

waymark



unitarians in edinburgh

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**I wandered down to the sea and
found a lonely sea and sky;
no waves crashing, no gulls crying,
no ships a-sailing by.
The only voice my own, whispering
“Look around, re-awaken!”
I prefer this world, this gentle world,
with its quiet new dawn breaking.**

Image and words by Kris Calder

A Very Warm Welcome to St Mark's

from Rev Peter Fairbrother



Dear friends, how are you? I hope you're coping with the continued challenges presented by the pandemic. Given that Waymark is published every two months, I'm writing these words at the end of July and giving thought to what August and September might look like for our community and the wider world. It's a tricky imagining given that we're living with great uncertainty. And it brings home to me just how much of our everyday lives is outwith our control. I am grateful for the reminder.

More positively, another thing I'm grateful for is seeing and hearing from each of you, whether by letter, telephone, email, Facebook, or through Zoom. Regarding the latter, we have many lovely Zoom meetings scheduled in the months ahead and these are listed opposite. Do dip a toe in. As most of you are aware, our church building will remain closed during August and September. However, the group tasked with its safe re-opening are working apace. I'm sure you'll join me in thanking them for all their hard work. We'll keep you updated on developments. And last but not least, my gratitude for *your* continued patience, understanding, and support at this time. Thank you for making the space we share together a gentle one.

With love,

Peter

Unitarians in Edinburgh

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Future Sunday Services at St Mark's

Join us online on Sundays, 11am



for time together in community



Unitarians in Edinburgh

We are continuing our time together in community online every Sunday, via Zoom.

These gatherings provide space for personal sharing, readings, music and song, and time held in silence, meditation and prayer.

To join us simply go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/459569403> on **Sunday** at **11am**. Immediately after, drop by for **virtual teas and coffees** at <https://zoom.us/j/939360646>.

Other **weekly** Zoom gatherings occurring during August and September are:

- **Tuesday — Mindfulness@Lunchtime** from **12.15pm-1.50pm**. A time of guided meditation, silence, and sharing at <https://zoom.us/j/390019616>. Meeting ID: 390 019 616, Password: Mindful
- **Wednesday** — our final weekly **Children's Programme** activity takes place on **5 August** at **11am**. For further information email Rachael at stmarkschildrensprogramme@gmail.com
- **Wednesday** — **drop-in** between **2pm and 3pm** for chat at <https://zoom.us/j/106391104>.

Our **monthly** Zoom gatherings during August and September are:

- The **Earth-based Paths Exploration Group** meet on **Wednesday 16 September** at **12.30pm**. For the Zoom link email Eli at eli.roth.personal@gmail.com or go to **EarthBasedPaths** on **Facebook**
- The **Bereavement & Support Group** meet on **Saturdays 15 August** and **12 September** at **11am**. For more information email Jane at ja@ednet.co.uk
- The **Poetry and Prose Reading for Pleasure Group** meet on **Sunday 13 September** at **2pm**. For more information email Margery at stmarkssecretary@btinternet.com
- The **Journaling Group** meet on **Saturday 29 August** at **2pm** and **Sunday 20 September** at **1.30pm**. For more information email Julia at juliamacintosh.uk@gmail.com.

Building Our Future

Mary McKenna, our Convenor, with our Minister Rev Peter Fairbrother, announce some exciting opportunities.

Recognised as the largest Unitarian congregation in Scotland, ours is a vibrant community that is growing, developing and evolving. Rooted in values of inclusivity and acceptance, we offer a loving space for individuals to come together in spiritual exploration. With all the stresses and strains around us at this time, the need has never been greater for spiritual sustenance and connection to enriching community. I'm proud that we're here to meet these needs.

As many of you know, ours is a community governed by a Council of elected representatives from the community's membership. Whilst we have a rich range of knowledge and experience on Council at present, as we grow and plan ahead we'd love to welcome some new members, fresh ideas, and some particular skills and knowledge. This year our Annual General Meeting will be held within a service of community celebration, and that'll be on Sunday 6 September, 11am to 12noon. It'll be by Zoom (usual Zoom link for Sunday services). In anticipation of this I am asking those who are members of our community to consider becoming a Trustee by serving on Council. This is an opportunity to add your contribution to shape our collective future, and it offers the following benefits:

- **Being part of a great team** committed to the very best for our community
- **Training to support you** in your role as Trustee/Member of Council
- An opportunity to **share your skills and experience**, and develop new ones
- The satisfaction of knowing that your input is **making a big difference** in helping us to help others.

The role of Trustee/Member of Council is a leadership role and a responsible one. Elections to Council occurs annually at our AGM and those elected serve for one year in the first instance. The role involves a minimum commitment to prepare for, attend, and contribute to Council meetings. During the pandemic we've been meeting on Zoom and will consider using this for future meetings.

