

The Unitarian

Nurturing Faith

Embracing Life

Celebrating Difference

April 2019

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The Unitarian

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Editor: Fran Pickering, 69 Sandylands Rd, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 6JG

Email: theunitarian@outlook.com Tel: 01539 721247

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Subscription Enquiries to the **Administrator:** Nalasha Stanley, Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1NL. infotheunitarian@gmail.com Tel: 07401 872137

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Unitarians in Britain
www.unitarian.org.uk

Our Unitarian community consists of about 200 congregations that meet in Chapels, Churches and Meeting Houses right across Britain.

We gather for worship and fellowship, to create a caring community where all feel supported in our search for meaning and value. Unitarians are an open faith community celebrating diverse beliefs. We originate from the liberal Christian tradition, but now include people of other faiths as well as spiritual seekers.

The National Unitarian Fellowship (www.nufonline.org.uk) exists for those who, (because of where they live, or for other reasons), are not able to be part of a traditional congregation and Unitarians also share ideas and experiences online via websites, social media and blogs.

Unitarians do not discriminate on grounds of gender (we have had women ministers for more than 100 years), age, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Unitarianism differs from many other religions in that we believe in helping people to find their own spiritual path rather than defining it for them.

We welcome all those with open minds who share our views on **tolerance** toward others, who embrace the **freedom** to be in a faith community that does not impose creeds or specific beliefs, and where the approach is based on **reason** not dogma.

Let's keep talking, my love. Words we have to spare: love words and angry words, and beneath them hurting, bleeding, dying words, and beneath them words melted by fire and hardened by ice, words of sadness and truth birthed from the cavern of tears.

And when the words are spent, heaped over the pages and spilled to the floor, let us read each other's eyes and see the chapters and places where old bookmarks press the pages apart, so the book opens up to the old story before we can move on.

For you are all the love words I have ever heard and all the hurt words where the love is deepest, stripped back and bleeding.

But lets keep caring, ever so slowly building down the words, one beneath the other, getting closer to the truth and still deeper until you touch your words to my wounds, honour them, and feel the pain. Our wounds may not be healed by the touch of the other's words but are dignified by our recognition of their existence.

Then and only then will the words mean anything; when we have used them up until the old meanings have been scrubbed off; when the wrong words have been tried and discarded and the right words have been spoken in a whisper, then let us climb down into each other's souls and rest there in silence and love.

Words by Elizabeth Tarbox.

Quoted in the March newsletter of Dunham Rd Unitarian Chapel, Altrincham.

Rules and Requests:

1. Please do not send me a copy of an article that has also been sent to *The Inquirer*. I do not want to duplicate material.
2. If you attach a photograph to your item, please label it. You may know that the image is of Mrs Jones, but I, most probably, will not. It also helps when I have multiple photograph submissions if they are not all left with just the camera numbers. If you can convert your image to 300 dpi, that also helps.
3. If you send me a copy of your chapel newsletter I shall assume that it carries with it permission to copy any item therein. If that is not the case, please enclose something to that effect, or say so in the body of the message if the publication is sent via email.
4. It is the policy of the MDA that we do not publish letters in *The Unitarian*.

Thanks. *Fran*

A View from Essex Hall

The Unitarian

Many of you will know that this is my final *View from Essex Hall* as I shall be leaving the General Assembly on 30 April 2019. I first wrote a column in the February 2010 edition of *The Unitarian*. It was a very different publication then. Simply eight pages in black and white with a few photographs. Looking back at it now, the format, particularly the font, seems very traditional. Today we have full colour and more pages with stylistic variety yet still the same size enabling copies to be easily taken away from chapel or church each month.

Just as *The Unitarian* has changed so has the General Assembly, and indeed myself. Nine years ago, I wrote that being new in the job I not only did not know all the answers but did not even know some of the questions. Not knowing what you don't know can be very dangerous. Over the years I have gained an insight into the issues facing our Unitarian and Free Christian Denomination as well as our ways of working. I have worked with the Executive Committee and the wider movement to try and understand the



changing world and develop our responses. Some of these have worked; others have been tried and fallen short. Success is often built on previous efforts that did not quite work out as planned.

