

The Unitarian

Nurturing Faith

Celebrating Difference

Embracing Life

JUNE 2019

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The Unitarian

Established in 1903 and published by the Manchester District Association of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Please send newsletters, contributions and editorial correspondence to: theunitarian@outlook.com. *Submissions are welcome and may be edited for content and length. Text should be emailed or typed and images should be of good quality and sent either as jpegs or printed on photographic paper. All submissions should be the author's original work or be attributed appropriately.*

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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.

This will be my last newsletter as the editor. In fact, I am not sure what is to happen to *The Unitarian*, whether it will continue as a printed publication or become an electronic magazine, available in pdf format. I had hoped for some clarification prior to writing this. However, as so often in life, the future is unclear. And are not all good adventures unmapped and often unplanned? The thrill of reading a well-written adventure story is the suspense of not knowing where the action will lead. Will the protagonists be safe at the end of the tale or will they have met some grisly fate?

Earlier this week I was browsing in an Oxfam store whilst fairly unremarkable musak played in the background. Suddenly, the volume increased slightly and a beautiful rendering of 'Abide with Me' filled the air. I stopped my browsing and listened. I noticed others likewise arrested. I hope that, like me, they were heartened and reminded that we are not alone; never alone, for we are all part of that Oneness that is ever changing yet changeless. Experiencing through us the multitudinous options of existence, yet greater than we 'sparks of light' and able to bear us up and keep us safe wherever the journey takes us.

Change and decay in all around I see—
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Fran

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

Acting on our Motions

This year at the UK Unitarians annual meetings we carried a resolution concerning knife crime.

The motion expressed concern at the increasing incidence of knife crime in Britain's towns and cities, and called for an adequately funded multi-agency campaign to tackle this significantly raised threat to public safety. Hull Unitarians proposed an amendment which was accepted by the mover and seconder, to call upon Unitarian congregations to publicise the resolution amongst their members and friends and to ask their local elected representatives to raise these concerns with the relevant ministers.

We have written to our local member as follows:

At the recent annual meetings of UK Unitarians, a motion was overwhelmingly endorsed that called for a multiagency approach to reduction of knife crime.

Hull Unitarians had included in the motion an amendment that asked each chapel to contact their local member of parliament to ask that they support a whole-of-government approach. We are especially conscious of the cut in funds for youth and social services and the strain that this places on local government.

One issue of particular concern is the need to look into ways of drastically reducing the availability of sharp pointed objects, by means of controlling retail and internet sales. While the risk is slight, we have locked away these objects in our church. We recognise as a community, that includes two trained chefs, that there is a place for such tools in the right hands, but that they should not be readily accessible.

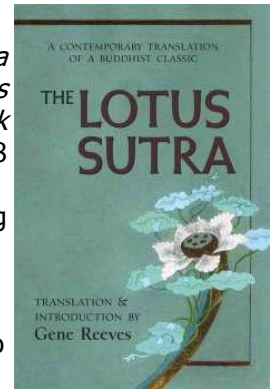
Can you please ask on our behalf that the Prime Minister take personal responsibility for ensuring that a coordinated whole-of-government response is forthcoming and that progress is monitored and evaluated so that effective multiagency approaches can be identified and have continued funding.

We are sharing this letter in the hope that other congregations will also act to give effect to the resolution.

*Ralph Catts
Minister, Hull Unitarians.*

The Lotus Sutra
by Gene Reeves
Paperback
ISBN 9780861715718

wisdompubs.org



Reverend Doctor Gene Reeves, respected Buddhist scholar and teacher, and Unitarian Universalist minister, died on May 8th this year. Reeves lived in Tokyo for more than two decades, where he studied, taught, and practiced Buddhism as encapsulated in the *Lotus Sutra*, for which he also published a widely-respected modern translation from Chinese into English.

In an article for *Dharma World Magazine*, Reeves recounted of his life: "I was raised Christian. At 20 I became a Unitarian. At 30 I became a Unitarian Universalist. And at 50 I became a Buddhist. But not once did I think of those becomings as a conversion from one faith to another. And so I remain, in my own self-understanding, Christian, Unitarian, Universalist, and Buddhist."

He was an active supporter for more than 50 years of civil rights causes, working with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Chicago Mayor, Harold Washington. He was also active for many years in interfaith conversations and organizations.

More: buddhistdoor.net

Report

The Bridport and Sidmouth congregations, under the exciting project of Angelica Kennard from Bridport, made a beautiful embroidered banner for Sidmouth Old Meeting Dissenting Unitarian Church.

Angelica and her friends brought the banner for us on 12th May, when she led a stimulating service. There were some twenty of us present, and we were told the story of the banner; a lovely gift. Angelica said that the quality of the sewing is varied but the richness of the fellowship is riveting.

