

Fellow Seekers

October 2024

Monthly News and Views from the Bath Unitarian Fellowship for its Members and Friends



“We build too many walls and not enough bridges” – Isaac Newton

Next Meeting at Barrow Castle

**Sunday 20 October
10.45 Coffee, 11.15 Service**

Theme: Taking Hold and Letting Go

Led by Judy

Reflection: Floods

I don't often recall much about my dreams, let alone analyse them. I rely on that first delicious early morning gulp of coffee to drive them back where they belong. However, I occasionally notice themes. Perhaps it's not surprising, given the recent torrential rain, that a couple of times lately I've dreamed of floods. This has led me to consider the symbolism of such natural events.

Unleashed water is dangerous, can be life-threatening, and destructive of homes and infrastructure. It is very powerful, and alongside earthquakes is probably twinned with the wind as the greatest force in nature. Only man-made nuclear power has outdone it on the wipe-out scale, though in the prehistoric past meteor strikes may have been world changing. Nevertheless, flooding has been a recurrent human experience, as shown by geology and archaeology. And it is to be feared.

It's no surprise, then, that many religious traditions include flood myths. (I am using the term "myths" in its original meaning of a story designed to make sense of otherwise inexplicable events, not as "wholly untrue".) Any of us who were raised in the Judaeo-Christian tradition will be familiar with the story of the flood in Genesis, when Noah and his family rescued animals by building a large Ark. (We are probably also familiar with the cartoons showing Unicorns watching it disappearing across the horizon and asking, "Was it today?") The Genesis story is very similar to the Babylonian story of Gilgamesh, and the ancient Greek flood myths recounted by Plato. In the Hindu tradition floods are regarded as an integral part of the life cycle of the earth itself, a sweeping away of the old in order for the new to flourish.

How are these myths to be interpreted? Islam claims that the Prophet Noah was spared from the deluge because he was obedient to Allah, and this is one basis for interpretation. But it doesn't sit easily with modern observers who watch on their TV screens as whole communities are devastated, with people dying simply because they were in the way, irrespective of their beliefs or lifestyles. The randomness of natural disasters has long provided an objection to the idea of an Act of God to cleanse the world, even though water is a symbol of the cleansing of the soul. Another interpretation – and perhaps one more acceptable to modern minds – is the "response" theory. Noah succeeded in saving life because he listened and took action.

As I write, the people of Florida are clearing up following the brutal arrival of a hurricane; fortunately they were forewarned by modern technology. It is probable that the increase in the number and ferocity of storms is an aspect of climate change – along with the rise in sea levels that will soon obliterate low-lying islands and coastal areas. I suggest that, like Noah, we should listen and take action. After all, "God has no hands but ours."

Kay

Poem of the Month

Returning Home

The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light, and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds leaving my track on many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said `Here art thou!'

The question and the cry `Oh, where?' melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance `I am!'

Rabindranath Tagore

Bath Interfaith events

Sunday 20th October 2024, from 3pm:

To mark the Week of Prayers for World Peace, in St Michael's Within, St John's Foundation Courtyard, Chapel Court, Bath BA1 1SQ. Prayers for peace across all peoples and nations in the Chapel – you are welcome to bring a reading, song or prayer to share, and join us for refreshments afterwards.

Thursday 14th November 2024, 7:00 pm for 7:30pm:

The Bishop of Bath & Wells and the Imam of Bath Mosque, in conversation on the theme of Science and Religion between Christianity and Islam. PLEASE NOTE: the venue for this has been changed: it will now be held in St Michael's Without, Broad Street Bath BA1 5LJ. Please book via Eventbrite. Café open from 7pm.

Note from Editor: One year on from the Hamas attack on Israel, there is an interesting article on Zionism at <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/religion/2024/10/what-is-zionism>

Words to Ponder

The Celtic Christians tended to seek to discover the underlying unity in all things rather than their separation, to align things rather than divide them . . . There was a consciousness of the integral wholeness in nature, an almost tender awareness of the unseen strands that unite all things.

So many of us have lost touch with reality and thus live in a fantasy world of distorted vision. In this distorted world one can be very alone . . . What we need to do is to break out from this narrow myopic world and widen our vision. Let us be seen as those who extend horizons, those who reach beyond the stars, beyond the created universe to the Creator who gives meaning and being to all. Let us look into the very centre of things and discover the mystery that unites all.

From *The Eye of the Eagle* by David Adam

Find Your Voice

UniSing - 3:00 pm / First and third Saturdays of the month. / Online

Singing is so good for the soul! Join fellow Unitarians and friends online for Uni-Sing! and feel that special connection you get when you join voices in song.

<https://www.unitarian.org.uk/event/uni-sing/>

Finally . . .

A vision without a task is but a dream.

A task without a vision is but drudgery.

But a vision with a task can change the world.

Words from the Brahma Kumari World Spiritual University



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