

BUF News May 2023



"Beautiful as a dandelion-blossom golden in the green grass, this life can be."

Edna St. Vincent Millay

**Next Meeting at Barrow Castle
Sunday 21 May 2023
10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Worship
Theme: Showing up for Justice
Led by Rev Liz**



Reflection

I am not a “royal watcher” but I did sit through most of the Coronation on TV. I am not a Republican either, or I would have avoided it on principle. I am one of the many who simply prefer a Head of State who is outside politics, but who has little time for all the celebrity froth of the non-working royals. On this occasion there was also a tug from my long-standing interest in ritual, especially rites of passage. They don’t get any more splendid or complex than the coronation of a British monarch. I stand in awe of all those who organised, choreographed, and enacted this magnificent spectacle.

The splendour was controversial. At a time when so many people are using Food Banks, was it justifiable? Views on that will differ, not least because a monarch can reign without being crowned at all. Coronation has been customary for over a thousand years, however, and the custom prevailed this time, perhaps in the hope that a celebration would lift people’s spirits. And within the coronation there is the anointing that, historically, has placed the King or Queen in a special relationship with God, a theme that recurred throughout, so it had an additional purpose. Essentially it is a religious seal on an existing legal reality.

For me the service was far too Anglican to enable me to feel spiritually engaged (well, it would be, wouldn’t it). I did find myself responding positively to Justin Welby’s sermon on the theme of Service, and wondered if he was quietly enjoying himself at the expense of the members of the Cabinet present! Generally, however, as a Unitarian I found its religious nature rather narrow. I had forgotten (if I ever knew) that the Coronation Oath is almost exclusively about being Protestant and upholding the Established Church. There was a nod to Other Faiths on the way out, but it was like a short footnote in a long book. Nevertheless, representatives of other Christian denominations played a part, and the congregation was composed of a cross-section of people, not only those in high office. So although the symbolism and ritual were traditional, even archaic, changes had been made to update the ceremony. Even an institution as old as the monarchy evolves. But was it *meaningful* in contemporary, secularised Britain?

In essence a rite of passage is an act of transformation. Many of us have experienced it at a wedding, a graduation, recognition as a Minister, or any celebration of growth into adulthood. One status is replaced by another. The individual enters a “liminal” space where the old has been left behind but the new has not yet been conferred. Something happens to effect that transition, and the individual emerges into a different phase of life.

Unitarians have personalised rites of passage for generations now, believing that they need to hold deep meaning for the individual rather than owe their potency to the pronouncement of formulaic words (except those required by law) in order to effect personal change, and perhaps I am now so steeped in that Unitarian culture that I find anything else too easy to criticise. I sincerely hope that the coronation *was* deeply meaningful for King Charles and Queen Camilla. After all, it was their day.

Kay

Poem of the Month

Recently I was driven to Bath by a friend, after almost a month indoors. I expected to see the trees and hedgerows fully green, but had reckoned without this year's slow arrival of spring. Perhaps that is why Larkin's poem seems apt.

The Trees

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too.
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

Philip Larkin

Congratulations

The Malmesbury Junior Citizen's Award 2023 was presented to Rhoslyn Millard on 27th April, for her voluntary work with Malmesbury Museum to help organise and launch an art exhibition featuring the work of local people.

Also in May

Friday 26th Shavuot (The Jewish Feast of Weeks)

Jews celebrate the coming of the Torah to Moses, seven weeks after Passover.

Sunday 28th Pentecost

Christians celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Disciples of Jesus.

Unitarians for Climate Justice join Extinction Rebellion's 'The Big One'



On Saturday 22 April 2023, 'Unitarians for Climate Justice' took part in Extinction Rebellion's ['The Big One'](#) peaceful protests in central London. 'Unitarians for Climate Justice' is a newly formed group for Unitarians concerned about climate change. Around 25 of them travelled to London to take part in today's protests alongside other faith groups, from Unitarian congregations across the UK including London, Brighton, Cardiff, Bristol, Hinckley, Horsham, Godalming & Framlingham. The March included singing and chanting and culminated in a "Die In" outside the Houses of Parliament. To find out more about the group, please contact Lizzie Kingston-Harrison, the GA's Congregational Connections Lead.

And Finally

Creator of the Seasons, give to me

Hours of Worship, Days of Holiness, Years of Love, and Eons of Eternity



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