Although *The Unitarian* has changed it has retained its essence as a publication aimed, in my view, at the casual reader in the pew looking for items of interest, sometimes entertainment and, of course, for information. Similarly with the General Assembly. We do things differently today yet the essence of seeking to serve local congregations remains very much the same.

Personally, too, I have developed and am able to do things today I would have struggled with or not even have aspired to do ten years ago. Yet in essence I too have stayed very much the same. My time as Chief Officer has been one of growth for me and I am grateful to the General Assembly for the opportunities I have been given. I leave with a feeling of achievement, having made a real difference in several areas of our work.

Back in 2010 I talked about the need to continue to de-

velop our Movement in response to changing times and circumstances. Just think of the changes – political, economic, social and religious – since then. Change seems to be happening at an even faster pace. It is tempting to say “Stop the world; I want to get off”. I have seen hints of this in some of our congregations as they hunker down to preserve what would sustain them as a group but, ironically, not their community in the longer term.

That is the challenge! How do we preserve the best of the past and the present but be open to a new future? Indeed, that’s the challenge I personally face as I look to my own future. I want to do new and different things. I wish at the same time to be true to myself. I wish the same for the General Assembly and for our local congregations. Finally I wish my successor, Elizabeth Slade, all the best for the future.

Derek McAuley

Derek McAuley retires as Chief Officer of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches on 30 April 2019.

Did You Know:

Only female mosquitoes will bite you.
The dot on a lowercase ‘l’ is called a tittle.
Pumice is the only rock that floats in water.
Cleopatra married two of her brothers.
The oldest known vegetable is the pea.

A black dog is sleeping in the middle of a black road that has no street-lights and there is no moon. A car coming down the road with its lights off steers around the dog. How did the driver know the dog was there?

Answer ➡

You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Actual Exchanges Between Pilots And Control Towers.

Tower: "TWA 2341, for noise reduction turn right 45 Degrees."

TWA 2341: "Center, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?"

Tower: "Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"

A DC-10 had come in a little hot and thus had an exceedingly long rollout after touching down.

San Jose Tower noted: "American 751, make a hard right turn at the end of the runway, if you are able. If you are not able, take the Guadalupe exit off Highway 101, make a right at the lights and return to the airport."



It was daylight!

Ho'oponopono:.

Ho'oponopono is the ancient Hawaiian practice of forgiveness. *Ho'oponopono: I'm sorry, please forgive me, thank you, I love you.*

The above mantra, said with intent, creates profound changes, acting as a form of mental and spiritual cleaning that could be compared to Buddhist techniques for clearing karma.

"I found that by simply chanting these words my inner discordance, my stuff, would come up. Not only would it come up, but it was as if my inner disharmony was being tuned to the frequency of these words and the intention they carry. Over time, I found these four simple concepts acted like tuning forks, each carrying a different tone of purity that I could use to tune the disharmonious parts of myself. Best of all, I found that applying this chant to the chaos of my mind brought about stillness and calm." *Jonathan Davis*

"Across all cultures practically all of us agree that the concepts of *Thank you, I'm sorry, Please forgive me* and *I love you* are all valuable and important. If there is such a thing as a collective consciousness, as Jung and many eastern traditions have suggested, then the basis of the power of Ho'oponopono may come from the sheer volume of people throughout human history who have agreed that these concepts are valuable, important and useful to humanity. In this way, Ho'oponopono may be tapping into a level of awareness that extends far beyond its Hawaiian roots into perhaps every culture that has ever existed on Earth. In common with other shamanic traditions, the Hawaiian tradition teaches that all life is connected. Ho'oponopono is, therefore, not only a way of healing ourselves, but others and our world as well." *Timothy Freke, Shamanic Wisdomkeepers*

Have you heard of the Hawaiian therapist who cured an entire ward of criminally insane patients, without ever meeting any of them or spending a moment in the same room? It's not a joke. The therapist was Dr Ihaleakala Hew Len. He reviewed each of the patients' files, and then he healed them by healing himself. The amazing results seem like a miracle, but then miracles do happen when you use this method, or Dr. Len's updated version called Self I-Identity. Through Ho'oponopono (SITH) Dr Hew Len believes we should take responsibility for more than our personal self because 'you are in me and I am in you'. He says the discordance we find in others and in the world outside ourselves is due to 'errors' in thought stored in our personal and collective memories. He believes these errors exist in some form of collective memory accessible to all and this allows a person practicing Ho'oponopono to clean these errors, whether the error originated in their personal thoughts or not.

