

# BUF NEWS

August 2023



Always go with your passions. Never ask yourself if it's realistic or not. *Deepak Chopra*

**Next Meeting at Barrow Castle**

**Sunday 20 August, 10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Worship**

***Theme: What are you passionate about?***

**Led by Kay**

## Reflection

There has been much in the press recently about Artificial Intelligence. I have to confess to skipping most of the furore about this, although I know I should try to keep up. Lately I have been working on a website for the Unitarian District. I tried out the “build-your-own” offerings online and got to about Stage 2 before I gave up, baffled. I was comforted by the news that my sister-in-law has now retired, having passed the age to do so a while ago, the deciding factor being the introduction of yet another new computer system. It is indeed difficult to teach an old dog new tricks. Times were when I would have relished the challenge. In my days as an academic publisher we were ahead of the curve on computer typesetting and design for highly technical journals. Times have apparently changed for me.

Talking with my grandchildren while they are off school, I realised that they are usually learning new things not only daily but hourly, which caused me to reflect on the different stages of learning we go through during our lifetimes. Small children are little sponges who absorb everything that comes their way. Formal education is designed to lead them through a process that enables them to add a new tier to what has gone before, and perhaps we keep that ability to build for much of our lives. Then there comes a time when we need to consolidate – to learn from our own life experience and evaluate the knowledge we already have. It is not that we stop learning, but that we learn differently.

Travel to faraway places undoubtedly broadens the mind, but there is also value in staying in our chosen place, and going deeper there, reviewing what lies within. For the past three years I have had to stay close to home because of mobility issues. This hasn't been all negative, though, as I've rediscovered many forgotten interests and enthusiasms.

Last month we considered Life Transitions, and I have been thinking about that since then. Perhaps some transitions are more gradual than others, and we only realise they have happened when we wake up to the fact that mastering the next new system is the last straw. Perhaps, too, we reach a point when we value different kinds of intelligence – for there are many, including common sense, which seems to be increasingly rare – rather than those we needed earlier in our lives. The ability to learn anew becomes secondary to the ability to understand better the existing contents of our minds. Maybe that's what is meant by wisdom, though I wouldn't claim it. Some call it “Spiritual Intelligence.”

I remain unsure what Artificial Intelligence is, though I suspect my computer is already using it extensively, but if you offered me a choice of that or Spiritual Intelligence I would take the latter every time.

*Kay*

## Our Young People

- Iris's poem *Hope* is now on the Worship Words Unitarian Website, so it can be used by any worship leader. <https://worshipwords.unitarian.org.uk/hope/>
- George is awaiting GCSE results – we wish him a good reward for all the hard work he's put in.
- Nancy has been back to Stoke Mandeville to take part in a race at the stadium, and be assessed to take part in paralympic events.

***International Youth Day is on 12 August***

**There is an interfaith youth weekend at Ammerdown from 8-10 September – cost £50**

## Poem of the Month

### ***The Guest House***

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honourably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.  
Be grateful for whatever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

*Rumi*

## Bath Interfaith Group

There will be a pilgrimage walk round the south side of Bath on the afternoon of Sunday 10 September. See <https://www.facebook.com/bathinterfaith/> for further information.

## Words to Ponder

What exactly is an angel? Here is how I suggest we can tell if we bump into one. Angels deny that they *are* angels. They don't all have wings or halos – those are only the ones who like to dress up. Angels don't expect anything in return for services rendered. They don't always tell us what we want to hear . . . Angels aren't all called Michael or Gabriel. We might even be angels and not realise it . . . Yes, angels are here among us, giving us gifts beyond measure. Gifts of humour when we think the sun will never shine again; affection when we believe we are unlovable; inspiration when our life force wanes; confidentiality when we can't tell anyone else our secrets; forgiveness when we so sorely need it; advice when we don't know which direction to turn; frankness when we try to tell less than the truth about who we really are; and the gift of just being there when we are so very alone.

*Don Beaudreault, Unitarian Universalist Minister*

## And Finally

Eternal Spirit,

Be thou a bright flame before me,

Be thou a guiding star above me,

Be thou a smooth path below me,

And be a kindly shepherd behind me,

Today, tonight, and for ever.

*Translated from the Gaelic by Alexander Carmichael*



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