



“Use this time to discover the extra-ordinary that lies in the depths of all things.”

From *Tides and Seasons* by David Adam

Next Meeting at Barrow Castle

Sunday 16 July

10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Worship

Theme: Life Transitions

Led by Judy

Reflection

Many of us will be looking forward to going away on holiday in the near future. The long breaks of school, university and college dictate that we are approaching the peak of the great annual migration to tourist hotspots. Family pets are already casting anxious looks at suitcases.

I will not be among those heading leisurewards. When you are retired you can go off-peak. But in any case I have begun to question how much I want to take part in modern tourism. As a resident in Bath for many years I have long been aware of the effects of mass tourism, but it appears the rest of the world is now waking up to its damaging effects – not to be overdramatic, its “social pollution”. From sunset beaches littered with detritus to cities crammed with so many visitors that their infrastructure cannot cope, tourism has become an environmental problem. For countries like Spain, where the economy is dependent on tourism, there is also a fine income/expenditure balance.

Of course we all have places we want to visit, at least once in our lives. I have been to Crete, to visit the ancient site of Knossos, the centre of the Minoan civilisation – a wish I have had since I read my first book on archaeology in my teens. I have walked around the Alhambra Palace, and stood eye-to-eye with the Mona Lisa (she didn't smile back). Others I may never get to – the walled medieval town of Carcassonne, the Cathar fortress, has too many steep cobbled streets for me to cope with now. But there is one that I could easily visit, but probably will not: the Matisse Chapel at Vence in southern France.

I have long been a fan of Matisse, and would love to sit in the chapel he designed for the Dominicans at Vence. I have seen the pictures, and marvelled at the light and space they portray. But I would not be sitting alone. Visitors to the chapel arrive by the coachload, and at best I would have a few minutes in a crowded space. The same is true of many places on the tourist trail, whether churches, homes of the famous, or simply beauty spots. One of my first experiences of this was at Mozart's house in Salzburg, where I felt as if I was on a crowded tube train. So perhaps it's better to leave it to the imagination.

I think it's important here to draw a distinction between travelling and tourism. To travel is to journey, and the journey is fundamentally important. Noting what lies between one stage and another, meeting people along the route, resting overnight in strange places, enjoying food that is unlike our usual fare – that is to travel! Becoming part of an unknown society for even a short time, finding ourselves in new environments, and getting to know ourselves anew when all that is familiar has gone – that is to travel!

Of course travel and tourism can overlap, and hopefully they do. And leisure is well-deserved by people who have worked hard and need a break. But whether travellers or tourists, seekers of knowledge or pleasure (or both), let us tread lightly on the places we visit, leaving no more than a footprint in the sand.

Kay

Bath Interfaith Event

Monday 31st July, 7:30-9:30pm

The Cecil Fry room, The Chocolate Quarter, Trajectus Way, Keynsham BS31 2GJ

Dorothy House Hospice training on Spiritual End of Life care, delivered by Dave Smith, Chaplain and Spiritual Care coordinator at Dorothy House Hospice. Please note that for this event, spaces are limited to 12, awarded on a 'first come, first served' basis. Full details from Kay.

Poem of the Month

The Chapel by R S Thomas

A little aside from the main road,
becalmed in a last-century greyness,
there is the chapel, ugly, without the appeal
to the tourist to stop his car
and visit it. The traffic goes by,
and the river goes by, and quick shadows
of clouds, too, and the chapel settles
a little deeper into the grass.

But here once, on an evening like this,
in the darkness that was about
his hearers, a preacher caught fire
and burned steadily before them
with a strange light, so that they saw
the splendour of the barren mountains
about them, and sang their amens
fiercely, narrow but saved
in a way that men are not now.

District Briefing

- Sheila Evans has completed her term of office as President. She has done much to boost the District after Covid, and been a joy to work with. She is succeeded by Fran Pitt (Taunton).
- The Annual Assembly at Cullompton was well-attended, especially in the afternoon when Rev Liz and Rev Maria interweaved worship and workshop on eco-spirituality.
- The District is developing its own green credentials – instead of a bouquet of flowers we now present honoured guests with a token from the Woodland Trust, the price of which covers the planting of a broad-leaf tree.
- We have now amended the Constitution so that meetings can be held by zoom, if necessary, but we still like to meet in person.

All Welcome

At Moretonhampstead Chapel

Saturday 22 July 2023 at 3 pm

Annual Service led by Rev Kate Whyman

Anyone wishing to join Gavin Howell for lunch beforehand please e-mail him on ghowell@unitarian.org.uk

Retreat! Retreat!

There is still time to sign up for the Annual District Retreat at Hilfield Friary in Dorset. This will run from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 October. It is a great way to restore the spirit, try out new crafts, eat with (and get to know) the Friars, all in a beautiful rural setting in the company of fellow Unitarians. Contact John Harley for details on rev.johnharley@gmail.com.

Finally . . .

Lord, each day brings . . .
Paths to discover
Possibilities to choose
People to encounter
Peace to seek
Promises to fulfil
Perplexities to ponder
Power to strengthen
Pointers to guide
Pardon to accept
Praises to sing
And a Presence to proclaim.



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