

# The Cross Street Rag

Cross Street Unitarian Chapel Newsletter, March/April 2017

*Edited by Catherine Coyne ~ newsletter@cross-street-chapel.org.uk*

## **View from the Vestry by Rev. Cody Coyne**

Two months of 2017 already completed – it's a bit surprising to think we have progressed into the year so quickly. The push and effort of the young year – as shoots burrow out of the ground, as chicklets break against their oval cages – catches me off guard. I suddenly lament losing the meditative time of winter, the lengthy drawn-out nights that push me into introspection. Epiphany passes without an epiphany, and spring cleaning comes without a plan.

March kicks off this year with Lent, a time to recognise pain and sacrifice, especially for those who challenge their temptations. Adjustment and growth can be a painful affair, and the cleansing water that washes us so we may begin again can pummel us as a winter storm rather than gentle baptism.

March is also a time for Annual General Meeting, and with this comes not only the reflection of the past year, but the anticipation of the next. The chapel is host to a fantastic variety of services, programmes, groups and events over the next twelve months.

Time is short. But that does not mean that it has to be unfulfilled. I had a brass teacher once who told me to think of the shortest notes needing the most air – to blow through the note fully and not to shirk it because of its briefness. There are no short notes, just short tubists, I guess; and with that thought I imagine that the greater awareness we can have of the indwelling breath coursing through our brief lives, the more richly we can experience the world.

Love and Blessings,  
Cody

## **Returning to Church by Emily Moder (New attendee at Cross Street)**

I have long had a complicated relationship with religion. Some of my earliest and happiest memories are from the UCC church I attended nearly every week for over 10 years - that is where I found my love of music, learned empathy, and discovered the importance of gratitude and self-reflection. But there were always small things that nagged at me and didn't feel quite right, so by the time I was old enough to get an after-school job, I had stopped going to church.

Fast forward 10 years, and I've spent the last 4 years living in Kenya, where it's common practice to put "Religion: Christian" on your CV, and homosexuality is a criminal offense. The same positive aspects of religion were there - I met many wonderful people who used religion to make a fresh start after challenging times, for whom the church community provided critical support, both emotionally and financially. But it also became clear to me what the nagging feelings were growing up. The form of Christianity most common in Kenya is a perfect distillation of the parts of religion I am least comfortable with: judgemental, punishing, and oriented towards conversion of outsiders.

When I moved to Manchester, I was looking for a community. It was my mom (who still attends our UCC church despite openly admitting that she identifies more as Buddhist) who recommended trying church. At Cross St, I saw none of the judgement with all of the community, and was taken completely by surprise at how much I had missed that morning every week reserved for quiet reflection and a badly-needed dose of perspective on what really matters in the grand scheme of things.

These days, I'm convinced that religion is neither good nor bad on its own, it takes the form of the people who practise it, and some of the best people I've ever known I've met at church. Looking back on my church-less decade, I'm surprised by how easy it was to become completely absorbed by my own struggles and triumphs, forgetting to take time out of my day to be grateful for small, beautiful things. On the other hand, I'm surprised by how easy it has been to remember again, and how familiar it still feels. I would still define my relationship with religion as complicated, but I'm also grateful to have found a place where that's ok.



## **Services**

Wednesdays ~ 1.00-1.30 pm  
Sundays ~ 10.45-11.45 am

*All are Welcome*

## **Events & Groups #CrossStEvents**

- **Friday Recital Series** ~ 31<sup>st</sup> Mar & 28<sup>th</sup> Apr
- **Palm Sunday Lecture** ~ Sun 9<sup>th</sup> Apr
- **Easter Sunday Service** ~ Sun 16<sup>th</sup> Apr, including Roundelay Choir
- **Craft Club** ~ Thurs 23<sup>rd</sup> Mar & Thurs 27<sup>th</sup> Apr – from 6.30 pm
- **Roundelay Choir rehearsals** ~ Every Wednesday at 6.00 pm