We are seeking to reflect our diverse community and would particularly welcome people with financial and admin skills for the **anticipated vacancies of Treasurer and Secretary on Council**. We have written role descriptions for these positions to share with you, alongside one for a 'general' Trustee role. If this sounds of interest, you're welcome to get in touch for an informal chat. Please feel free to contact any of our current Trustees, myself, Ann Sinclair (Acting Treasurer) and Margery MacKay (Secretary):

Mary McKenna – stmarksconvener@gmail.com
Ann Sinclair – stmarksunitariantreasurer@gmail.com
Margery MacKay – stmarkssecretary@btinternet.com

Thank you

Mary McKenna
Convenor

with
Rev Peter Fairbrother

Lighting the Chalice

On 31 May, St Mark's member Niall Urquhart lit our Chalice with these words.

In the early 2000's, after a 13 year wait for permission from the monks of the Carthusian Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse in the French Alps, the German documentarist Philip Groening was finally invited to make a film about their lives. In his film, *Into Great Silence*, he immerses himself into their lives of prayer, poverty and solitude for four months. A new awareness of the present grew within him; objects around him which had previously seemed mundane took on new meaning; ordinary things became intensely real and beautiful.

While we may not have been living quite like monks during lockdown, our isolation has invited us to see the world in a new way too. There have been challenges as a dark cloud has been cast on our lives by the pandemic, and many of us have experienced very real emotional and physical hardships and losses over the past few weeks. And yet, there can be no shadow without light.

Rachel Carson said that "the more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less we shall have for our destruction". Like Philip Groening, through our isolation and the slowing down of our lives we have had the chance to experience the beauty of the ordinary things around us. Suddenly, we can hear nature. The singing of the birds, the rustle of the wind in the leaves, the hum of the bee. The air is fresher, the atmosphere calmer. We've had the chance to experience the rebirth and renewal of spring more closely, more intensely than ever before during our own time of *Great Silence*.

If we didn't think much about it before, lockdown has focused our attention on the gifts of nature right on our doorstep. We've been re-awakened to the joy of nature and the sense of wonder it can bring us; to its preciousness but also its fragility.

Our time of *Great Silence* has given us a glimpse of how life used to be, when we were closer to and more aware of nature, and how it could be again in a carbon-neutral world. How would the last few weeks have felt without the wonder of nature? Without the re-birth of spring to help keep us sane?

I light the candle this morning as a symbol of gratitude and of hope. Of gratitude, for the joy that nature has brought us over the past few difficult weeks; and of hope, that just as the pandemic arose from our abuse of the natural world, that our increased awareness of its meaning and beauty will more clearly focus our attention on the need to live our lives in a different way: one which respects and protects nature, for us and for future generations.



More from lockdown...

This Gardener's World by Kris Calder

Like many people, I enjoyed the additional time which lockdown brought. Working at home meant more time at the beginning and end of each day; daily chores could often be done at lunchtime; and the weekends seemed amazingly long. As someone fortunate enough to have a garden, I made sure not to waste the beautiful weather we enjoyed in April and May. Our potting shed was cleaned and painted a beautiful cornflower blue; I managed to get everyone (even the teenagers) involved in tidying, trimming, mowing and weeding; new plant stands were built; beds were raised; annuals were potted up; and we all sat back happily enjoying the garden at its best for years. Everything in the garden was indeed rosy. That is until one fine evening in June when my neighbour uttered the words "Would you like some tomato plants?"

I tried to grow tomatoes about 6 years ago but wasn't very successful. Despite giving the plants good compost (with sand mixed in to help drainage), marigolds for companions (to ward off the greenfly) and plenty of Tomatorite (the favourite tippie of tomato plants), the yield was very low with only around 3 tomatoes per plant. I didn't bother after that as it seemed easier to go to Tesco. But feeling buoyed up at the thought of having plenty time to lavish on tomato plants this year, and also wanting to relieve my neighbour of the burden of caring for so many needy seedlings, I said "Yes, that would be great!" and promptly took 3.

Now, it seems to me that tomato plants bring out the parenting instinct in us. I know a number of people who set tomato seeds every year, then, realising they have too many plants to look after, desperately try to re-home the plants rather than thrown them on the compost heap.

So, with my maternal instincts in full flow and deciding that this time I would raise my tomato plants 'properly', I ordered a pop-up greenhouse just the right size for a growbag and 3 plants, some tomato 'halos' to hold them, and a large container of Tomatorite to ensure they were well fed. The first few days were all rather jolly - unzipping the greenhouse in the morning, remembering to zip my wee babies back in at night, giving them some water, an encouraging word here, a smile there...happy days indeed. Then, just as with most new parents, the fretting started. Were they getting enough sunlight? Were they getting too little or too much water? Had I remembered to zip them up before going to bed? Were they too small or too tall? But more importantly, where were all those all-important flowers which would turn into tomatoes?

