unitarian minister, it is not for me to tell anyone how to vote in the referendum on 23 June. However, this question needs to be posed: If we DO vote to leave the European Union will we as a nation BE more independent or actually less so? In a Britain that has left the European Union whom do we think will be making the decisions and pulling the strings?

The Empire is all around us. The Empire always strikes back. These days it's just harder to see it for what it is because we can't point to it on a map anymore.


There is a personal responsibility here too. We can pledge our loyalty to the Empire - either by acts of omission or commission, rendering unto Caesar without thought or limit - or we can be true to our dissenter heritage as Unitarians and choose to work for something better. We can instead choose a way of love and mutual respect - a way that works for peace - as taught by Jesus and the great teachers of all the world's spiritual traditions.

Blessings *Matthew*

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

**NB** Any articles published in *The Frambridge Chronicle* express the individual views of the author. -Ed.

Services in June 2016			
Date	Time	The Unitarian Meeting House Bridge St Framlingham, IPI 3 9AJ	The Unitarian Meeting House Churchgate St., Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RH
5 June	3 p.m.		<i>Is nothing Sacred?</i>
12 June	4 p.m.	A series of services on themes from the work of Oscar Hammerstein  <b>2. Carousel of Life or Beyond?</b>	
19 June	11a.m.		<i>Flower Ceremony</i>
26 June	4 p.m.	<i>You've got to be carefully taught</i>	

**Sunday 29 May. *Frambury Fifth Sunday Meet Up* 11.45 at The Apex, Charter Square, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3FD to hear a free lunchtime presentation by *The West Suffolk Youth Jazz Orchestra*, upstairs in the Apex bar area, starting at 12.30. Doors open at 12 noon. Space will be limited; first come first served. The bar will be open, as will the downstairs cafe for light bites. The programme will be about one hour in length. **2 mins walk from BSE Bus Station or Cattlemarket/Arc Car Park IP33 3DG.** Rosemary Hegerty 01284 727739**

**JUNE events at the Bridge Street Meeting House:**

Every Tuesday 10 – 12 noon: **CAFE CONNECT** our community Coffee Morning. All welcome.

Every Friday 09.30 – 10.30 a.m. **"Feel Good Friday YOGA"** Pre-book via [www.bigskyyoga.co.uk](http://www.bigskyyoga.co.uk) (Angie Foster).

Wed 1 – Sat 4 June 10 – 4 p.m. **RAG RUG EXHIBITION** + daily demonstrations & Sale of wall hangings, cushions, rugs ...

Wednesday 8 June 10.30 The Framlingham Unitarian Trust will meet

Saturday 11 June, 2 p.m. The **Wedding of James Norman and Julia Wright** conducted by Rev Matthew Smith

Saturday 18 June 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. **GREENER FRAM: Swap or Mend** Fair Trade Refreshments for sale.

Monday 20 June 7 p.m. **MINDFULNESS: Refresher Session** led by Barbara Winfield (01728 720029).

**Review: *Ramivana* in Concert at the Meeting House on Thursday evening, 14 April - Matthew Smith**

Spiritual educationalist, Multi-instrumentalist and overtone singer **Rami Shaafi** and his wife, **Ivana**, both from Slovakia, brought to the evening an astonishing collection of unfamiliar world instruments. If the audience was unsure what to expect, as *Ramivana* demonstrated the sounds and harmonics of this unusual collection, they were taken on an extraordinary journey into a world of resonant sounds and harmonics such as those we may associate with the Meditation and Spiritual Healing by adherents of religions practised on the "roof of the world" such as Tibetan "Singing Bowls", symphonic gongs & extraordinary Khoomei Mongolian Throat-singing (Rami). The World tour of sound continued to the Antipodes as Ivana played the Didgeridoo; to America with the sounds of the Native American Flutes, returning to Eastern Europe with the Jaw Harp. It was an evening of transcendental, personal, musical experience.

Material for the JULY edition of the *Frambridge Chronicle* must be with the Editor before 12 noon on Monday 19 JUNE – Ed.

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