

The Unitarian



Nurturing Faith

Celebrating Difference

Embracing Life



November 2018

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The Unitarian

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Submissions are welcome and may be edited for content and length. Text should be emailed or typed and images should be of good quality and sent either as jpegs or printed on photographic paper. All submissions should be the author's original work or be attributed appropriately.

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Unitarians in Britain
www.unitarian.org.uk

Our Unitarian community consists of about 200 congregations that meet in Chapels, Churches and Meeting Houses right across Britain.

We gather for worship and fellowship, to create a caring community where all feel supported in our search for meaning and value. Unitarians are an open faith community celebrating diverse beliefs. We originate from the liberal Christian tradition, but now include people of other faiths as well as spiritual seekers.

The National Unitarian Fellowship (www.nufonline.org.uk) exists for those who, (because of where they live, or for other reasons), are not able to be part of a traditional congregation and Unitarians also share ideas and experiences online via websites, social media and blogs.

Unitarians do not discriminate on grounds of gender (we have had women ministers for more than 100 years), age, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Unitarianism differs from many other religions in that we believe in helping people to find their own spiritual path rather than defining it for them.

We welcome all those with open minds who share our views on **tolerance** toward others, who embrace the **freedom** to be in a faith community that does not impose creeds or specific beliefs, and where the approach is based on **reason** not dogma.

Cover photo: Scorton Steam Fair © 2018 Mike Oram **Deadline for next issue: 18 November**

In Flanders fields the poppies grow*
Between the crosses, row on row....

Poppies will be strong in the collective psyche this month as we, once again, approach Armistice Day and all the memories, implications, sorrows and hopes that anniversary holds. Poppies became the symbol of remembrance of those fallen in the Great War mainly because of one woman's reaction to the poem *Flanders Fields*, (Originally entitled: *We Shall Not Sleep*) by Col. John McCrae.

Moina Michael, a teacher, was working at the YMCA Overseas Secretaries training headquarters in New York and in attendance at their annual YMCA Overseas Conference in November, 1919. Bored, she picked up a copy of that month's *Ladies' Home Journal* and read McCrae's poem. Moved to tears, she immediately penned her response in the form of her own poem: *We Shall Keep the Faith*. The last verse of this reads:

And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honor of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields.

"This was, for me, a full spiritual experience", Moina wrote in her memoirs. "It seemed as though the silent voices again were vocal.....I pledged to KEEP THE FAITH and always to wear a red poppy as a sign of remembrance....."

And so she began a campaign that we see the results of today when poppies are worn on Armistice Day.

**Note: There is some dispute as to whether the poet wrote 'grow' or 'blow'. Fran*

Rules and Requests:

1. Please do not send me a copy of an article that has also been sent to *The Inquirer*. I do not want to duplicate material.
2. If you attach a photograph to your item, please label it. You may know that the image is of Mrs Jones, but I, most probably, will not. It also helps when I have multiple photograph submissions if they are not all left with just the camera numbers. If you can convert your image to 300 dpi, that also helps.
3. If you send me a copy of your chapel newsletter I shall assume that it carries with it permission to copy any item therein. If that is not the case, please enclose something to that effect, or say so in the body of the message if the publication is sent via email.
4. It is the policy of the MDA that we do not publish letters in *The Unitarian*.
Thanks. Fran

The most significant external event for the General Assembly President during their year in office is undoubtedly their attendance at the National Cenotaph in Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday. Joan Cook will represent Unitarian and Free Christians at the ceremony this year on 11 November 2018. The leaders of a range of faith groups pay their respects but do not lay wreaths. The Ceremony is televised live to the nation and beyond.

At present, 15 faith and belief denominations are represented at the Remembrance Service. These are: Anglican, Catholic, Church of Scotland, Methodist, United Reformed Church, Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, the Salvation Army, Baptist, Greek Orthodox Church, Jewish (United Hebrew Congregations), Jewish (Reform), Islam, Hindu and Sikh.

