

AUTUMN 2019

THE UNITARIAN

Unitariansmda.org.uk



WELCOME

A very warm autumnal welcome to you all. We are now on the 2nd new edition, and we still need your input to make this work. Many thanks to those who have already offered contributions.

As you are all aware, The Unitarian magazine has taken a change of direction. In order for us to survive, we need your assistance. In the past, we have struggled with the lack of content being sent to us, and we would like to invite you all to contribute as little or as much as you would like, or see fit and able.

If you fancy yourself as the new Sandi Toksvig, Giles Coran, or Monty Don, and you would like to have a feature column or page each month, we would be only too delighted. If you are a Minister or Lay preacher, and you would also like to share a compacted sermon, or prayers, then a monthly column or page is ready and waiting for you. The magazine can be as big as you like, so please do send any funny stories, handy tips, reflections, photographs, events etc. .

We would also like to hear from you about what you would like or not like to see featured each month. Please feel free to be as open and honest as you like, as without your feedback and input, we are unable to grow. Would you like a more interactive online magazine? We have lots of ideas, but we would love to hear yours.

Your article can be sent in any text or format, there are no stipulations. I can do the rest from my end. We want to hear about you and your congregations, near and far. This is a national publication, not just for the Manchester district.

Email: infotheunitarian@gmail.com

We very much want The Unitarian to publicise events both inside and outside of our district. One idea is that we could enhance our current website, to include a pdf of your newsletters for people to download. This will benefit your congregations, by getting your news out to more people. I know that many hours are spent by yourselves producing some extremely fantastic newsletters, and we would like to help you in getting as many people as possible, knowing what is happening in your area. In addition to this, I would also like you to send me any articles etc, that you would like to include in The Unitarian itself. We have explored many options on how we can improve what we already have, but we need your assistance. Have you thought about individual district administrators, who can gather the information and send it to us?

TAKE A MOMENT TO JUST BE... "More George".

Hello all from myself and George,

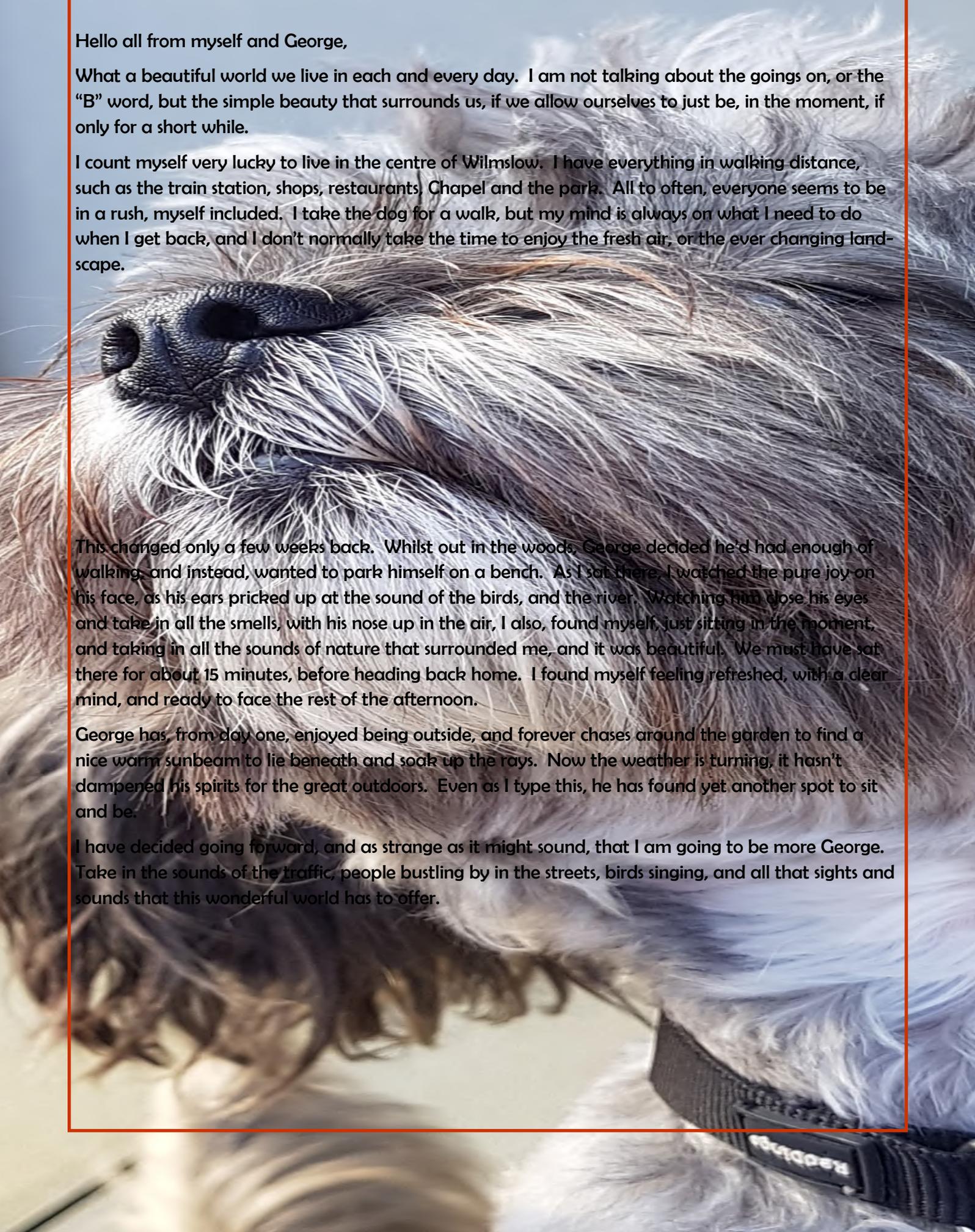
What a beautiful world we live in each and every day. I am not talking about the goings on, or the "B" word, but the simple beauty that surrounds us, if we allow ourselves to just be, in the moment, if only for a short while.