Paraphrased from www.laughteronlineuniversity.com/

More on Ho'oponopono: <http://hooponopono.org/>

Fran

A Press Release From the Lancashire Collaborative Ministry. (19 March 2019).

Lancashire Church Takes Action Against Sectarian Violence and Racism.

The tragic and senseless shootings in Christ Church, New Zealand are to be comprehensively condemned for the acts of terrorism that they are. They represent a growing trend of Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism and general intolerance of the other.

The Lancashire Collaborative Ministry (LCM) is a group of Unitarian churches dedicated to social justice and has a history of positive interfaith connections. The LCM asserts we must all stand together as human beings created for love of our neighbours not hate. Our purpose is not to tear apart and break down, but to build up and live together in peace. Our humanity is united through our respective faiths and our desire for true fellowship. No act of violence can be justified by a political or religious manifesto.

It is only when we walk together and advocate justice and show mercy to each other that we are fully human. Our friendship and living together in peace must be based on acceptance of the other. Those who would frighten and break down society have no place in our communities. It is only by doing things together that we can show that positive action can overcome destructive acts. Rev'd Dr Shannon Ledbetter, Social Justice Minister LCM, says, "Our hearts go out to the families of the victims of the mosque shootings in Christ Church. No words can bring those people back, we can only try to move forward renewing our efforts to break down barriers and to build relationships".

Rawtenstall Unitarian Church has started a bi-monthly interfaith service with representatives from the different faith communities. We are learning about each other's traditions during an informal service and then socialising while we share a meal together. The next gathering is Sunday 16th of June at 5:00pm at the Rawtenstall Unitarian Church on Bank Street.

The church will also be hosting a *Faith Question Time* on Friday the 10th of May at 5:00pm, where you are invited to ask that question which has always puzzled you about religion. Jake Berry, MP for Rossendale and Darwen, will be our moderator and will be joined by a panel of representatives from different faiths. He says, "Violence is to be condemned in all of its forms and we remember especially at this time our Muslim neighbours. I hope that this opportunity to express our questions to a panel of experts will foster understanding and build friendships."

Help us to be a positive force in honouring what unites us as humans and to appreciate what makes us unique. Come join us.

Note: The Lancashire Collaborative Ministry consists of the Unitarian churches in Padiham, Chorley and Rawtenstall and is focused on developing social justice and interfaith projects. For further information please contact:

The Rev'd Dr Shannon Ledbetter, Social Justice Minister, Lancashire Collaborative Ministry, 07720 072787, scledbetterosprey@gmail.com

A Few Easter Myth-busters.

◆ Contrary to some modern claims, the term “Easter” was not derived from the name of Ishtar, the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess of fertility and sex. *Pascha*, the feast of the *Resurrection of the Lord*, was celebrated for centuries before the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons. *Pascha* is a transliteration of the Greek word Πάσχα, which is itself a transliteration from the Hebrew *pesach* meaning *Passover*. The festival of *Pascha* was celebrated for centuries before the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, who named it 'Easter', from the Germanic name for the month in which the feast of *Pascha* usually fell.

◆ Many old religions had a Spring Goddess, a special deity who breathed life back into the world, both by encouraging growing things to grow and living things to mate. She went by many names. The Scandinavians called her Ostra, the Anglo-Saxons Eostre, and those who lived in the region that is now Germany knew her as Eastre. This conjunction led to the belief that Easter had its origins in pagan rites.

