

# waymark



unitarians in edinburgh

**Volume 53 Number 2**  
**Apr / May 2021**

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**Springtime creativity — poetry, prose  
and pictures from members and  
friends of St Mark's**

*Image by Kris Calder*



# A Very Warm Welcome to St Mark's

from Rev Peter Fairbrother



## How are you?

Three wee words many of us frequently use, but I wonder how often we respond to them honestly? Undoubtedly, being in pandemic has placed a variety of stresses and strains upon many of us. We've had to deal with illness and loss (whether individually/ collectively), the imposition of social restrictions, and now with the imminent easing of restrictions, adjustment to a further, new set of circumstances. How are we coping?

During our Sunday gatherings in April and May we'll give consideration to our mental health and wellbeing at this time. There'll be wisdom from a diversity of guest speakers: Dr Rebecca Lawrence, Consultant Psychiatrist, will share from her blog 'Doctor and Patient' (11 April); Rev Sarah Tinker will invite us to 'welcome the difficult' (18 April); we'll explore the healing power of nature through flower communion (25 April) and Lectio Terrestris (with Rev Monika Strell, 2 May); Rev Lindy Irving will share personal reflections (9 May); and we'll honour what's held by our families (16 May). Alongside, I'll provide my offerings too. All via Zoom - connection details opposite. I hope you can join us.

And I hope too you'll get involved in the forthcoming consultation to support our continued growth and development. (See the statement on page 4.) Much to be grateful for, much to consider, much more to do...

With love, Peter

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## Forthcoming Gatherings



# TRAVEL MORE DISCOVER NEW PLACES >

# VISIT YOU

Unitarians in Edinburgh  
every Sunday 11am GMT

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/459569403>

**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 April and May are:

- **Tuesday — Mindfulness@Lunchtime** from **12.30pm-2pm**. A time of guided meditation, silence, and sharing. For more information contact the team via **Mindfulness at Lunchtime** on **Facebook**.
- **Wednesday — drop-in** between **3pm** and **4pm** for chat at <https://zoom.us/j/106391104>.

Our **monthly** Zoom gatherings during April and May are:

- The **Earth-based Paths Exploration Group** meet on **Wednesdays 21 April** and **19 May** at **12.30pm**. The theme for April is 'Totems, Tricksters, and Tails: animals and their place in nature-based spirituality and our lives.' and the theme for May is 'Time to get fired up for Beltane and a discussion of Celtic Fire Festivals throughout the year.' For the Zoom link email Eli at [eli.roth.personal@gmail.com](mailto:eli.roth.personal@gmail.com) or find **Earth-Based Paths Exploration Group** on **Facebook**.
- The **Bereavement & Support Group** meet on **Saturdays 17 April** and **15 May** at **11am**. For more information email Jane at [ja11951@outlook.com](mailto:ja11951@outlook.com)
- The **Poetry and Prose Reading for Pleasure Group** meet on **Saturdays 3 April** and **1 May** at **1pm**. The theme for April is 'Place' and the theme for May is 'Revolution'.
- The **Journaling Group** meet on **Saturdays 24 April** and **29 May** at **2pm**. For more information email Julia at [juliamacintosh.uk@gmail.com](mailto:juliamacintosh.uk@gmail.com)

# Our Community, Our Future

## A statement from our Minister and Convener

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The past year has been one of enormous change for each of us, all of us, in all sorts of ways. I'm sure we're all holding awareness of the impact the pandemic has had on the world(s) we thought we knew. So many things have changed.

One such change has been how we meet together in community.

Our Zoom gatherings have been very successful. Congregation size has increased, feedback on our Zoom services has been positive, and together we've stepped into the realms of greater possibility - embracing new ways of being together. We are grateful for your continued support and involvement. Thank you.

As expressed at our last AGM, we're committed to nurturing our online community, in addition to recommencing physical gatherings when this is possible.

In honouring both elements, it remains our intention to create a new form of gathering, one which equitably serves those who meet with us 'in-person' as well as those who continue to join us online. (The term we've begun to use for this is **blended provision**.) Such provision presents us with opportunities for further growth, and, yes, some challenges too.

There are many issues we need to address and many steps we need to take to enable us to offer blended provision.

The starting point for development is understanding what is possible with our present resources.

As a number of you are aware, the community's finances have been in a precarious state for quite some time. Annual expenditure frequently exceeds income, and to stay afloat we are heavily dependent on revenue derived from letting the church building and the interest generated from our investment portfolio.

Now, as we begin to ease out of lockdown, and eventually out of this pandemic, the financial outlook is even more challenging for us.

In 2019 a third of our income was derived from letting the church building. Broadly speaking, this income meets the maintenance and running costs of the building itself. Due to the pandemic, our letting income was severely diminished last year, and this is likely to be the case this year too. Like last year, we won't be running a Fringe programme in 2021. Furthermore, it is uncertain how many of our previously 'regular' clients will be willing/financially able to continue renting from us in the future. Many of our friends in the Arts and in the third sector have been financially devastated by the pandemic. Others, who have adjusted to online provision, may decide to continue in this way to reduce overheads. The full picture has yet to emerge, but for certain we are not returning to how things were regarding the rental income we used to derive from the church, and this will have a big impact on our financial wellbeing as a community.

Added to this, our listed building needs ongoing and expensive repairs. Last year, before lockdown, you may remember that we had to temporarily close the building for urgent repair work to the heating system. Before this we had to make repairs to the roof. Early last year long-term rot was identified in the roof of the Upper Hall. Presently this repair work is underway. The estimate bill is in the early thousands, but until the work is completed, I don't think we can be confident in knowing the full extent of the rot problem and the corresponding final cost. Furthermore, the building has issues of damp and long-term subsidence which at some stage we'll need to address. In short, the building requires considerable investment in its continued maintenance, and we would argue in associated refurbishment, at a cost well in excess of our present annual income.

