

BUF News March 2023



“Belonging so fully to yourself that you’re willing to stand alone is a wilderness — an untamed, unpredictable place of solitude and searching.” – Brené Brown

Next Meeting at Barrow Castle

Sunday 26 March

10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Worship

Theme: Innocence

Led by Rev Maria

Important – Please Note

We have had to make some adjustments to our Meetings Schedule between April and July. The following is the revised programme, changes in bold. Please update your diaries.

23 April	Theme: <i>The Risen Spring</i>	Leader: Kay
21 May	Theme to be Announced	Leader: Rev Liz
25 June	Theme to be Announced	Leader: Tim
16 July	Theme to be Announced	Leader: Judy

Reflection

Last month we had an excellent service on Beauty, and I was struck by how many of us pulled out words from *Divine Beauty* by John O'Donohue. It is no secret that I favour the Celtic religions as a source of spiritual inspiration, and perhaps it should not be surprising that fellow Unitarians rate him highly as well. Although we have no official reading list we do tend to home in on the same writers, either of poetry or prose.

Sometimes I wonder idly what might have been the religion of the whole British Isles if there hadn't been a decision in favour of the Roman Church at the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD. (Yes, I know, I really should get out more.) It could have meant fewer (if any) stand-offs between Christianity and Paganism (the religion of nature); maybe no need for a Protestant Reformation, instead a more gradual evolution into modernity; and little need for dissent, except at the outer edges of the spectrum of belief. This is only speculation. We cannot know, because another road was taken a long time ago. We are where we are, as a rather irritating truism says.

Part of where we are now is with a divided Ireland. This Easter will mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, which allowed for power-sharing in a devolved government in Northern Ireland and a soft border between the Province and the Republic. Thus ended most of the armed aggression that had blighted the previous 30 years. That the accord should have been threatened by the Brexit Protocol for Northern Ireland has been profoundly disturbing. Although in much of the UK religion has lost its grip on the population, in NI it is still a totem of the tribe for many. At the time of writing it is uncertain whether proposed new arrangements will be accepted and take the heat out of the situation there.

Ultimately a reunited Ireland with a shared Celtic heritage may become a reality. That is not for me to decide, but the Irish people of both North and South. Meanwhile I simply pray for peace to continue.

Kay

Poem of the Month

Continuing the Celtic theme, I have loved the poetry of W B Yeats since I was introduced to it by an English Teacher at the age of 16. This is, to me, an appropriate poem for Lent, a way of going into the wilderness but without the harshness.

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

W B Yeats

Marshfield Unitarian Chapel Update

The Bath Fellowship has been peripatetic over the years. Originally meeting in members' homes, we then met at the Bath Quaker Meeting House. When that went up for sale, Tim found the Chapel in Marshfield, then owned by the Royal British Legion, and we met there for several years, with the added bonus of Sunday lunch in a local pub. However, the Legion also put the building up for sale, and a planning application that would have destroyed the interior was fought by an alliance of Fellowship members and local residents. Rod was instrumental in researching the special features of the Chapel and extending the listing to aspects of the interior. The building was subsequently sold to an artist as a gallery for large works, and thus kept its original character. Now it has been sensitively converted to an unusual home, and has again been sold. Tim has been contacted by the new owner for historical information. The restoration can be seen at <https://www.purplebricks.co.uk/property-for-sale/3-bedroom-character-property-marshfield-1025637#/>

After Marshfield we tried one or two (not very successful) venues in Bath before settling at Barrow Castle, courtesy of Peter and Judy. My thanks to Tim for information on the latest Marshfield Chapel incarnation.

Kay

Cherishing the Earth - Nourishing the Spirit

This new book, which will be launched at the National Annual Meetings in April, presents a range of Unitarian responses to the global ecological crisis. Contributors include ministers, lay people, and children; their insights range from the prophetic and political to the practical and intensely personal. The chapters are interspersed with poems, prayers, and short rituals. Each ends with questions for reflection and discussion, providing a resource for study by individuals and small groups.

Rev Maria was formerly the Minister at Horsham, and now lives in Stroud. Several of our young people contributed to this book. Available from April – watch the GA website for purchase details.



Maria has agreed to conduct a session exploring eco-spirituality at the District Annual Meeting on 17 June in Cullompton, Devon. So even if you aren't going to the GA, you can hear her there (details from Kay). She will be working with Rev Liz to produce worship for the day as well. Thanks to both of them for what promises to be an inspiring afternoon.

March is . . . Women's History Month

We have our own tradition of women's involvement in our denomination at all levels. We also have *Unitarian Women: A Legacy of Dissent*, edited by Ann Peart, available from booksellers or Essex Hall.

Also in March

8th International Women's Day

"There is no work in the world . . . that a woman cannot do as efficiently as a man if she is given the same training and opportunity." Gertrude von Petzold

17th St Patrick's Day

"May the road rise with you, may the wind be always at your back, may the sun shine warm upon your face, may the rain fall softly on your fields, and until we meet again may you be held in the hollow of God's hand." Traditional Irish Blessing

19th Mothers' Day

"The wind whipped through the needles of the Mother Tree, but she stood steadfast . . . She would be here for hundreds of years, guiding the recovery, giving it her all, long after I was gone." Suzanne Simard *Finding the Mother Tree*

20th March Vernal Equinox

At 9.24 pm – watch live at Stonehenge on <https://www.stonehengeskycape.co.uk/>
"That still centre where the spinning world sleeps on its axis . . ." Dorothy L Sayers

And Finally

We have missed St David's Day on 1 March, so . . .

David told his followers: 'Do the little things you have seen me do' . . .

. . . help us all to do the 'little things' that make a really big difference.



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