I count myself very lucky to live in the centre of Wilmslow. I have everything in walking distance, such as the train station, shops, restaurants, Chapel and the park. All too often, everyone seems to be in a rush, myself included. I take the dog for a walk, but my mind is always on what I need to do when I get back, and I don't normally take the time to enjoy the fresh air, or the ever changing landscape.

This changed only a few weeks back. Whilst out in the woods, George decided he'd had enough of walking, and instead, wanted to park himself on a bench. As I sat there, I watched the pure joy on his face, as his ears pricked up at the sound of the birds, and the river. Watching him close his eyes and take in all the smells, with his nose up in the air, I also, found myself, just sitting in the moment, and taking in all the sounds of nature that surrounded me, and it was beautiful. We must have sat there for about 15 minutes, before heading back home. I found myself feeling refreshed, with a clear mind, and ready to face the rest of the afternoon.

George has, from day one, enjoyed being outside, and forever chases around the garden to find a nice warm sunbeam to lie beneath and soak up the rays. Now the weather is turning, it hasn't dampened his spirits for the great outdoors. Even as I type this, he has found yet another spot to sit and be.

I have decided going forward, and as strange as it might sound, that I am going to be more George. Take in the sounds of the traffic, people bustling by in the streets, birds singing, and all that sights and sounds that this wonderful world has to offer.



BLOG

THE WRITE STUFF By Janet Kelly



PUTTING THE BOOT IN

There is something that many people do on Sunday mornings with a fervour I didn't realise existed among the suburban population. No, not going to church or gardening - Car Boot Sales.

For the uninitiated I can only describe the experience as something akin to waking up and finding the End Of The World had been declared - and every human being was out to pillage whatever they could in quest of comfort during their final hours.

Having decided that the contents of my garage were beginning to form the first stages of a Turner prize exhibit, I roped in a friend for a morning of fun at the fair. We had barely pulled on the handbrake of the people (or in this case, trash) carrier when a horde of people - obviously used to this hand-to-object existence - were ferreting through the contents of my vehicle like rats on speed.

It was only the assurance that this attack on my worldly possessions was a trait of the CBP (Car Boot "Professional") that persuaded me to stay. I blame the Antiques Roadshow. Everyone seems to think they are going to find that one thing that will exclude them from the need to earn a living - just by scavenging through the contents of other people's waste. "Ooh, Mrs Jones! What a bargain. This rusty ironing board just happens to be a Hottity Hittity of the late 20th century and worth more than enough to pay off your mortgage," goes the dream, particularly for those who practise how modest and surprised they would look on telly, being told such news.

Having said that, there is a very basic appeal about things at Car Boot Sales. I found myself very attracted to other people's shoes, a moth-eaten Backgammon set - and the burger van which sold very nice chips for £1.10 a bag (an essential part of the occasion).

I sold four broken watches, a vase which the buyer thought was an umbrella stand, plus a box of my husband's DVDs. Unfortunately for him it now appears they were not in the garage for the sale, but to keep them tidy.

