



The Frambridge Chronicle



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

Dear Friends,

Do you ever experience doubt – either doubting your beliefs or even doubting yourself? It's not a very nice sensation is it? But it IS human to doubt.

I was once in a car with a Unitarian minister (now deceased), one of the most respected figures in our movement at the time. He turned to me and said "I have no idea what I am doing in ministry. No idea." While I was shocked by his remark at the time, I now see it as a source of strength in him – that he was asking and facing the most fundamental questions of what it might mean to serve others, either as a minister or layperson, and why it might matter so much.

I have always been drawn to the figure of the Apostle Thomas – 'doubting Thomas' as he is sometimes known. The disciples, we are told, encounter the Risen Jesus when Thomas is absent. When informed of the incident, Thomas demands concrete evidence – he will not believe unless he touches Jesus' wounds himself.

This story is often presented by mainstream Christian teachers as a condemnation of those who lack faith. I have always found such a critical view both disturbing and shallow, without necessarily knowing what interpretation I would put in its place. The fact is there is often very good reason to doubt – to doubt what others tell us, to doubt our beliefs, even to question ourselves (although it's important we have good support in this final scenario).

It occurred to me this week that one overlooked aspect of the story is that Thomas suffers no punishment whatsoever for his 'lack of faith'. (I know this is a radical, unconventional interpretation but bear with me!)

On the contrary, when the time is right he too sees what he needs to see. Thomas didn't abandon his friends when they started telling him stories that made them sound like lunatics – though he would not agree with them either – neither was he forced out by them. Sceptic though he was, Thomas stayed firmly in the conversation. He was not closed-minded, but neither was he prepared to be gullible. It was the 'staying in the conversation', while being true to his own best understanding in each moment, that was to become his own unique path of 'salvation'.

Our doubting is part of our spiritual journey. Let's stay in the conversation of liberal, inclusive faith so it may become a path of salvation for us all.

Blessings,

Matthew (the minister guy)

N.B. the Minister's Rest Days are Thurs/Fri excl. pastoral emergency

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Service Themes during July 2017		FRAMLINGHAM Congregation Meets at	BURY ST EDMUNDS Congregation Meets at
Date	Time	The Unitarian Meeting House, Bridge St, Framlingham, IP13 9AJ	The Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate St, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1RH
2 July	3pm		Congregational Service led by Rosemary Hegerty
9 July	4pm	Move to the centre, then the edge	
16 July	11am		I walk the line
23 July	4pm	Moments of awakening	
30 July	FIFTH SUNDAY SO NO SERVICE		

We are delighted that the concert on Saturday 17 June at 7pm by the SCUNSULATA choir from Norfolk in aid of the Disaster Emergency Committee's East Africa Crisis Appeal raised £251.39 – a fabulous total.

Events in the Meeting House (unless otherwise stated) during July.

Every TUESDAY 10.30 – 12.30 CAFE CONNECT. We are incredibly grateful to Angela, Brenda and Deborah for running Café Connect for us. It is clear it is making a real difference for people in the community. Café Connect supports **FAYAP** (Framlingham Area Youth Action Partnership), which provides school support services such as after school clubs from The FAYAP Youth & Arts Centre – located next to Thomas Mills High School.

Every Thursday in term time, “Drama for Youngsters” with Fiona McAlpine, Thursdays 3.15- 4pm (Age 6-8), 4.10-5.10pm (Age 13-15) Tel: (07779) 060717; Email: fiona@allegraproductions.co.uk .

Monday 24 July, 7 p.m. The Mindfulness Group is due to meet. Please let **Barbara Winfield** know if you wish to attend by phoning **01728 720029**. Barbara is pleased to hear from anyone interested in attending mindfulness classes for the first time and happy to discuss mindfulness and answer any questions.

Saturday 8 July 9.30 – 1 p.m. Greener Fram ‘Free Recycle, Swap & Mend’; Bring along anything you don't need to swap for something you can use. Nothing to bring? Come anyway and help yourself; you may be surprised by what you find. The collecting tin is there for donations.

Monday 3 July – 7pm Our Monday night spiritual exploration group is continuing for a few more weeks at the home of Rayleen Finn before a summer break. This is now a closed group but if you are interested in joining a new course in the autumn please do contact the minister.

Saturday 15 July Two events to mention on this date – Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House are holding a “Music on the Green” from 11am – 4pm to raise funds for Meeting House repairs. There will be music (a wide range of styles throughout the day), stalls and games to enjoy. On the same day, at our own Fram Meeting House, Framlingham Residents’ Association are holding a Traditional Cream Tea from 1pm onwards to raise funds. Should be great!

COMINGS & GOINGS: The minister will be on leave from Saturday 1st July – back at his desk on Saturday 8 July.

Deadline for the August edition of *The Frambridge Chronicle* is noon, Monday 21 August 2017