



**“When we awaken to the call of beauty, we become aware of new ways of being in the world.”**  
From *Divine Beauty* by John O’Donohue

**Next Meeting for Worship at Barrow Castle**  
**Sunday 26 February**  
**10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Service**

***Theme: Beauty as a Spiritual Gateway***  
**Led by Peter**

## Reflection

We are emerging from the darkest quarter of the year. Winter is not yet over, but there are tentative signs of approaching spring, the days are a little lighter, and the sun has a bit more strength, and Rev Liz has reported seeing a new-born lamb. The first month of the year has finally passed (it always seems to have many more than 31 days) and although we may still face winter storms we can console ourselves that they will probably be short-lived.

We all have dark times in our lives, too, whether they coincide with the cycle of the seasons or not. During those periods we welcome the least glimmer of light, and the merest hint of warmth, to ease the burden of whatever causes us to suffer – physically, mentally, spiritually. A caring presence can make a world of difference when we feel alone, and a small sign of hope can help us to go on. The “dark night of the soul” comes to all of us at some point, and has been addressed by many spiritual teachers in their wisdom writings.

This year, for reasons that are complex and range from world events to local decisions, many people are literally facing cold and dark times because heat and light is unaffordable, and hunger because of soaring food-price inflation. Food banks are stretched to their limits, and many community centres are offering warm space. Unitarian HQ staff members Simon Bland and Lizzie Kingston-Harrison have talked to The Village Halls Podcast about the Warm Space being offered in Framlingham in Suffolk by local groups, including Framlingham Unitarian Chapel, where Lizzie is a member. [Ctrl+Click here to listen to the podcast in full \(Episode 22\)](#).

*Kay*

My copy of Robert Frost’s poetry is coming apart at the binding, but at least that tells me where my favourites are. This is one of them.

### For Once, Then, Something

Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs  
Always wrong to the light, so never seeing  
Deeper down in the well than where the water  
Gives me back in a shining surface picture  
Me myself in the summer heaven, godlike,  
Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.  
*Once*, when trying with chin against a well-curb,  
I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,  
Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,  
Something more of the depths – and then I lost it.  
Water came to rebuke the too clear water.  
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple  
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,  
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?  
Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

## It's Not Far Away:

### Malvern Festival of Ideas 3-5 March 2023

Malvern Festival of Ideas is a multidisciplinary festival of ideas that takes place in Malvern, Worcestershire. It is a themed weekend of talks, discussion and activities. The founder and organiser is Andrew Webb of Evesham Unitarians and Malvern Transformers and the festival organising team includes several other Unitarians.

This year's speakers include poets Michael Rosen and Benjamin Zephaniah, scientist Professor Alice Roberts, and former First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones.

The title for the 2023 festival is *As Time Goes By*, which explores the concept of being a good ancestor as well as examining how we handle the legacies handed down to us. Can we become good ancestors and work towards creating a different future from the trajectory we are on now? How do we handle the legacy handed down to us? What are the issues we need to reconcile ourselves with? How do we see ourselves in the history of life on earth? What are the timescales we should be working to? For more information <http://www.malvernfestivalofideas.org.uk/>

## And Finally . . .

As we approach the first anniversary of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, a prayer for peace and understanding:

God of kindness and compassion,  
I throw wide open the windows of my heart,  
So that the peace of your presence  
May pour out in all directions,  
Showering its blessing upon all the earth.  
May this benediction heal the wounds of war,  
And bind up the bitterness of painful divisions.  
As the blessing of your presence encircles the earth  
May it awaken in all people a desire  
To serve each other in humble and loving ways.  
May it call proud hearts to gentleness,  
Inflame those hearts that have grown cold,  
And reawaken the weary of soul.

*Edward Hays*



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