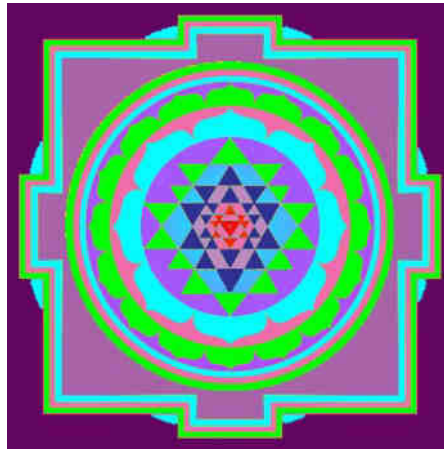
◆ The Easter Bunny is of German origin. He shows up in 16th century literature as a deliverer of eggs. As rabbits were introduced to Britain by the Romans and are not an indigenous species, it is impossible for rabbits to have been sacred to any indigenous British Goddess. You can see the first recorded mention of the Easter Bunny in a collection of medical essays, entitled *Satyrae Medicae* and collated and published by Georg Franck von Franckenau in 1682. According to The Royal Society, number 18 of these ‘satyres’ included a piece on Easter eggs written by a young German doctor and theology buff named Johannes Richier. In one passage, Richier mentions the Bunny as a regional phenomenon located in ‘Upper Germany’, the Palatine, Alsace and Westphalia. He notes that it is common practice for people in these regions to search for ‘Easter eggs’ and that the local children are told that these were hatched and brought by the ‘Osterhase’ or Easter Hare, who hides the eggs in the garden, in the grass and shrubs. Children are then sent to look for these eggs – described by Richier as being purple, red, yellow, green, multicoloured and even painted with pictures.



◆ Eostre's symbol wasn't a hare. That was an unsupported guess made by the folklorist Adolf Holzmänn, in 1874. Holzmänn was baffled by the Easter Hare tradition, finding it 'unintelligible', and guessed that 'the hare was probably the sacred animal of Ostara'. Later writers misrepresented his guess as a statement of fact.

Fran

The Sri Yantra



The *Sri Yantra* is a symbol that is at least 12,000 years old and is considered the mother of all Yantras. Yantras are geometrical designs based on the principles of sacred geometry and are used for meditation. A yantra is the yogic equivalent of the Buddhist mandala. Each Sri Yantra design contains a centre point or 'dot' from which geometric shapes radiate, comprised of interlocking triangles with two circles of lotus petals enclosing them. The entire design is surrounded by a gated frame that is referred to as the 'earth citadel'. The triangles consist of five downward triangles (the female, or Shakti), and four upward triangles (the male, or Shiva). These nine triangles create three smaller triangles, each of which being the house of a particular deity.

This yantra is thought to be a representative of Mount Meru, viewed in Buddhist, Hindu and Jain mythologies as a sacred mountain considered to be the centre of the physical and spiritual universe. The Sri Yantra is a focus for spiritual pilgrimage and inner journeying. It represents our bodies at a microcosmic level (through the chakras), and the cosmos on a macrocosmic level. As the concentric figures gradually grow away from the centre, this signifies the process of macrocosmic evolution. When they gradually move towards the centre, this is a symbol of microcosmic involution. It represents a gradual movement from unity to multiplicity and again back to unity. Traditionally, studying and meditating on the Sri Yantra balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain. It helps to clear the content of a person's consciousness so it can become a pure mirror, reflecting without interpreting. All that exists infinitely in this emptiness.

It is said that Nikola Tesla, with his fractal mind, would see the Sri Yantra in blinding flashes.

Fran

Roll up, roll up...

I read that Norwich Cathedral has installed a helter-skelter to enable visitors to get close-up views of its architecture. The canon apparently said he hoped it would bring people in for a religious experience.

This got me wondering what sort of funfair attraction we might put in our church to enhance services or bring new people in. A carousel with the organ playing in the middle while the congregation spin around on galloping horses? Dodgems representing diverse and sometimes colliding theologies? Hymn number bingo?

Answers on the back of a coconut...

David Strachan

From *The Flame*, March 2019. Richmond and Putney Unitarians.