Still, he can always go and buy some more at a Car Boot Sale - there are some real bargains to be had!

Janet Kelly's novel, Dear Beneficiary, was published by Cutting Edge Press on March 19th 2015.

LIFESTYLE

Get outdoors and breath the delights of the autumnal air.....

Walking improves general health and well-being

The importance of regular exercise and a good diet is well-known and both are documented as aids to a long and healthy life. While most of us can manage the diet side of things perfectly well and fit our nutritional needs around our lifestyle, when it comes to doing the same with exercise many of us are sadly lacking.

Contrary to popular belief, exercise does not have to be regimented or expensive, requiring us to sign up for numerous classes or hours at the gym; one of the simplest, best and cheapest forms of regular exercise is walking, something most of us do every day without even thinking about it.

Walking can easily be fitted into a daily routine by most, whether you are a stay-at-home Mum, a busy professional or a retiree. It can be done with others, alone, or even with your dog, and doesn't require a personal trainer. It improves lung and heart function and strengthens the muscles in the lower body, and because walking is a load-bearing activity it can help with poor bone density, making it particularly beneficial for older people. In short, we can all benefit from walking.

There are many opportunities in the day to take a walk and it doesn't have to be chore. Starting a walking programme is as easy as walking to the local shops and walking the children to school rather than driving or taking a bus. Begin by taking a walk in your lunch break and see the increase in your mental performance at work during the afternoon, or walk in the evening and experience a much better quality of sleep.

Walking in open countryside or the local park adds another pleasant dimension to your exercise. But while you take in the beauty of the local flora and fauna along your chosen route, focusing on the quality and distance of your walking can dramatically benefit your wellbeing and increase fitness.

After a few weeks of easing yourself into the habit, try to walk more briskly and add some up-hill stretches into your route for extra benefit. This will help burn off calories and increase cardiovascular fitness, and once a good level has been reached, try power walking at as fast a pace as you can manage during the middle section of your walk. Enjoy striding out, getting fresh air in your lungs and appreciating your surroundings as you go along.

You will soon find that you start to look forward to your daily walk, and you will certainly notice the difference in your general health. At this point you may consider joining a rambling club to enjoy your new found exercise with others. Ramblers meet for regular walks in stunning surroundings, and tackle walks for all levels of fitness. You may even find you make some new friends to share your new exercise regime with. Details of these clubs can be found on the internet or at local libraries. You can also find some great local walking groups on Facebook or Meetup.com. Why not start a walking group within your congregation. Some of us are surrounded by beautiful countryside, and woodland walks, it would be a shame not to take advantage.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

With an abundance of pumpkins now on sale, why not take the opportunity to make this scrummy and nutritious soup. Perfect on it's own, or with a slab of bread and a wedge of butter.

Ingredients

- 200g Pumpkin
- 50g Yellow Lentils
- 1 tbsp Olive Oil (optional)
- Pinch of Salt
- 1/2 tsp Vegetable Stock Powder (or you can use your own Vegetable Stock liquid, if you have some already made)
- Pinch of Black Pepper
- Approx. half a handful of fresh Basil and fresh Coriander leaves.
- Water

Instructions

Preparation & Cooking Method:

1. The Yellow Lentils can be pre-soaked to reduce cooking time - but this is not essential.
 2. Set aside a few of the Coriander leaves for a final garnish.
 3. Combine & roughly chop the rest of the Basil and Coriander leaves.
 4. Boil the Yellow Lentils until they are soft / easily squeezed with your fingers. Drain them well and set them aside.
 5. Cut the Pumpkin into approx. fingertip sized pieces - so that it will cook quickly.
 6. Place the cut Pumpkin into a pan with 3 to 4 cups of water (or your own Vegetable Stock liquid).
 7. Bring the pan to a boil & then medium simmer it for 8-10 minutes - not longer - do not over-cook the Pumpkin.
 8. Add the Olive Oil, Salt and Vegetable Stock Powder into the pan - if you used them.
 9. Add the Yellow Lentils into the pan.
 10. Let everything cook for another 2 minutes.
 11. Turn off the heat, then add the Basil and Coriander leaves and a dollop of natural yoghurt.
 12. Blend everything until creamy.
- Serve, with a generous helping of bread and butter for dunking.