Makers in Southampton originated from many countries of the world. As part of the Extinction Rebellion protests recently on Waterloo Bridge, the banner was sewn by women and men sitting on the kerbstones, and in the Parliament Square, sitting on the grass. Everyone enjoyed sewing leaves whilst chatting and exchanging life stories.

The banner is stitched with a donkey, flowers, butterflies, a flowing river, and the words 'Sidmouth Unitarian: We Welcome All Faiths and None'.

*Miriam Brown.
Sidmouth Old Meeting Dissenting Church.*

THE MAN THAT BRINGS THE SMARTIES



My name is Paul, and I'm 54 years old. Actually, that means nothing to me, you see I can't count or do much, like so-called 'normal' people. At a very early age in my life I was diagnosed with learning difficulties. The original diagnosis said I was mentally handicapped, but it seems that this is not politically correct, as if I care. I'm also autistic, whatever that means. I look just like anyone else, but, apparently, I think differently, and I don't

talk, but I can make myself understood when I want something, I just don't use words. These words that others use are just noises, sometimes I see people get upset about words spoken; no I don't think I am missing much by not talking.

My innermost thoughts it seems are different to others, therefore I do not conform. Who lays down the law of what conformity is? It seems the way I see life is different to most. But what is right? Is there a right or wrong? Because I see life differently to others, does that make me wrong? Perhaps my way is right, but I have no sense of reason, I don't think things through like you, but that doesn't bother me.

I have a room of my own. I go there a lot; it's quiet and I can rest, usually without being disturbed. Occasionally, someone will come and get me when it's time for food or someone wants to see me. So, I can often be found in my room, lying on my bed, or staring out of the window. Today, the window is wet, but the view is only of a brick wall of the next building so there is nothing much to look at. Today, there appears to be smoke coming out of the top of the building next door. I wonder why. It doesn't bother me.

It is time to get up. I don't tell the time, but I am feeling hungry, so it must be time. I can dress myself, in a fashion, sometimes I put my pants on back to front and don't realise it until I come to use the toilet. So, I get dressed. It doesn't matter what I look like, so any clothes will do, but I do sometimes get cold if I don't put on the right things. I go downstairs. I walk very quickly. I don't know why, there doesn't seem to be any hurry to get anywhere. I sit down and wait for the magic hatch to open. Magic hatch? If I wait here long enough, it will eventually open and they pass food out to me. My food is ok but it's always mushy; you see, I don't have any teeth to chew food with, these have all rotted away because of my constant regurgitation of my food. This is why I am painfully thin, because I get rid of the food as soon as I have eaten it, hence no nutrition.

There seems a buzz of expectancy about the place today, perhaps someone is

coming. I have heard the term Daddy used, but I'm not sure what that means. I have been helped to get dressed today; perhaps something is happening.

I've eaten my food. Now I sit here in the chair rocking. Why do I do that? I don't know, it's just something I do. There is a ringing noise, and one of the carers gets up and goes to the front door. Well, well, look who it is: it's the man that brings the Smarties. I recognise him; he always smiles at me. I lean forward, and he kisses my forehead; this seems to please him, so I am happy to oblige. He calls me by name. Has he? Has he? There you go! He produces the box of smarties! Good oh! This bloke has been coming to see me for years. When he first came, he had dark wavy hair, and was really quite thin, now he seems to have thinning white hair and he is quite a lot bigger.

Over the years I have seen a lot of changes in him. He now wears these things on the end of his nose that he looks through, goodness knows why. I noticed a short while ago that he's got things stuck in his ears; no idea why. Still, he always brings the Smarties, and that's important. I like the yellow ones best, the colour reminds me of that object I sometimes see in the sky, that makes me warm, but I haven't seen it recently. But I can only suck them now, but that tastes good. I notice when he arrives that one of my carers dips down in a peculiar manner, I think it's called a curtsey. I don't know why she does that. Ah ha, perhaps he brings her Smarties too.

I haven't been feeling well lately, I don't know why, and I have no way of telling anyone, so I stamp my feet; sometimes I shout, and often slap myself, this seems to detract from the pain. I was taken to that building yesterday. The last time I went I had to sit with a room full of people for some time. I didn't like that, and those around me didn't seem to like the noise I was making, so I was taken into a room and this bloke started prodding me around. I didn't like that much so I made more fuss. I escaped from the room to go and sit in the car that brought me, but the bloke followed me, sat in the car with me, and prodded me about some more. I don't think I am going to go back there.

Hello! The Smarty man is leaving. He kisses my forehead; when he gets to the door he turns and waves. I have learnt to wave, so I wave back, and that's it, he's gone. I wonder when he will come back? I hope he remembers to bring the Smarties.

This article is about my son Paul, and I am the Man that Brings the Smarties.

