

# Suffolk Humanists and Secularists

Newsletter April 2017

I disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it (Voltaire).

## APRIL MEETING

George Bethell on

"VOLTAIRE and CANDIDE"

François-Marie Arouet known by his nom de plume Voltaire was a French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher famous for his wit, his attacks on the established Catholic Church, and his advocacy of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and separation of church and state.

Possibly best known for his comment (above) on free speech, he was an outspoken advocate of civil liberties, freedom of (and from) religion and the separation of church and state.

At our next meeting George Bethell will talk about Voltaire and "Candide", his most famous work in which he ridicules religion, theologians, governments, armies, philosophies, and philosophers.

To hear George and join with us come along on

Tuesday 11th April at 7:30

in  
The Darwin Room  
Arlingtons Brasserie  
Museum St  
Ipswich



## Meeting with the Unitarians in March

On Tuesday 14th March we spent a fascinating evening with Lewis Connelly who is the new Unitarian minister in Ipswich. Unfortunately there were rather few of us but it was a very open and worthwhile discussion. Lewis who was brought up in Glasgow and then in the USA began by describing his life story. He had been an enthusiastic 'evangelical' conservative Christian at university who felt called to preach the gospel. He went to the London School of Theology but while there realised that he could not accept the

narrow literalist views espoused there by the 'in' crowd - including six day creationism. That was the start of a journey towards a much more liberal viewpoint. He left and looking for a more open approach trained as a priest for the Church of England at Westcott House Cambridge. However as a priest he became increasingly disillusioned with the authoritarian and arrogant nature he found within the CofE.

He was becoming much more critical of established religion and increasingly influenced by books such as "Honest to God". He attended a Unitarian meeting and found that "being allowed to disagree" was liberating. He resigned his parish and left the CofE. By that time he would have probably described himself as a "Christian atheist" but was embracing all sorts of ideas that he described as having a 'spiritual nature' that were accepted by the Unitarians. He became a Unitarian minister.

He then covered some of the history of the Unitarians, the background to the Ipswich Meeting house and the strong historical links between Unitarians and the Humanist tradition not least of which was the link via the South Place Ethical Society which grew into the modern Humanist movement in the UK.

Needless to say there were lots of questions trying to tease out the differences between the beliefs of Unitarians and Humanists and we concluded that we were pretty close.

Some say that now the only difference between Humanists and Unitarians is that the Unitarians have buildings, but my favourite comment comes from

Bertrand Russell (a one-time Unitarian). He said " the great thing about Unitarians is they believe in one god - maximum".

Denis Johnston

## Future Events

**Tuesday April 11th** 7:30p.m. (Arlingtons, Ipswich)

"Voltaire and Candide" (see front page)

**Saturday 29th April** Lunch meeting: The next of these will be held at the Duke of York in Woodbridge from 12:00 noon onwards on Saturday 29th April. Please let Richard (richard-layton@zen.co.uk) know at least by the Thursday before if you are planning to attend.

**Tuesday 9th May** 7:30 at Arlingtons  
Topic: To be advised.

### POETRY CORNER

#### VOLTAIRE!

For April's meeting we've a talk,  
On polymath, Voltaire;  
Who was the Gallic bete noire of,  
The beau monde everywhere!  
Amongst his foes, the Catholic Church,  
And other's who'd assailed;  
His love of truth and honesty,  
And, therefore, had him jailed.  
Today there's politicians here,  
And elsewhere who'll deny;  
That their 'alternative truth' is,  
Another way to lie!

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### Suffolk Humanists & Secularists

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