REFLECTIONS

Fragments of Holiness for Daily Reflection

Edited by Catherine Robinson

Published by the Lindsey Press

With 366 carefully curated fragments (yes, there's one for the Leap Day too – the editor really has thought of everything) there is something for everyone in *Fragments of Holiness*. *The book blends inspiration, wisdom and poetic beauty with flashes of humour, most obviously in the form of the delightfully odd entry for April 1st. Well-known Unitarian names from history such as Emerson, Priestley and Channing rub shoulders with present-day ministers. Wisdom is gathered from a whole range of traditions: perhaps not surprisingly, Buddhism is particularly well represented, though the Native American tradition also provides a rich vein. Members of Unitarian congregations in Britain take their places alongside international household names such as Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Che Guevara and Malala Yousafzai.*

Fragments of Holiness is a rich source of material for reflection. It's a book well designed for our soundbite culture, with the same kind of appeal as scrolling through a very positive, thoughtful and spiritual Facebook feed. The inevitable downside of this is that the breadth and variety of the content results in a certain loss of depth, as the format of short snippets doesn't provide much room to develop a concept or theme. Fortunately the meticulously prepared list of sources makes it easy to follow up any ideas which appeal, and avid readers will no doubt come away with a much extended reading list to pursue.

As a source of short readings, the book has undeniable value for worship leaders looking for that elusive 'perfect quote', but is also useful for people who can't easily access congregational worship, as well as for congregation members looking for a daily focus beyond the Sunday service, and for those who prefer to browse when the spirit moves them... in short, if you enjoy reflective reading and have a broadly Unitarian perspective on life, it is hard to see how you could avoid loving *Fragments of Holiness*.

Stephanie Bisby

Editor's note:

<https://www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/unitarian-books>

ARTICLE OF INTEREST



The Unitarian Earth Spirit Network is for Unitarians who find divinity in nature. It began as a rather secretive group thirty years ago who then described themselves as Neo Pagans. Later the group changed the name to the current Unitarian Earth Spirit Network which they felt better reflected where they stood within the Unitarian spectrum. In those early days the word 'pagan' did not reflect its true meaning. The word actually means 'country dweller'.

Country dwellers lived closer to nature and the seasons than their city cousins. There were specific dates in the calendar when conditions changed in the growing and harvesting seasons. For example, around the first of February the soil became warm enough for seeds to germinate and the ewes began to lactate in preparation for the birth of their lambs.

This date became known as 'Imbolc' one of the eight festivals in the year. Of the eight, four were associated with the sun. They celebrated the longest day and the shortest day and the spring and autumn equinoxes. Between each sun festival is a festival associated with fertility and harvests. All the festivals were set around the community. There were traditions for celebrating the first cut of the grain harvest and first loaf that was baked from it, traditions too of honoring ancestors and recognising marriages. Living within the rhythm of the natural cycle of growth and decay, times of anticipation and times of rest invokes a spiritual response. We are part of something much grander than ourselves. We might try to influence that spiritual divinity with our prayers and rituals or create deities within it but we are always subject to it and we therefore respect the earth and the whole world around us. When Christianity arrived, the churches festivals followed the agricultural year too bringing their own saints and renaming the festival days.

Just as Unitarianism is a kaleidoscope of differences on a single theme, so it is with modern paganism. There are Wiccan groups, Druid groups, Norse groups and independent groups and independent individuals. Most are affiliated to the Pagan Federation. The Earth Spirit Network is not but we often attend each other's meetings or moots.

Descriptions of the eight festivals of the year can be found on the Unitarian Earth Spirit website and we also sell a set of 'Wheel of the Year' cards (£6.00). Membership of the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network costs £15 for a year. This helps to pay for the maintenance of the website, the Facebook page, our presence at the Unitarian annual meetings, printing and publicity. A magazine, called The File is published at least once a year and is free to members. The File is filled with contributions, articles and poems submitted by members. I also keep an e mail list of people who asked to be kept informed about the network.

The Network consists of several small independent groups who share news of their meetings and activities mostly through the Facebook page. I belong to the Bolton group. We meet every January to plan how we will celebrate the eight festivals of the wheel of the year. Most but not all are members of Unitarian congregations around the Bolton area. We meet sometimes indoors at Unity Chapel Bolton. At these meetings we begin by creating the area as a sacred space, then we will share readings and thoughts about the history and significance of the festival. Sometimes we have a go at associ-

ated craft work too. We have made pictures out of natural materials for well dressing, we have made

Brigid crosses and corn dollies and shared the first harvest loaf. At Samhain (Halloween) we bring photos or mementos of people who have been influences in our lives and share memories of them.