HM The Queen will pay tribute alongside members of the Cabinet, Opposition Party leaders, former Prime Ministers, the Mayor of London and other ministers. Representatives of the Armed Forces, Fishing Fleets and Merchant Air and Navy will be there, as well as the High Commissioners of Commonwealth countries. Each year, veterans participate in a March Past.

Earlier this year, the Government announced that, with the marking the centenary of the end of World War 1, it wished to make faith and belief rep-



resentation at the National Remembrance Service more reflective of modern Britain, both for this year and going forward. The Faiths Forum for London was asked to run an open application process, inviting organi-

sations representing different faith/denomination and belief groups across Great Britain, who were not currently represented, to be part of the annual commemoration service.

It has been reported that the following organisations will be added: Humanists UK, the Spiritualists National Union, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Zoroastrian, Jain and Baha'i faiths (*The Times*, 17 October 2019).

The National Cenotaph was initially a temporary structure erected for a peace parade in July 1919, with the current Memorial being unveiled in 1920. Until 1945, the service was held on Armistice Day itself then moved to the nearest Sunday. Ceremonies in the 1920s were not uncontroversial. According to the War Memorials Trust, in 1921 some ex-servicemen, angry at the lack of opportunity and support they had received since returning home and disagreeing with continued concentration on the dead when survivors needed help, disrupted the service at the Cenotaph and this was repeated throughout the 1920s.

In 1947, it was agreed that both World War One and World War Two would be remembered on just one national day: Remembrance Sunday. The Unitarian and Free Christian Churches were only invited to attend the Ceremony in 1945 when Rev Dr Mortimer Rowe, General Secretary, officially represented the General Assembly.

Having been excluded ourselves, Unitarians will welcome the news that the contribution of those of other faiths is recognised.

Derek McAuley is Chief Officer of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Round and About

Listen! The wind is rising,
And the air is wild with leaves,
We have had our summer evenings,
Now for October eves!

Humbert Wolfe (1885-1940)

Underbank Chapel October newsletter.

At no time can you say, "The world is this", for before you have finished saying it, the world has changed.

Michael Servetus (c.1511-1553)

Bradford Newsletter, October & November 2018.



Aberdeen October Calendar

And if a man from another country is living in your land with you, do not make life hard for him. Let him be to you as one of your countrymen and have love for him as for yourself.

Leviticus 19: 33-34.

Quoted in The Fulwood Messenger,



Mandala by Kate Buchanan

INTERFAITH CELEBRATION OF ANIMALS



On 30th September 2018 the above service was held at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel in central Manchester. (This was inspired by Rev. Feargus O'Connor's similar services, which have been held for the past fifteen years at Golders Green Unitarians.)

Congregation

The service was led by Rev Cody Coyne, and was attended by about eighty people. We started with music from *Carnival of the Animals*, and the animal theme continued throughout the morning.

Representatives from the major world faiths spoke; in order of speaking: Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Unitarian, Sikh, Quaker, Jain and Buddhist. Readings and talks were interspersed with prayers and hymns. We learned that each religion teaches compassion, kindness and respect towards animals and forbids all cruelty, and that many religions promote total non-violence (ahimsa). A common theme was the inter-connectedness of all creation; the web of life, which was further touched on in Cody's final words when he quoted from Chief Seattle's speech, in particular the words:

"This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all; Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."



Participants



Our main speaker was from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). Fay Ganney told us about the wonderful work that IFAW does, and she enlarged particularly on their work in Africa where, amongst much else, they are successfully fighting ivory poaching, both by working with local people and by mounting sophisticated outreach cam-

paigns to change attitudes and behaviour in the consumer countries driving the demand for ivory.

After the service, we all moved into an adjoining room to look at relevant literature and to eat delicious vegan food. Everyone agreed that it had been an inspiring event, bringing people of many different religions together, showing us how much we all had in common, and teaching us to rethink our attitudes to all those other inhabitants of our beautiful world.

Sonia Waddell, organiser of the event.

Photos by Nick Waddell.



Jadeesh Singh



Peter Sampson



Rev Cody Coyne

Round and About

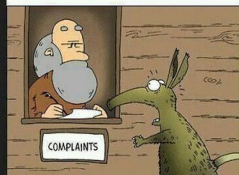
Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision.

