



“If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.”

Henry David Thoreau

Next Meeting at Barrow Castle

Sunday 21 April

10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Worship

Led by Kay

Theme: Awakening

Reflection

I know from experience that the period of recovery from an operation is *not* a good moment to catch up on some serious reading. Therefore I have to confess that Dan Jones' *Crusades* remain unlaunched, and Rory Stewart has been left teetering *On The Precipice* – though I'm looking forward to exploring *Another England* with Caroline Lucas when it is published later this month.

Instead I have been indulging in what are described as “cosy murder mysteries.” While I – like all of us, I hope – regard the reality of murder as abhorrent, these books are not in the realist literary tradition, and the “cosiness” of them lies in the setting rather than the crime. They are usually set in a rural part of England, an England that only exists in our nostalgic imagination. They often feature amateur detectives who outwit the police, and have one universal feature: at the end, the mystery is solved. This *genre* of light reading has been gaining ground recently – think of the popularity of Richard Osman's *Thursday Murder Club* series – perhaps because, as T S Eliot once remarked, human beings can't cope with too much reality.

It is satisfying to be able to solve a puzzle and I usually give the grey cell a daily workout on several (I can't read *all* the time). Whether they require the logic of a jigsawdoku or the lateral thinking of a cryptic crossword, there is a welcome sense of achievement in cracking them. But what of those puzzles than cannot be solved?

The world in which we live has many intractable problems, one of which – the Israel/Gaza conflict – is constantly on our TV screens. The future of Ukraine as an independent state will have no easy solution. Closer to home, it is a pipe-dream that *any* political party can provide a “quick fix” to all the socio-economic issues that have built up over decades, let alone sort out all the current international tensions or place us on a trajectory for nullifying climate change. The best any of them can do is to formulate policies that make progress towards potential solutions. Still, it is right that as stewards of the earth (or our small portion of it) we try to resolve these things.

Yet as spiritual people we accept that there are mysteries. There is a famous Unitarian saying that “there are many questions that cannot be answered, but no answers that cannot be questioned.” In the Orthodox Christian Tradition there is constant use of the term “mystery” with regard to God/Ultimate Reality. We do not expect these mysteries to be solved. We know that we will have to live in a state of unknowing. We may have glimpses of the beyond, or inspiration to follow a particular path to enlightenment, or a feeling of oneness with the divine that cannot be put into words, or even a vague belief that good will triumph. But the puzzle will never be cracked, because it is beyond our capacity to imagine the answer.

I find that strangely reassuring, since it reinforces my faith – my belief that the God of Love and the Miracle of Life are somehow intertwined in our eternal being. For me this is not a “cosy” mystery, but the ultimate one.

Kay

Poem of the Month

The Trees

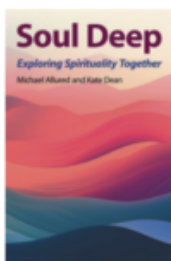
The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too,
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

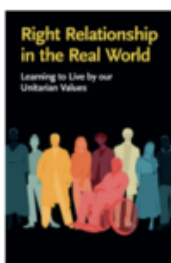
Philip Larkin

Hot off the [Lindsey] press



Soul Deep: Exploring Spirituality Together £10.00 by Michael Allured and Kate Dean

An eight-week course of spiritual exploration for small groups, created to encourage personal reflection and shared insights. Each session plan includes readings and activities, with practical guidance for facilitators, to help participants find meaning and spiritual fulfilment in their daily lives. Michael is the Unitarian minister at Golders Green, and Kate is the minister at Rosslyn Hill Chapel (Hampstead).



Right Relationship in the Real World: £7.00 **Learning to Live by our Unitarian Values** Edited by Jane Blackall

Contributors to the Hucklow Summer Schools in 2022 and 2023 explore ways of nurturing authentic relationships with oneself, with others, with the Earth, and with God; and they consider what it means to be truly real, and how we can make space for others to do likewise. Each chapter ends with questions to encourage congregations to set up small groups to explore the themes more deeply.

Available now from Essex Hall or Amazon or go to <https://uk.bookshop.org/>

Coming Soon

The Annual Assembly of the Western District

will this year be held at Frenchay Chapel, Bristol. It's on Saturday 15th June, from 10.30 am to 4.30 pm. It would be great to have a good turnout from Bath!

Hucklow Summer School: 19th to 26th August 2024

'Sustainable Living: Changing Our Ways and Saving Our World?'

Please note that this year's Summer School runs from Monday to Monday. There is an option once again to sign up for an online-only engagement group, running for two hours daily from Tuesday-Sunday, enabling those who are unable to travel to Great Hucklow in-person to join in remotely with our core small-group activity. Our theme talks will also be livestreamed each morning for our online participants, and recordings will be freely available to all later the same day, via our YouTube channel and podcast stream. 'The real work of planet-saving will be small, humble, and humbling, and (insofar as it involves love) pleasing and rewarding. Its jobs will be too many to count, too many to report, too many to be publicly noticed or rewarded, too small to make anyone rich or famous.' – Wendell Berry

You can register your interest at

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/gaunitarians/1087829>

Finally . . .

Take courage friends.
The way is often hard, the path is never clear,
And the stakes are very high.
Take courage.
For deep down there is another truth.
You are not alone.

Wayne B. Arnason



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Contributions to kay.millard@btinternet.com by the first Sunday of each month, please.

