



The Monthly Messenger for

May
2020

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Unitarian Church
Clover Street
Rochdale

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May Flowers



Did you know that every month has a "Birth Flower" and that, just like Birth Stones, each one has its own meaning?

Those lucky enough to have been born in May can claim the exquisite Lilly of the Valley as their birth flower.

A favourite of royal brides, this elegant flower has dainty bell-like flowers and a beautiful sweet fragrance.

The fact that they only bloom for a short season (typically from March to May) adds to their exclusivity and appeal.

May's birth flower is said to represent purity, humility, and sweetness. According to the Victorian language of flowers, Lilly of the Valley also symbolises 'a return to happiness.'

Edna
Flower Fund Secretary



100 CLUB WINNERS

APRIL 2020

1st	44	Ann Shepherd
2nd	69	Glenn Whyment
3rd	3	Diane Bennett

Congratulations

Prizes- 1st £30 - 2nd £15 - 3rd £5

I hope all our Messenger readers and their families are still holding up during this time. There is so much packed into this edition, there almost wasn't space for an editorial! The centrefold, pg 6-7, have reflections on the online "Being Together" event held by the GA 7-9 April and a thought-provoking submission by Joyce Ashworth. Thank you to all who contributed to this edition. Submissions to rochdaleunitarian@outlook.com



Sightsavers Trachoma

How quickly time passes, we are now at the end of our 2 year support for the nominated church charity, Sightsavers Trachoma. We have slightly brought forward the close-off date to coincide with our end of March financial year, making reporting and accounting much easier. Any monies raised before we decide on our next charity at the annual general meeting, will be held over until we have selected one from the nominations presented.

The General Council is in the process of selecting 3 charities for our deliberation, before we meet for the AGM on 24 June (pandemic allowing) to make a final decision. Should anyone have suggestions for consideration then please feel free to mention it to Paul or any member of Council but please do this quickly.

However, back to Sightsavers, I am pleased to report that over the last 2 years we have raised the impressive sum of £2,012.89 which will be rounded up to £2,020, before we send the cheque off. What a magnificent effort on everyone's part, thank you all very much!

Contributions are summarised as follows

Film Club proceeds	£1,089
Split proceeds from 2 Charity Lunches	£664
Personal donations	£105
Carol Service retiring collection	£103
Loose change collection box	£51
Round up	£8
TOTAL	£2,020

I must note the loose change collection of £51, without which we wouldn't have passed the £2,000 milestone! Just goes to show how small items do mount up and reinforces my request for us to remember on Sundays to clear out our pockets and purses of small denomination coins, it really does help.

Regards
John



Church Charity 2018-2020

Visit www.sightsavers.org to donate and for more information

ADVANCE NOTICE

As the current pandemic progresses and lock down is extended now until the 7th May, it looks increasingly unlikely, especially if a phased return to normality is introduced at sometime in the future, that our annual Trustees and Church AGM's will not be able to take place on the scheduled dates of 17th and 24th June respectively. We realise that this may necessitate a departure from our Deed of Trust and Constitution but in these unprecedented times there is little that can be done about it.



The Church Council will review the situation at each of its monthly meetings, which are taking place online. Further advice will be given as the ongoing situation develops but please rest assured that the relevant notice periods and procedures will be strictly adhered to once revised dates are set. We will also endeavour to ensure that everyone receives as much notice as is possible.

John Illingworth

HILARY BIRCHOVSKY'S YOGA

This is the Monday link every week, I believe. Possibly the Friday one as well, but I will send reminders.

Also a reminder there is optional meditation, after Monday yoga, from 12.00 to 12.20ish

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/96374155485?pwd=TUxXTETHWGpVSVqzeDhXRkV2SHBKUT09>

Meeting ID: 963 7415 5485
Password: 7STeg2



REFLECTIONS CENTRE-FOLD

Being Together: I was pleased to join Laura Dobson for her morning meditation based on Saint Hildegard of Bingen. I had missed Laura's service at Rochdale last year when Hildegard was her theme. After a brief history of her life, the meditation was made of readings and music Hildegard had written on the subject of 'greening'. Here is one of her readings:

I am the one whose praise echoes on high.
I adorn all the earth.
I am the breeze that nurtures all things green.
I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.
I am led by the spirit to feed the purest streams.
I am the rain coming from the dew that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.
I call forth tears, the aroma of holy work.
I am the yearning for good.