For further information about Events & Groups email [events@cross-street-chapel.org.uk](mailto:events@cross-street-chapel.org.uk) or call **0161 834 0019**

**Facebook & Twitter: @CrossStChapel**  
**Website: [cross-street-chapel.org.uk](http://cross-street-chapel.org.uk)**

Charity no. 1080836

### **My trip to CERN** by Emma Nichols (Member at Cross Street)

I'm a physics public engagement manager at the University of Manchester, which means I run workshops and talks and other events for schools and young people to get them interested in studying physics, and I help our researchers communicate what they're working on to the general public (who, one way or another, are the ones paying for it). I love my job; I've been fascinated by how the universe works since I was little, and I get to hear about that from people researching all kinds of things, and to work out how to tell people about it.



I also get to travel – or “have to” travel, depending on how I feel about a particular trip. Most recently I've come back from CERN in Geneva, the site of the Large Hadron Collider, which is always definitely a “get to” trip. I'm reining myself in from going off on the explaining-about-science tangent that's my day job (many hundreds of words have been deleted from this piece, you can learn more – or just thank me for sparing you – over coffee after a service some time): short explanation, the LHC is where physicists smash particles together and see what happens in order to find out more about what the universe is made of. The circular tunnel where this smashing occurs is 17 miles long and deep underground, with four immense detectors the size of buildings dotted around it: even leaving aside all the physics, seeing it in person made me feel awed at the sheer human achievement in drilling that tunnel 500 feet under mountains and lakes, and then filling it with all the pipes and magnets and computers that actually make it work, in order for scientists from 60 different countries to work together on studying particles far too small for us to see.

This might seem like a purely academic exercise that's only of interest to particle physicists, but the technology developed at CERN has given us MRI scanners and proton beam cancer therapy and the internet as we know it (my group had to stop while I took a picture of the “where the web was born” plaque marking the former office of our fellow Unitarian Tim Berners-Lee). This is what we tell people to justify the funding CERN receives (and it's a drop in a bucket, compared to things like military funding) – but I think there's a wonder and a value in doing this just to find out more about our universe. That was particularly brought to mind during my trip because my bedroom window in the visitors' hotel looked out on CERN's one prominent piece of religious iconography: a Nataraja, a statue of Shiva represented as the Lord of the Dance, a gift from the Indian government meant to symbolise that the scientists are studying the “cosmic dance”.

### **Challenging Hate Forum Public Day** by Sarah Hasanie (New attendee at Cross Street)

It is a sad reality that, even in this modern day and age, an innocent person should become the target of a hate crime all because there appears to be something different about them.

What does it mean to have a certain religious identity, or belong to a certain ethnic minority group, or have a certain sexual orientation, or a transgender identity or a disability? Sadly for some this can mean that they become the victims of bullying, abuse, harassment or intimidation all because of an intolerance, and hostility towards them by some ignorant people in our society.

The Challenging Hate forum was one of the best public events I've ever been to. The insight that I gained from this event about the level of hate crime in our community, as well as the different ways of reporting it and the importance of reporting it left me feeling empowered! I say empowered because we should no longer tolerate any form of prejudice or abuse no matter how big or small.

I know what it feels like to have people hate you because there is something different about you. I have experienced racial hostility before and I did nothing about it because I had no idea what I could have done. With the information that I have learned from this event, I can now encourage others that we need to become more proactive about reporting these crimes, and where they can be reported. Perhaps we might think, “who cares what someone else says to me, I've got thick skin, I can take a few nasty comments thrown at me so why should I bother reporting it?” But what we need to remember is that the next person in our shoes might not be able to handle it. Maybe something which we see as minor could be really damaging to the next person. We must remember that our efforts to report such incidents will go a long way in ultimately discouraging and reducing such crime- once we stop letting the perpetrators of these crimes get away with it, and start allowing for more of them to be prosecuted.

It is wonderful to see so many different faith groups and community organisations come together in support of this great cause of taking a stand against hate crime. I admire the Chapel's commitment to this cause and hope to take part in such events like this in future.