— Winston Churchill —

Unknowingly, we plough the dust of stars, blown about us by the wind, and drink the universe in a glass of rain.

Ihab Hassan. Seen on a notice board at Cross St Chapel, Manchester.

Noah's Ark
Complaints
Department



YOU ONLY
BROUGHT
TWO ANTS?

On the day when the weight deadens on your shoulders and you stumble, may the clay dance to balance you.

And when your eyes freeze behind the grey window and the ghost of loss gets in to you, may a flock of colours, indigo, red, green, and azure blue come to awaken in you a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays in the currach of thought and a stain of ocean blackens beneath you, may there come across the waters a path of yellow moonlight to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours, may the clarity of light be yours, may the fluency of the ocean be yours, may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow wind work these words of love around you, an invisible cloak to mind your life.

Beannacht / Blessing by John O'Donohue

Music, Silence, Poetry, Prayer, 7 April, 2017. Chapel in the Garden, Bridport.

GOING TO CHURCH

Being a regular attendee at a Unitarian Church each Sunday I sought an alternative church when I discovered that no Unitarian Church was in the immediate vicinity.

I quite recently spent a week in Malmesbury in Wiltshire and attended the church service at the United Reform Church. I'd never been to one of their services before so looked forward to this new experience and was given a warm welcome.

There were five hymns, several Bible readings and a 20-minute sermon about sin. I came away feeling quite guilty regarding the content of the sermon, that reminded us all that we are sinners.

There was, however, a memorable moment to the meeting. As soon as the piano started playing the first hymn, an 8-year-old girl, wearing her best party frock, came skipping down the aisle. She went to an elderly gentleman (about my age) sitting in the front row of the seats, grasped his hands and pulled him to his feet, and proceeded to dance with him. This occurred during each of the hymns, which brought smiles to us all.

I assumed that the older man was her grandfather or some relation of the little girl. So, over a cup of tea, I asked him about his dance partner. He explained to me that he had been attending this church for more than 50 years and met a lady that was to become his wife. Four years ago, after 47 years of marriage, his wife passed away after a long illness.

The Sunday after her death he attended the service as normal to get some comfort and support from the other members of the congregation.

He sat in his usual seat, quietly sobbing during the service. A young couple, who also attend the service on a regular basis, were accompanied by their 4-year-old daughter; they allowed the young girl to go and sit with the man. She sat quietly there holding the old gentleman's hand, not saying a word.

Each subsequent Sunday, the little girl skipped down the aisle to sit with the gentleman, and eventually got him up to dance to each of the hymns.

The service that I attended that Sunday did not really uplift or inspire me. But the actions of an 8-year-old girl reassured me of the faith and love of human beings towards one another. A memorial experience? Whatever your thoughts of religion, or going to church, love, compassion and understanding are its key factors. Going to church is secondary to those feelings of love compassion and fellowship to all.

Alan Larcombe, (Hastings Unitarian Church).

After the christening of his baby brother in church, Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, "That preacher said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, but I want to stay with you lot."

Underbank Chapel October newsletter.

But we are emaciated and starved. Our food is bad and mixed up with so much substitute that it makes us ill. Our artillery is fired out...we have too few horses. Our fresh troops are anaemic boys in need of rest who cannot carry a pack but merely know how to die. The summer of 1918 is the most bloody and terrible. The days stand like angels in blue and gold, incomprehensible, above the ring of annihilation. Every man here knows we are losing the war. Not much is said about it, we are falling back, we shall not be able to attack again after this big offensive. We have no more men and no ammunition. Still the campaign goes on - the dying goes on.

From *All Quiet on the Western Front*
by Erich Maria Remarque.

Quoted in *The Fulwood Messenger*, Oct/Nov 2018.

Youth is impulsive. When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and disfigure their faces with black paint, it denotes that their hearts are black, and that they are often cruel and relentless, and our old men and old women are unable to restrain them. Thus it has ever been. Thus it was when the white man began to push our forefathers ever westward. But let us hope that the hostilities between us may never return. We would have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Revenge by young men is considered gain, even at the cost of their own lives, but old men who stay at home in times of war, and mothers who have sons to lose, know better.

