

BUF NEWS

November 2023



“Faith is what is left after all your beliefs have been blown to hell.”

Ram Dass

Next Meeting

Sunday 19 November at Barrow Castle

10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Worship

Led by Elizabeth

Theme: “Keeping Faith”

Reflection

Sometimes I wonder what it must be like to live at the Equator, where every day of the year has 12 hours of dark and 12 hours of light. There is a balance about it that appeals to me, like the Yin/Yang Symbol, but there is also a feeling that losing the seasons would be too high a price to pay. As we enter the darkest quarter of the year in Southern England it is tempting to seek sun and warmth in lighter climes, but also tempting to settle down indoors and appreciate how fortunate we are in having comfortable shelter from the cold and damp, even while we look forward to passing the Winter Solstice and searching for early signs of spring.

The dark and light times in our lives don't always follow the seasons. We can be grieving over loss at blossom time or enjoying the Festive Season at midwinter with friends and family, for example. Personal circumstances are more likely to affect us at any time of year than the amount of sunlight (although I realise that people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder have a specific problem). But the state of the world also has its effect, and at present the world seems to be going through a very dark period. There is war in Ukraine and Gaza to name but two; there are extremities of drought and flood, causing famine; and there are dangerous levels of toxicity in our oceans, atmosphere, and land. How can we find balance in ourselves when the world is in such an unbalanced state?

Perhaps we can't. Perhaps the best we can do is to find glimmers of light in the darkness, to keep hoping and praying that peace and justice will come to our world, and to have faith that loving human kindness will prevail over suffering. I struggle to do that, and I'm not always successful. Yet I am heartened by some words of Maya Angelou that are apt for the prevailing November weather: "Even the heaviest storm eventually runs out of rain." I'm not ready to give up on the power of faith, hope, and love. Not yet.

Kay



Bath Interfaith Events

Sunday 12th November 2023, 3.30 to 5.30pm, In the Beech Room, Weston Hub, Penn Hill Road, Weston, Bath BA1 4EH. Vicki Burke: *Facing our Collective Shadow; An Interfaith Conversation for Positive Change*.

Wednesday 15 November 2023, 7.30-8.30pm: Zoom organised by Ammerdown: **But why interfaith?** More details from Kay for anyone wishing to attend.

Sunday 19 November 2023: Prayer Vigil outside Bath Abbey – details to follow, please let Kay know if you are interested in attending.

A Prayer in a Poem

O Let That Red

This Autumn day
the air is ablaze
with reddening:
hips and haws and holly berries.
There's the reddening too
of bright leaves
still clinging defiantly.
O let that red
remind us
of the beautiful life-force
that streams through
the body of every living being.
O let that red
remind us -
re – mind us –
that too, too much blood
has already been lost;
that too, too many
bloodied bodies lie
in ancient holy lands.
O let that red
wake us
from the nightmare of agony
that condemns generation
after generation to repeat
destruction and death.
O let that life-giving red
help us to remember
our humanity, and the beauty
of our love,
and our love of life and beauty.
O let that red
be in all our hearts.

Elizabeth Birtles
22 October 2023
Stroud

On Retreat

'I can't wait to high five a Friar!' And she did!

In October the Western Union held its first retreat specifically for families from across the district. It was a bit of an experiment and came after many months of consultation, exploration, and ponderings into what might be possible.

It was a great success. The theme was, *Where the wild things are: Our wildness and the wildness out there*. We played games, went on walks, and made art. The venue was The Hilfield Friary in Dorset. Apart from its stunning location, the venue offered a unique opportunity for families to experience life as part of an intentional community renowned for its hospitality. See below for my picture gallery.

Gavin

[WU Intergenerational Retreat | Flickr](#)

A Closing Prayer

We did not want it easy, God,
But we did not contemplate
That it would be quite this hard,
This long, this lonely.
So, if we are to be turned inside out
And upside down
With even our pockets shaken
Just to check what's rattling
And left behind,
We pray that you will keep faith with us,
And we with you,
Holding our hands as we weep,
Giving us strength to continue,
And showing us beacons along the way
To becoming new.

Anna McKenzie



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