At Yule (the shortest day) we share memories of Christmases past and make promises to ourselves of what we will do better in the year ahead.

For the summer solstice we meet outdoors on a high point to welcome the sunrise.

At other times we will go on a trip to visit a stone circle or an ancient well.

We have noticed that many congregations these days will have a Sunday service themed around one of the eight festivals. There are many hymns in our various Unitarian hymn books with themes around spirituality and the natural world. When members of the Network met at last years four groups weekend at Great Hucklow, the Unitarian Renewal Group introduced us all to some of the less often sung hymns in the new Purple Book. Hymn 103 could be an anthem for the Network! We will be inviting Network members to attend the next 'Groups Weekend' in 2020, though numbers are limited as there will be four or five groups or societies there.

To learn more about the Network please look at our website or Facebook page. Just google Unitarian Earth Spirit Network. There is an application form on the website too. To keep in touch please e mail tony.mcneile@gmail.com.

Tony McNeile

Application for Membership

I would like to join the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network

Print Name.

Address

Post Code

e mail

Phone

I enclose subscription for £15 for one years membership

(cheques payable to Unitarian Earth Spirit Network)

Signed

Date.....

INTERESTING FACTS

- * **The pop group ABBA wore outrageous sequined jumpsuits, hopants and platform heels at the peak of their fame for tax purposes. Swedish law meant costumes could be deducted against tax so long as they were so outrageous they could not possibly be worn on the street.**
- * **In 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in a car with the number plate A 111 118. World War One started as a result of this act. Four years later, World War One ended with an Armistice on the 11-11-18!**
- * **Did you know that human's have lived on Earth for only 0.004% of the planet's history?**
- * **British soldiers John Parr and George Ellison are buried facing each other just 5 yards away in Belgium's Saint Symphorien cemetery. Their final resting places are an extraordinary coincidence as they are the first and last British soldiers to die in combat during the First World War.**
- * **John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the second and third Presidents of the United States, and the Founding Fathers of the Declaration of Independence, died on the same day - July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of American independence!**
- * **Circa 1864, Edwin Booth saved the life of a stranger who fell between a train and its platform in Jersey City. The stranger was Abraham Lincoln's son, Robert. A year later, John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre in Washington. Edwin was John Wilkes Booth's elder brother!**
- * **In 1956 typist Bette Nesmith Graham invented the first correction fluid (liquid paper). She is the mother of musician Michael Nesmith of The Monkees.**

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

REVEREND BOB POUNDER

OLDHAM UNITARIAN CHAPEL & ONE WORLD CAFE



Dear Friends,

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5-6

The Bible is full of inspiration and wisdom. The above proverb describes an attitude that is really at the heart of faith. I've just read a book by Jim Phillips entitled, *The Key to Life: Living in Full Expression*. To be clear, the challenge presented in this book is that our true purpose in life is to discover who we really are. I think most of us know the BBC series, where celebrities are shown the uncovered records and facts about their ancestor's lives. This popular television programme is called, *Who Do You Think You Are?* However, we can only really begin to answer the question of who we think we are by 'seeking the presence within the body.' The psychologist, Carl Jung wrote, "To live a rich life, we have to be in contact with our inner world." Towards the end of his life he stated, "I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures underneath the eternal flux".

When Moses at Mount Horeb found himself in the presence of God, he asked how God should be referred to. God replied, 'I am that I am'. This is the eternal nature of God, who always has been and always will be. The awaiting revelation for each of us is to discover that we are not just the flux (flesh) of this world but that there is something of the eternal within each one of us. Simply put, we are all spiritual beings. If only we could reflect this reality in our own short lives!

The problem appears to be that we find it difficult to accept a truth that ancient scripture takes for granted. In life we are given a label, an identity, or we each give ourselves an identity, we may think we have a reputation to live up to, or perhaps have a need to seek the acceptance of others by conforming to their expectations. But, in the end, none of this really works if we wish to live authentically, if we wish to experience the joy of living, if we want to become the person we really are. We can only do this when we fully understand that love is all there is, that God is love and that we are part of God. When we can trust in God with all our hearts, when we can see our connection to God, then we will know the path of our destination. As Jim Phillips puts it: "To be who you know yourselves to be is to allow the greatness and the glory that is within each one of us to be fully explored". Then, as the title of his book suggests, we will have the key to life, we will be living in full expression.

My best wishes as always,

Bob.