From *Chief Seattle's Oration*, 1854.



I finally realized
that people
are prisoners of
their phones
that's why it's
called Cell
Phone

One of those October days, when to breathe the air is like drinking wine, and every touch of the wind against one's face is a caress; you have a sense of companionship; it is a day that loves you.

Sarah Jewett
Newcastle-under-Lyme October
Newsletter.

LEST WE FORGET

How can the Unitarian movement in this country best commemorate the centenary of the Armistice of 1918?

The management committee of The Nightingale Centre have been giving some thought to this matter as The Florence Nightingale Convalescent Home for Men was erected as, 'The National Memorial to the men of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches who fell in the war 1914 - 1918'.

If I Should Die is a powerful poem of consolation written by Rupert Brooke in 1914. It intimates that those hopes for the best that life has to offer remain - 'A pulse in the eternal mind no less'. Poetry helps us wrestle with our feelings. Maybe in our remembering we should focus on the hopes for peace and for a better tomorrow of those who lost their lives in the horror of that war. And not just remember but to recognise that faith as alive within their National Memorial, The Nightingale Centre, as the embodiment of those hopes for a better tomorrow and with the words of Rupert Brooke resonating in the life of the Centre.

Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day,
And laughter, learnt of friends and gentleness
In hearts of peace....

We hope to raise awareness that we have a National Memorial and one of which to be proud. A living memorial alive to those hopes for a better world.

On the centenary of the Armistice we invite all congregations, as an act of remembrance, to consider joining the many individual *Friends of The Nightingale Centre* in helping to financially support the Centre into the future. Perhaps District Associations would also wish to consider joining the *Friends* in memory of the fallen of those congregations that are no longer active.

For those congregations and any individuals who wish to join the *Friends of The Nightingale*, please contact the Centre for further details. Telephone: 01298 871218. Email: info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk.



An image commissioned by the
First World War Peace Forum of
national peace organisations

Friday 2 November. 7.30pm. All Souls Service.

Dunham Road Chapel, Altrincham WA14 4NU will be creating and holding a space for those who wish to remember loved ones who have touched their hearts and souls but are no longer physically with them. You are invited to bring a picture or small item that reminds you of your loved one and to light a candle in the time and space we will be holding together. All are welcome to share in this sacred time and space.

11 November. Armistice Day

Armistice Day is commemorated every year to mark the armistice signed between the Allies of World War I and Germany at Compiègne, France, for the cessation of hostilities on the Western Front of World War I, which took effect at eleven o'clock in the morning—the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" of 1918.

Saturday 1 December 2018. 11 am to 3.15 pm. *Future of Faith.*

Matt Carmichael: *Rekindling the Spirit of Community – Restoring Depth in an age of Screens.* What does it take to build community today? And where can we find inspiration?

Second in a series of lectures at the newly-renovated Rawtenstall Unitarian Church. The series is organised by the Lancashire Collaborative Ministry, which unites Unitarian places of worship in Chorley, Padiham and Rawtenstall. Audience participation is encouraged, with workshops and panel discussions to follow each talk.

There is no cover charge, but donations will be invited to help with costs. Lunch is BRING and SHARE. Refreshments will be available.

Matt Carmichael is a schoolteacher, writer and activist from Leeds. He is co-author, with Alastair McIntosh, of *Spiritual Activism: Leadership as Service*, and he blogs for *Ecohustler* and other outlets. A founding director of Schumacher North, he has campaigned on environmental, social and peace issues since the early 1990s. He has developed the Delta course for people interested in spirituality free of religious strictures.



Back cover: Poppies, Carlisle Castle © May 2018 Mike Oram

A photograph of a stone wall, likely part of a fortification, with a large, dense cluster of red poppies growing from the top and cascading down its side. The foreground is covered in a field of red poppies.

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there is some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth, a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away;
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less,
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness
In hearts at peace under an English heaven.

Rupert Brooke. 1914.