Well, as the photo below shows, despite my best efforts, I just don't think I'm cut out to grow tomatoes. Given the current number of flowers (see if you can spot any in the picture below!) and the money I've spent, not to mention the time spent watering, feeding, caring and worrying, I reckon **each** tomato will cost at least £8.50. Tell you what, at that price they better taste bloomin' good!



Spot the tomato flowers...

The Not-So-Mad Hatter's Tea (and Coffee) Party!

It looks like the attendees at the virtual teas & coffees on Sunday 24 May were having a lot of fun — hats off to them!



Singalong with UNI-Sing!

Margery McKay tells us "Perhaps you are missing singing in a group or choir, want to sing more hymns in general, or want to get to know new ones. Why don't you join us at **UNI-Sing** on Zoom on **Saturday afternoons** at **2.45pm** (singing starts at 3pm). You can sing to your heart's content as we are all muted for the singing! There is also time afterwards to chat and discuss how you would like this Zoom group to progress. The group is run by Louise, Myrna, and the Unitarian Music Society. For more details or to get the Zoom link so you can attend, contact Louise by email at louise.rogers256@gmail.com, or phone her on 07732 361262.

Hope to see you there!"

The Wave of the Young Trees by Eli Roth

The wind swirled gently around the young trees,
whispering

“Wave to her as she goes by”

“Wave to her as she goes by”

The young trees quivered with excitement

And the anticipation of her arrival

While the older trees stood strong against suggestion

When the train advanced into view

the young trees waved

And, I waved back,

saddened that the train hurried forward so quickly

that I could not have a conversation

That is the nature of trains

They hurry

Forward is their goal

My goal was to take in the details of the view

The patterns of snow on the branches of fir trees

The contours of the fog that fills the valley

Was that a yellow spring bulb emerging

Or sunlight sparkling on the snow banks

My gaze could not linger long enough to be sure

I could only make out the waves of the young trees

And, I waved back

Even my camera poised for action

could not take in the details

Blurry images showed only the rush of the train

Forward

Forward

In a hurry

And, the wave of the young trees

The Earth-Based Paths Exploration Groups recently held an arts & crafts session where they designed their own collage Tarot cards. Eli, Monika and Kim shared their designs for The Fool.



Stepping up to the Challenge

Annabel Treshansky is currently taking part in the **One Million Step Challenge** organised by **Diabetes UK**, a charity which supports people affected by diabetes. The Challenge is to walk 1 million steps over 3 months from July to September, while raising money for the charity.

To achieve 1 million steps Annabel has to walk a minimum of 10,000 steps a day. Annabel says "There are 4.8 million people living with diabetes in the UK, the complications of which lead to over 500 premature deaths every week. So, I'm stepping towards a healthier me, and a better future for people living with diabetes."

To make a donation and support Annabel and Diabetes UK, go to <https://step.diabetes.org.uk/pages/annabel-2> and hit the donate button.

Donate to Annabel's page



Playtime in the Meadows!



It was a delight to see some of the children meet up in the Meadows recently. Lockdown easing allows youngsters to meet each other and so we enjoyed a day filled with sun, fun, nature games, dodgeball, ice-cream and even a bit of moral philosophy over our picnic. Healthy minds and healthy bodies! We hope this will be the first of many regular outside meet-ups and aim to do this at least once a month for the foreseeable future.

As schools return in August, we will need to rethink our Wednesday morning sessions but we very much hope that we will continue to meet weekly online at a time that suits all.

Children's Corner with Rachael King

Hello and welcome to the Children's Corner!

We continue to meet weekly online, which is proving a happy and supportive way of remaining connected to each other and to St. Mark's. Once again, a huge thanks to the parents and children for their commitment to these sessions during which we share our joys and concerns, and play games and quizzes (we can now use the whiteboard function on Zoom which means... picture!). The children continue to inspire us with their creativity, honesty and love and their nimble and innovative approach to our rapidly changing lives.



We have also been thinking about our own congregation and the people we haven't been able to see from our community, and about Unitarian communities in other parts of the world, in particular our sister church in Chennai. We have looked on Google Earth to locate where Chennai is, and are very curious about what a day in the life of a child who lives in Chennai might be like. We are preparing a video to send to the children at the Chennai church and hope they enjoy finding out a little about us.

Books the children have been reading



A crafty robin



“Give, even if you only have a little.”

Buddha

Image by Rev Peter Fairbrother

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