

BUF NEWS

March 2022



Next Meeting

27 March

Barrow Castle

**10.30 Coffee,
11.15 Service**

Theme

Mothering

Led by Judy

“Mother God, thank you that when your spirit is at work, she always produces in the commonplace something that is inspiring.” From *Laughter, Silence, and Shouting* by Kathy Keay

Reflection

Among the many terrible scenes of war in Ukraine are those of mothers with young children, and elderly people, fleeing to safety from the bombing of their homes. Almost overnight the Eastern European nations are watching a refugee crisis unfolding before their eyes. But they are doing much more than look – they are providing emergency help and support, with the aid of worldwide charities which are sending money, trained personnel, and supplies. This is a classic reminder that “God is not in the event – God is in the response to the event.”

One of my childhood memories goes back to 1956, when the Hungarian uprising was crushed by the USSR, and refugees came to the UK. In our village the WI mobilised, and set to work knitting blankets and collecting clothes, toys for children, books, and anything useful that could be spared and shared. Because we had an elderly van to get around in, my father was roped in to help deliver these to a local army camp which was being used as temporary housing. On one occasion I was allowed to go with him. I have a vivid memory of a gaunt-looking man whose clothes were too big for him, staring out across the fields. When I asked my father why we were doing this, expecting him to explain what had happened in this Hungary everyone was suddenly talking about, he simply said: “Because they need help.”

There always have been, and probably always will be, people who desperately seek refuge in a frightening and dangerous world. Hopefully there will also be people who respond, in whatever ways they can, simply because they need help.

Kay

Solidarity with Ukraine



2 March 2022

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

We condemn the unjustifiable attack on Ukraine and call for an immediate withdrawal of Russian forces and for an immediate ceasefire.

We urge the UK Government and devolved administrations to offer whatever humanitarian aid is possible to prevent catastrophe in the region.

Safe corridors for the passage of civilian refugees are now an urgent priority and we urge the UK Government and devolved administrations to offer safe haven and refuge to those fleeing this war.

Warfare creates terrible suffering, reinforces social inequality and causes incalculable environmental damage. We resolve to prioritise peace and peace-making in our Unitarian worship and culture.

This statement was issued by the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches on 2 March 2022.

A message from our President, Anne Mills:

“As President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, I endorse the sentiments of horror, apprehension, and fear aroused by the recent Russian attack on Ukraine. On behalf of us all, I send messages of solidarity, sympathy and support to the people of this war-torn country; we are thinking of them and praying for them, in their need; and we are glad that their neighbouring countries are freely offering them help and care, in their suffering. Many of our chapels are organising vigils, which we may join, either in person or in spirit, and I know that our prayers will bring encouragement and reassurance to Ukraine. Please remember that we may be able to help, tangibly, by donating funds; Unitarians have long supported the Red Cross as a way of providing relief in disasters, raising over £115,000 in the last ten years, and [you can donate online to support humanitarian work in Ukraine here](#). Let us all help, in whatever ways we can; no contribution is too small or insignificant. Thank you for your empathy, your efforts – and your hopes.”

With very best wishes,

Anne.”

The following poem comes from a book recommended to me by Rev Elizabeth – The Heart's Time by Janet Morley – a poem a day for Lent and Easter. The poets range from George Herbert to D H Lawrence, with several by R S Thomas, so definitely my kind of territory. This is one I have only just discovered. It continues the theme of "trees" that we considered at our last meeting.

Lent

Lent is a tree without blossom, without leaf,
Barer than the blackthorn in its winter sleep,
All unadorned. Unlike Christmas which decrees
The setting-up, the dressing-up of trees,
Lent is a taking down, a stripping bare,
A starkness after all has been withdrawn
Of surplus and superfluous,
Leaving no hiding place, only an emptiness
Between black branches, a most precious space
Before the leaf, before the time of flowers;
Lest we should see only the leaf, the flower,
Lest we should miss the stars.

Jean M. Watt

As many of you know, Rev Elizabeth has been down with Covid. We all hope it has not been too bad for her, and that she will soon feel better.

Meanwhile, Rev Lindy is home from hospital following surgery, and is convalescing with the aid of Barney the Butler. We are all very relieved that she is on the mend, and hope her recovery continues apace.

Love and Hugs to them both

The Road to Easter

In the Christian tradition the 40-day period of Lent is marked by fasting before the arrival of Easter. Whether Unitarians follow this pattern or not is an individual choice. In an age when food is plentiful all year round fasting has largely been replaced by reflection. Some chosen practices are:

- Decluttering – finding an item each day that is no longer wanted or needed, then donating them all to a charity shop.
- Gardening – preparing the earth for the new growth of spring.
- Reading – there are a number of prayers and poems designed for Lent which can be bought in book form or found online.
- Meditation – even if this is a regular practice, its focus can be directed towards Lent for the duration.

Kay

Our Hearts are with Nancy – and her family

We have all been reeling from the news that one of our young people has suffered a rare and disabling stroke. Her grandmother, Judy, and mother, Katherine, have sent news of her progress.

Nancy has had a spinal stroke and it has left her with paralysed legs and she is unlikely to be able to walk normally again. She is in the Bristol Children's Hospital and having wonderful treatment and support. She is keeping her spirits up and thinking positively about the future. She is a very brave and impressive girl. She should have been at an international netball match in Bath this week but of course couldn't go. However, Tracey Neville (the International Netball Coach and medal-winner) sent her a video message. There has also been a big fundraiser for her on Just Giving which gives much more detail of her struggles. The link is <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/supportfornancy>

Judy



I wanted to share an update on how we are doing in hospital. We are still so overwhelmed by how kind everyone is being, it's such a lot to process. Today Nancy had a bit more energy and was able to spend more time in a wheelchair. She had a great physio session working on upper arm strength. She also got to meet Buddy the therapy dog who comes to the hospital once a week.

Katherine

On the Move

We have found a lovely house in the Camden area. Our offer has been accepted and the sellers have found somewhere with no chain, so fingers crossed! Meanwhile we're inundated with paperwork and planning. We'll be very sorry to leave our flat, its location is wonderful and we have many happy memories of living here, but we have outgrown it.

Tim

And Finally . . .

For Peace

*As the fever of day calms towards twilight
May all that is strained in us come to ease.*

*We pray for all who suffered violence today,
May an unexpected serenity surprise them.*

*For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
May their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history.*

*That those who make riches from violence and war
Might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost.*

*That we might see through our fear of each other
A new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression.*

*That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
Might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.*

*That the wolf might lie down with the lamb,
That our swords be beaten into ploughshares.*

*And no hurt or harm be done
Anywhere along the holy mountain.*

By John O'Donohue, from *Benedictus*

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