Alan Larcombe (Hastings Unitarian Church)



Sidmouth Old Meeting is a church
With buildings, named Dissenter,
And everyone and anyone
is welcome here to enter.

We will not approach you
If you only wish to look.
There are many leaflets, so
Please take some or a book.

The church is very old, of course,
And costly to maintain,
A small donation's optional,
We don't expect to gain.

So please feel free to meditate,
Relax, or maybe pray,
Or just enjoy the atmosphere -
We're glad you're here today.

*Miriam Brown:
Trustee, Sidmouth Old Meeting*

Authentic community often dictates that we have to move beyond our comfort zone to accommodate the 'other' and in the attempt to better understand another, we come to know ourselves a little better. Generally, in life, the reality is that we tend to gravitate toward those people who think in similar ways to us, but in a church community we rub shoulders with those who we might not usually connect with. Sometimes, the meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances; and, for good or for ill, there is a reaction where both are transformed.

Rev Simon Ramsay in *The Flame*
Richmond & Putney Unitarians.

**Be the
Change**



The Lochbrim & Firestone Kirk wishes to clarify that their inspirational display on the church wall is meant to say 'ARISE'. A church spokesman told us, "We heard there was confusion and even some raising of smirks regarding our display. Imagine our embarrassment when we took a look and realised the break above the letter R must be causing people to misread it as

'AKISE'. Hopefully once we finish the Godly instruction with the addition of 'Whole' to the right-hand side, the matter will be resolved and the public will appreciate what we are saying to them."

From Aberdeen Unitarians' May *Calendar*

Round and About

The Unitarian

All religions and communities have the same weights and it is my responsibility to ensure there is complete and total protection. My government will not tolerate any discrimination based on caste, creed or religion.

*Narendra Modi. Prime Minister of India since 2014.
Quoted in Dunham Road Unitarian Chapel's May newsletter.*

God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illuminated by a steady radiance renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason.

Dag Hammarskjöld
Secretary General of the
United Nations 1953-1961
Bradford Unitarians Newsletter
June and July 2019

Dear God,
Be the expression on my face and the thoughts in my heart.
Be the strength in my body and the kindness in my eyes.
Be the gentleness in my words and the tenderness in my deeds.
Be the love in my eyes and the smile on my face.
Be the dreams that I dream and the air that I breathe.
Be the light in my life and the joy in my soul.

Chrissy Greenslade. League Letter.
May/June 2019.

Chorus:

*We are living 'neath the great Big Dipper,
We are washed by the very same rain,
We are swimming in the stream together,
Some in power, some in pain.
We can worship this ground we walk on,
Cherishing the beings that we live beside.
Loving spirits will live forever;
We're all swimming to the other side.*

I am alone and I am searching
Hungering for answers in my time.
I am balanced at the brink of wisdom;
I'm impatient to receive a sign.
I move forward with my senses open;
Imperfection it will be my crime.
In humility I will listen -
We're all swimming to the other side.
Repeat Chorus.

On this journey of thoughts and feelings
Binding intuition; my head, my heart,
I am gathering the tools together,
I'm preparing to do my part.
All of those who have come before me
band together and be my guide;
Loving lessons that I will follow -
We're all swimming to the other side.
Repeat Chorus

When we get there we'll discover
All of the gifts we were given to share
Have been with us since life's beginning
And we never noticed they were there.
We can balance at the brink of wisdom,
Never recognizing we've arrived.
Loving spirits will live together;
We're all swimming to the other side
Repeat Chorus

*Pat Humphries.
Partially quoted in 'The Norfolk Unitarian', May.*

In medieval times Christians considered most of the churches as sanctuaries, asylums, where people could claim refuge from the law or pursuers. This practice still comes up from time to time.

At the end of last year, a small Protestant church in The Hague conducted round-the-clock religious services for 96 days to protect an Armenian refugee family from deportation. By law, police officers in The Netherlands are not allowed to enter places of worship during religious services. So, ministers from around the country took turns holding services at Bethel Church to prevent officials from arresting the family, who have been in The Netherlands for nine years and who, finally, were granted a permanent residence permit.

More than 100 UU congregations in US are part of the Sanctuary Movement, working to protect immigrants facing deportation by literally offering sanctuary, a safe place in the church, to people who are at risk of being deported

From The Old Meeting House, Mansfield, newsletter, May 2019.
Part of Rev Maria Pap's *Ministerial Musings*.

A conversation between a Zen master and his disciple:

"Is there anything I can do to make myself enlightened?"
"As little as you can do to make the sun rise in the morning."
"Then of what use are the spiritual exercises you prescribe?"
"To make sure you are not asleep when the sun begins to rise."

Quoted by Rev Sue Woolley in *Mu Now*, Spring 2019.

A primary school teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work. As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, 'I'm drawing God.' The teacher paused and said, 'But no one knows what God looks like.' Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, 'They will in a minute.'