Laura sends her love to everyone at Rochdale and hopes she'll be with us again soon. Helen I

THE MAGIC ON OUR DOORSTEP

Well, the expected extension to the lockdown was announced and we are likely measuring up for the strangest Spring and Summer we ever remember. With planned holidays unlikely to go ahead, perhaps now is the time to discover and note well the magic right on our doorsteps. Maybe we will find we don't actually need a holiday to experience a change of scene and realise that it's all about finding simple pleasures where we live. We are fortunate indeed that the days are lengthening and the sun is shining; both elements which give a fresh perspective on the everyday and bring with them a heightened sense of wellbeing. I have just been reading retired Unitarian Minister Rev Frank Walker's entry in the book of daily reflections *Fragments of Holiness* where he points out that "this is the time when the earth is renewing herself quietly, marvellously, victoriously. No power on earth can push back this triumphant tide of life". It is true that nature recognises nothing of the worrying pandemic presently scourging our communities and severely restricting our activities. Whilst we struggle with the effects of this virus, the natural world carries on uninterrupted so let us not miss the awesome seasonal wonders that Mother Nature delivers on a regular basis. I hope, like me, you have been able to take short walks for physical exercise, sit in your garden, stand on your balcony, at your door or at least view the world from your window. I have personally noted pink dappled sunrises, welcome birdsong, the riot of colour provided by spring flowering shrubs and trees – Forsythia, Cherry, Magnolia, Azalea and now Rhododendron all with the background of trees just donning their fresh green leaves. After the long dark and wet winter months just to feel the warm sunshine kiss your face and caress your shoulders is heaven indeed. We have been seriously challenged and had to adapt to a new way of

life, but perhaps it has not all been bad. It has given us the opportunity to stand still and take stock. The isolation caused by Covid-19 has given us the gift of time. Ralph Waldo Emerson in his rather apt quote suggests that we "Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience."

In closing I also quote Benjamin Disraeli, who is known to have commented "How fair is a garden amid the toils and passions of existence." Any green space can provide a personal sanctuary, succour for the soul and hope for the future.

'A Blessing For Our Time'

(Variation on MA Muse's song: 'We Shall Be Known') by Eleanor Chiari

Friend, take care. Wash your hands, don't touch your face. Let each hour reveal itself to you with the radiance of a bluebell forest. Consider its shape like you are holding a new robin's nest in your palms, and let stillness enfold you like a summer lake, still warm, and studded with stars.

I don't know when I'll be with you again or you me, but time is ours to give thanks for food and shelter and for all those still working out there to heal, protect, and feed us all.

It is time now to plant trees, vegetables and bee-friendly flowers, to serve on virtual committees, to put rainbows in windows, to make tea and art. It is time to knit, and sign petitions, to write manifestos, sympathy cards, and love letters. It is time to wash dishes and quilt blankets, to teach children and call elderly relatives, neighbours and long lost friends. Let's be fully present to the people in our lives. In our homes or through our screens. Let's smile at strangers, dogs and children, even and especially from two meters away. Let's dig deep into our pockets to reach out to those who suffer, in our communities and in far corners of the globe. A time will come again when we'll hold hands and dance, chant in yurts and sing in chapel pews. We'll eat in restaurants and sit in crowded theatres. Our time will come to run for office and gather in protest. We'll hug at weddings and namings and we will once more sit at the bedside of our suffering loved ones and bury our dead standing side by side.

Now is the time to mend what's broken and mourn for what is lost and can't be fixed. To speak up for kindness and for justice. To light chalices and kindle new ideas. In this great turning, all that we do is needed and so much more must still be done. Only you know what it is that you have the strength, the courage, and the power to do more of today. Do it gently, with purpose, and with kindness. Together we will learn to lead in love.

"ABOUT PEOPLE"

It is with sadness that we record the death of **Sybil England**. She had been unwell for some time and recently been in Ashbourne House. She died of natural causes in Oldham Royal after an overnight stay. Sybil had reached a good age. She was a relative of John Wood and had in the past been a regular at our Saturday lunches. We offer our sincere condolences to John and Edna and the extended family.