← In September 2018, artist Trevor Leat created a willow sculpture for 'Unbind the Wing', a celebration of women's suffrage at Bodnant Garden National Trust, Conwy. A photo of this (not this one) was reproduced in Brook Street's March-April newsletter. You can see Trevor Leat building the sculpture on this vid: www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6WNO38VEf8

I'm not trying to counsel any of you to do anything really special except dare to think. And to dare to go with the truth. And to dare to really love completely.

R. Buckminster Fuller.

Music, Silence, Poetry, Prayer.

March 15. Chapel in the Garden.

Bridport Unitarians.

Love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence.

Eric Fromm. Quoted in the March newsletter of Dunham Rd Unitarian Chapel, Altrincham.

ONE KIND WORD
can change
someone's
entire day

Round and About

The Unitarian

As some of you might know, my favourite sport is figure-skating, though according to my husband it cannot be considered a sport at all. This month will bring the World Championship and I will have a couple of wonderful days watching it. Now in this sport there is a competition for pairs and for dancing, where the judges are looking not at the skaters' individual performance but at their performance as a pair. This means that if one of them fails an element, even if the other executed it beautifully, they will get marked for the failed element. At the end of the performance it is quite interesting to watch how the pair deals with their failure while they are expecting their marks: some won't hold hands and won't even turn to the other, they just sit next to each other as strangers, seething with resentment; the one who did not fail would scowl or look angry and disappointed and so on. But there are others who try to comfort their partner, with gestures and soothing words, with the encouragement that next time will be better.

If you think about it, this is something pretty familiar to married couples, to team-sports and to democracies, where results are not judged on individual brilliance, but on our collective, overall performance. As individuals, it may be below our expectations, we may feel cheated or annoyed, but resentment and bitterness are not conducive to change and to a common future; we need good will, patience and understanding to move forward.

It would be good for all of us to remember Jesus' saying: "A house divided cannot stand" and accept that both in our personal and national life compromise and cooperation have their place, especially as there are so many unknowns we are facing.

Rev Maria Pap.

Old Meeting House Mansfield March newsletter.

There is something truly beautiful in speaking words, heart to heart. The language of the heart is not really about correct use of the language but a way of being with each other; it is an intention; it is about invitation; it is about allowing others to be who they are in your space. This is true openness, by the way. Openness is not about telling another all about yourself, instead it is about inviting another to be themselves in your space.

Words connect us in some very special ways; they can be incredibly powerful. They can begin to bring deep healing or can be deeply destructive. What matters is the intention behind them. What seems to matter is the condition of our heart and soul as we speak, what we must speak.

Rev Danny Crosby.

From the March newsletter of Dunham Rd Unitarian Chapel, Altrincham.

**"REMEMBER THERE'S NO SUCH
THING AS A SMALL ACT OF
KINDNESS. EVERY ACT CREATES A
RIPPLE WITH NO LOGICAL END."**
Scott Adams

**Strong people
don't put others
down...
They lift them up.**

KIND WORDS CAN
BE SHORT AND
EASY TO SPEAK,
BUT THEIR ECHOES
ARE TRULY
ENDLESS.

MOTHER TERESA

It takes a million
compliments to
build you up.
And one insult to
send it all crashing
down.

Better than a
thousand hollow
words, is one word
that brings
peace.

Buddha.

A gentle answer turns away rage,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

PROVERBS 15:1

**DON'T WORRY
ABOUT THOSE
WHO TALK
BEHIND YOUR BACK,
THEY'RE BEHIND
YOU FOR A REASON.**

The tongue has no bones
but is strong enough to
break a heart. So be
careful with your words.

*Sticks and Stones
can break your Bones,
but Words can hurt your Soul.*

Gitte Falkenberg

**BE CAREFUL
WITH WORDS
BECAUSE ONCE THEY
ARE SAID, THEY CAN
ONLY BE FORGIVEN,
NOT FORGOTTEN.**

**A BAD WOUND
HEALS BUT A BAD
WORD DOESN'T.**

Persian Proverb