Monton Church, Eccles, May newsletter.

Anyone who longs for the light is not lightless, for yearning is already light.

Bettina von Armin (Countess of Armin, 1785 – 1859).
Quoted by Rev Sue Woolley in *Mu Now*, Spring 2019.

Queens Road Unitarian Free Church, URMSTON M41 9HA

19th June 11am

"OUR COMMON SEARCH FOR MEANING" – Awe, Wonder, Amazement

Is the goal of life to live in "Radical Amazement?"

The subject this month is "Awe, Wonder and Amazement?" We will be exploring what we mean by Awe, Wonder and Amazement? Asking are they vital to a fully lived life? Asking how where, when and why we experience them? And we can perhaps develop these senses? How perhaps we can develop Please do join us and invite friends or other interested parties. All are welcome.

Queens Road Unitarian Free Church Urmston M41 9HA invites you to explore the many questions of life, in an open and supportive environment. To seek and develop meaning in our lives, to enrich our own experiences and therefore impact on the lives of others in positive ways. Exploring ideas from a variety of traditions, sharing our personal experiences, encouraging deep listening and compassionate discussion.

***We meet on the third Wednesday of
every month at 11 am.***

OUR GOAL SHOULD
BE TO LIVE LIFE IN
**RADICAL
AMAZEMENT**

- ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL -



A warm and open
welcome

Searching together
in an inclusive
and supportive
environment

An opportunity to
experience
spiritual intimacy
in community

Feeding our
own souls

Impacting
positively on our
world

<https://unitariansmda.org.uk/urmston-unitarians>
Tel: 07908894049



Children's Day

Saturday 15th June
11 am - 3 pm

Service of Worship led by Rev Anna Jarvis: 11am.
North West Provincial Assembly AGM: 12 noon.

Craft workshop
With Marta Pacini - 1:30 pm

Hear from Gavin Howell (GA Youth Officer)
about future plans for the Unitarian youth
movement.

Monton Church, Eccles M30 8AP

Lunch 12.45 until 1.30, bring a sandwich, tea/coffee and cakes will be provided.

Any further information from Rev. Lynne Readett 01942 893965

Mobile 07885 414410 or email rev.lynne@hotmail.com



HUMAN FLOURISHING ON A FLOURISHING EARTH FINDING A WAY TOGETHER

Saturday 8 June 2019, 10am – 4.45 pm

Brighton Centre, Brighton BN 1 1 YD

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: NICOLA PEELE

AWARD-WINNING ENVIRONMENTALIST

Event Fee: £ 16.50 / £ 11 for those with low income.

Booking: www.wegotickets.com/event/461951

Refreshments: hot drinks are provided at 10 am and
mid-afternoon. Bring your own lunch or use local cafes.

Further Information: www.livingspirit.org.uk/brighton

Enquiries: petagriffiths@livingspirit.org.uk

Event musician: Philip Roderick

Participants will be invited to attend two out of four workshops:

1. Green Grace: The practice of presence and the power of pause in the greening of things.
2. Top Tips for Taking Personal Action to Protect the Earth : Exploring in greater detail the practical actions that Nicola suggests are most helpful.
3. Saving the World is a Spiritual Matter: Is it possible to find a way of engaging with the challenges facing the world that is joyful and affirming of life?
4. The Great Water Challenge: Water is life. It is present in everything we eat, all our work, and what we shall become as a species.



JOY SINGING AND SILENCE SINGING MEDITATION TOGETHER IN SOUND & SILENCE THURSDAY 20TH JUNE 7PM

SCHOOL ROOM, DUNHAM ROAD UNITARIAN CHAPEL
SYLVAN GROVE, ALTRINCHAM, WA14 4NU

An evening of simple song chants from a variety of world traditions interspersed with periods of meditative silence. This is a simple practice that anyone can engage with. You do not need to be an experienced meditator or singer. In fact many people who thought that either singing or meditation was beyond them have found their voice and their space in this simple joy filled time together. Please feel free to bring any song chants you know and or musical instruments to enhance the energy...

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: REV DANNY CROSSBY ON 079088894049

Living the Questions: Fables, Myths & Legends



Held in the small schoolroom at Dunham Road Unitarian Chapel, Altrincham WA14 4NU.

On Thursday 6th June, at 7:30pm.

It will be led by Adie Tindall. The following is his description of the evening. The subject will be 'Living with fables, Myth and Legends,' 'In a world where Science and secular truths are becoming more prominent. Is there still room for the truths in fables, Myths and legends to play Their part in the development in human society. We will look at how the narratives of these stories and how they have spoken to our Psyche, through our lifetime and through history.

All are most welcome...Come as you are, exactly as you are...but do not expect to leave in exactly the same condition...