Rev Daphne Roberts has sadly passed away at the age of 90. Daphne, along with her husband Rev John Roberts, ministered to Rochdale and Oldham congregations during the 1970s, when both churches were in process of rebuilding. We remember Daphne and her ministry with affection.

Since our last Messenger **Lynn Holland** sadly lost her wonderful, quirky Auntie Gladys, who she took care of. On account of the lockdown, it was particularly distressing for Lynn not to be able to be with her auntie when she needed her most. We offer our sincere sympathy to Lynn and her wider family at this very difficult time.

During April **Ann Beasley** also lost her brother-in-law, George at the age of 92. Quite apart from the sense of loss, Ann as next of kin, has been tasked with making all the necessary arrangements and dealing with his house and effects. No mean task in the current challenging circumstances. Our love and thoughts are with you at this difficult time Ann.

Isobel Faulkner (granddaughter of Margaret Salt) graduated from Sheffield University and has now qualified as a doctor. She is starting work soon at the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield.



Left: Daphne and her son, Gawain.

Right: Lynn's beloved Auntie Gladys



Dear Friends

On 31st March, my lovely Auntie Gladys who I cared for died. Sadly, I could not be with her when she needed me most and it is likely there will only be and my husband Philip at the funeral. I'm going to ask the rest of the family and her friends and neighbours to light a candle and sit quietly in their homes and reflect on their relationship with my wonderful quirky auntie. I'm linking a dedication I've done for her on my little blog. Hope you like it. Stay safe and well and thank you for continuing with the Messenger.

Kind regards
Lynn Holland

<https://oneimadeearliertoday.blogspot.com/2020/03/over-and-out.html?m=0#comment-form>

Dear friends

It has now been 8 weeks since my spinal surgery and I am pleased to say I feel absolutely fine. No pain (which is wonderful) and I am walking further each time I go out. Still continuing with Physiotherapy although over the phone rather than in person. Thank you to everyone for good wishes, cards, flowers and visits (pre-Coronavirus). Hope everyone stays safe during this unbelievably difficult time and I look forward to meeting together once again.

My respect and thanks goes out to those remarkable workers in the NHS, Social Care, Postmen, Refuse collectors, delivery drivers for their hard work during this time.

Stay safe

Ian Dawson

To everyone at the Rochdale Unitarian Church

Thank you so very much your kind and very generous donation to the work of Rochdale Soup Kitchen. We do appreciate your help and support to this vital service that we provide.

We are feeding so many people on a regular basis that your donation will enable us to continue the work.

Blessings and best wishes
Vida and Marilyn, Rochdale Soup Kitchen

M UDDY BOOTS



Walking
Group

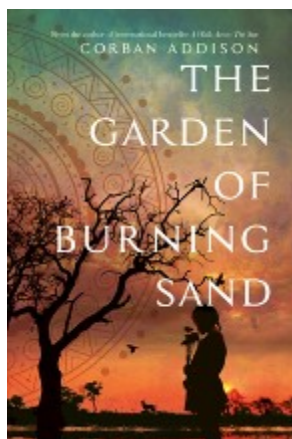


Sadly, we were unable to walk in the Shibden Valley on Good Friday. However, the weather in April has been wonderful and I hope that members of the Walking Group have been enjoying walking from home. John and I have walked over to Lanehead and Greenbooth and intend to widen our range to Naden Brook and Ashworth. The countryside is peaceful, the sky beautiful and clear and it's a joy to rediscover old footpaths now back in use. We've met people on our way but it's easy to stop a distance away to let them pass and wave a cheery hello. Do get out if you are able – I believe Government advice has now changed to allow you to drive a short distance to start your walk as long as the walk is longer than the distance you drove!

B OOK CIRCLE



Book
Group



Six members attended the first Zoom Book Circle last month. We had all read *The Garden of Burning Sand* by Corban Addison which was distributed just before the lockdown. It was such a good read that it would have been a shame not to discuss it. So we downloaded the App Zoom onto our i-pads and

laptops and met at our usual time – but a different place! It was lovely to see everyone's smiling faces on our screens and catch up on how everyone is fairing.

As we enjoyed the Zoom meeting so much, we chose the e-book *Big Sky* by Kate Atkinson to read for our May meeting when we hope more members will join us.

