

Fellow Seekers

December 2024

Monthly News and Views from the Bath Unitarian Fellowship for its Members and Friends



Next Meeting at Barrow Castle

**Sunday 15 December
10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Worship**

Theme: Advent

Led by Rev Liz

***There will be a collection of gifts
for a local food bank***

Reflection: December

We are in the darkest four weeks of the year. I often find myself looking forward to the Solstice as the start of the Festive Season. I really *want* to see the light growing again. It doesn't surprise me that so many religions have Festivals of Light, or that the theme of light plays its part in the Christmas celebrations. Originally they were intertwined with the Sol Invictus ceremonies of Roman times. Now the lights are in the streets of towns and cities, shop windows and places of entertainment, as well as Churches. They herald a time of consumerism as well as faith.

In our "foggy little island, north-east of Ushant" we have been battered by storms and cold.* I am grateful for the warmth and solidity of my home, where I feel safe and comfortable, and I am relieved that I need not worry about the cost of heating. As I have said before, I have more than enough to live on, and if that isn't riches I don't know what is. This is surely the time of year when we should be able to settle down by the fire (with or without a book, good or otherwise) and have a hot, filling meal for supper. I am sad that so many people don't have that basic comfort.

In the wider world some don't even have anywhere to call "home" – in Gaza, of course, but let's not forget the Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon . . . and in Europe, Ukraine. So many people seem intent on war, for what end . . . Power? Resources? The elimination of those who dare to differ? The settlement of old scores? What can possibly justify the human misery that results from war? The pain, injury, death, displacement, trauma, destruction, and grief that goes on long after the bombing has stopped. The message of Peace is as badly needed now as ever, but also seems to be as far away as ever.

We are in the last month of a year that has been dominated by politics, both here and abroad. Important elections have been held around the world. The historian in me is a keen observer of politics (after all, it's history in the making), though my active involvement is limited. Yet I have listened in vain for an inspirational voice, a prophetic voice, even the voice of an authoritative parent saying: "Stop that *now!*" Where is the word that will change the world?

I purchase presents, write cards, visit friends, make charitable donations, and anticipate decorating my home and listening to carols – the usual preparations for the Season. Above all I look forward to the joy of a Christmas holiday spent with those I love. This will be a brief time when the darkness can temporarily be set aside, and we immerse ourselves in the annual reminder that *hope is present in the mystery that is God*. Hope of peace, love, and justice.

May we all live in that hope as the spinning world tips on its axis and becomes the New Year.

Kay

*From one of the *Hornblower* novels of C.S.Forrester. Don't ask me to remember which, I haven't read them since childhood!

Poem of the Month

Advent Calendar

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

Rowan Williams

Unitarian & Free Christian General Assembly 2025

Dates: Saturday 12th to Monday 14th April 2025

Location: Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel

Bath Interfaith Group

There is an interesting article from Bath Quakers on the exchange of views on science and religion between the Bath Imam and the Bishop of Bath and Wells. You can view at https://bathquakers.org/2024/11/18/bath-interfaith-group-hosts-lively-discussion-on-faith-and-science/?fbclid=IwY2xjawHD-qBleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHVgYhnbZIL8414_lenp9bwk_g520JGEsQLoArNycBbMC36AUL-3hNWNocQ_aem_cetam68QZa-ssifPw1eUIQ

Winter Solstice 2024

9.21 am on Saturday 21 December. You can watch online from Stonehenge on <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/things-to-do/solstice/winter-solstice-2024/>

Words to Ponder

Presents are the sorts of things that fit on lists, complete with size and colour preference. Presents are the sorts of things that we are smart enough to ask for. Gifts are altogether different. We don't usually think to ask for them, perhaps because we think we don't deserve them, or don't want to risk expressing the need. Maybe we don't even recognise the need ourselves. Gifts differ from presents because no matter what form they take they always represent something greater, something deeper, something more enduring; they are about things like love, respect, and affirmation.

From *A Temporary State of Grace*, by David S. Blanchard

And Finally . . .



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Published by the Bath Unitarian Fellowship, c/o 26 Fountain Court, Westbury BA13 3JY.
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