MESSAGE FROM CELIA CARTWRIGHT: Hello Everybody, It is customary that the President, outgoing, offer you a flavour of their year, highlighting the most memorable events and reminiscing on the most valuable lessons learned before handing over the chain of office to the incoming President, which should be Anne Mills, who would then in turn pass on her badge to the incoming vice president. This year things have not turned out as they normally do.

As you can imagine, there have been discussions aplenty between myself, Liz Slade, the EC, Anne Mills and Sue Woolley. How do we pass on the Presidency and the Vice Presidency when we cannot meet, cannot celebrate?

For a few days we thought we had that sorted out. Sue and I would travel to Bury where, keeping well apart from each other, we would safely create a ceremony of our own that would be filmed and be available to go out with the rest of the GA virtual meetings films. But, we did not have time, and things changed at the beginning of March with dizzying speed. So it never happened. We tried to think of other ways of doing it, but nothing really worked. So.....

Anne, Sue and I decided upon a plan which was offered and accepted by the Executive Committee.

This year is to be what we have called a 'fallow year' Anne will not officially take over the presidency, though I will cease to be President on the 9th April. Instead, there will be a presidential team. Anne Mills, Sue Woolley and me.

The plan is that we treat this year in a way that has not been done before. That whatever this year brings, we three will undertake any and all necessary actions between us, though if possible, Anne will attend any engagement she has been asked to do, if the virus situation allows.

It appears that it is going to take at least till June, probably to September and, worst case scenario, if the virus does what the Spanish Flu did in 1918, it may return in a mutated form to cause more havoc. Given that we can make no plans, we three offer ourselves as joint carriers of the presidency.

What will we be doing? Simply offering as much support as we can to all our congregations across the entire Assembly, as they continue in lockdown and later seek to pick up the pieces of our lives, spiritual and temporal. This is too great a job for one person so we will do this together, as we are able, wherever and whenever we are able. Next year, wherever we meet for our GA Meetings, we three will be there, doing what we should have done this year.

As we stumble through this very difficult time, when people are still dying of COVID 19, when NHS and other emergency staff are still exhausting themselves to care for thousands of extra sick people. When shops and pharmacies are struggling to meet our needs and keep their staff healthy, when bin men still come and take our rubbish and risk the disease every time they grab a wheelie bin handle. Let us give thanks and take stock. We will need our energies to support all those who are finding the isolation difficult, who are struggling with the illness, who are worrying about relatives, who are worrying about money, who are worrying about themselves. At this time let us be grateful for our Unitarian and Free Christian movement, for its Assembly of conjoined congregations across the UK and beyond. Let us give thanks for those who bring worship into our homes when we are unable to travel, by post, by email, on YouTube, Facebook, and I am sure on other places too. Let us give thanks for those who try to keep our spirits up and remind us that we are not alone.

I have spent a year collecting blessings from every place I have visited, collecting good wishes from congregation after congregation. It has been my huge privilege to have served and I will continue to serve this beloved Movement for as long as I am able.

I leave you with the blessings of the Assembly, from all of us to all of us, and in my imagination now we are all holding hands, linked across miles and countries, counties and cities, towns and villages, linked by a faith that nurtures and holds, one of compassion and healing.

I wish you well, and I look forward to supporting Anne and Sue in the coming months as we answer to your call.

Stay safe, stay well.

Celia Cartwright, GA President

EVENT DATES 2020

PLEASE NOTE:

Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions on movement in place, services and events at church have been cancelled/postponed until further notice.

Below are important calendar dates from June onwards. We hope that by this time, we will have a clearer indication of the situation and will be able to plan a revised calendar.

In the meantime, updates will be posted on our website, Facebook page and in our bi-weekly newsletter

Date	EVENT
20 Jun	Summer Lunch
22 Aug	Women's League Project Lunch
27 Sep	Harvest Service
03 Oct	Film Night
10 Oct	Autumn Lunch
08 Nov	Remembrance Service (at 2 pm)
21 Nov	Film Night
05 Dec	Christmas Lunch
06 Dec	2020 Toy & Gift Service
13 Dec	Carol Service
25 Dec	Christmas Morning Service (at 11 am)

Messenger by Email?

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