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Financial difficulties and the continued deterioration of the building are two critical issues we face, and both impact on our future service provision. There are others. In exploring possibilities regarding blended provision, we may also wish to review the digital platform(s) we use to broadcast our gatherings. Are we content with Zoom, or might other technologies provide additional benefits?

In all of this, we have options, possible solutions, for the issues we face. For example, with regard to our finances, might we explore previously untapped income streams, such as community fundraising, engagement with business, and sponsorship? And regarding our future physical meeting space, might we look beyond present constraints and out of the box? We have an abundance of options if we are courageous and open to change.

**In all of this, one thing is definite: seeking to return to the pre-pandemic status quo is not an option. The world has changed, and so must we.**

Earlier we mentioned that the starting point for development is understanding what is possible given our resources. And in this, our biggest resource is **you**. During April and May we will be undertaking consultation focused on a number of key questions regarding our future. This will include, but not limited to, the following:

- **Seeking your intentions regarding future attendance in a physical meeting space and/or online**
- **Seeking to understand what is important to you in where and how we meet (again considering both physical and online spaces)**
- **Seeking your input in how we create a financially sustainable community**
- **Seeking your input in the development of equitable, inclusive service provision.**

It is our intention that the consultation will be:

- **Rooted — in our community's Unitarian values**
- **Respectful — in hearing a diversity of views, especially those that may differ from our own**
- **Grounded — in addressing the very serious issues we face**
- **Practical — in identifying deliverable solutions based on our present resources/what's possible.**

This is not another 'blue skies' thinking exercise. **We are seeking your input to ensure the sustainability of our community.** Your input will guide us to the actions we need to take to achieve this.

The consultation will use a variety of methods to acquire the widest input. There will be online surveys, discussion groups on Zoom, the opportunity to provide written and telephone responses. Eli Roth, a member of our community and skilled facilitator, will be leading the consultation process. She will be feeding back throughout the consultation, with the end product being a report listing recommendations for action which will be shared with you. Further information on the consultation will follow shortly.

**During this time all our Zoom services will continue as usual.** The output to the consultation will determine how and when we commence blended provision.

Thank you for your continued support, understanding, and we hope your involvement in the forthcoming consultation.

**Rev Peter Fairbrother  
Minister**

**Mary McKenna  
Convener**

# Lighting the Chalice



## **Heather and Leon Coates lit the chalice on 7 February with these words.**

It has been (still is!) a challenging time, but...there is light at the end of 'the tunnel'.

The vaccine seems to be a beacon of hope and, this being the end of January, there is new life pushing up in the shape of snowdrops and green shoots of other bulbs — heralding the spring!

We are looking forward to the light — when musicians will have the opportunity to perform to audiences — not just digital presentations which give a certain amount of satisfaction but fall short of the full performance experience.

The livelihoods of many performers and teachers and the futures of young musicians can get back on track in that future scenario.

Leon and I are very fortunate in being able to play music together — a completely different joy to isolated practice or to putting things together via Zoom — amazing though that is when achieved (with technical wizardry) by the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and the Edinburgh Bach choir.

Let us light our candles and may that flame inspire us with hope for the future.

## **Rachael King lit the chalice on 7 February with these words.**

It is National Libraries Week and so today I light our candle in recognition of our wonderful Public Libraries. As part of a campaign to recognise the importance of libraries, Stephen Fry comments "Libraries are where minds flourish and grow. They are like a kind of water supply. Without libraries a country can become a kind of desert." Many other writers are campaigning for a commitment of public funds to secure the future of libraries. As Irvine Welsh has said, libraries can be nothing short of life-changing — "I grew up in a scheme where every house and street pretty much looked the same. As a kid it was essential to have your imagination fuelled by a psychic portal into different worlds. That was my library in Muirhouse."

As gateways to knowledge and culture, libraries play a fundamental role in society. The resources and services they offer create opportunities for learning, support literacy and education, and help shape the new ideas and perspectives that are central to a creative, caring and innovative society. Libraries provide a safe haven, are open to all and are places that offer shelter. They transport us, free of charge and free from prejudice, to other worlds.

So, here's a light for our libraries, librarians and borrowers.



## **Ailsa Aitkenhead lit the chalice on 14 February with these words.**

I'd like to light the candle today in honour of music.

Music is a powerful thing, it can bring back memories, rouse strong emotions, gives us hope and is a form of human bonding. It can say things that cannot be expressed in words, and I am often moved by music in a way unlike anything else. I've been incredibly lucky to be able to share my music with everyone at St Marks on a Sunday, to have an audience and all your support, and I've been lucky to be able to earn a living and receive the government help. At the same time, I'm deeply missing the bond of performing with other musicians, the sense of self-worth and validity that I have as a working musician, the joy of hearing others perform, and the missed opportunities that I would have been looking forward to.

I can only imagine how difficult it must be for all those who are worried for their livelihoods and have no outlet to show their work, despite the huge amount of effort, skill and creativity it takes to be a performing musician. I know people who were working for professional orchestras and opera companies and are now unemployed or stacking shelves at supermarkets. The music students I work with at Edinburgh University had their recitals cancelled and are unable to meet in person to rehearse, and their experience going out into the world and trying to earn a living will be radically different from mine. Over 65% of musicians are thinking of changing careers due to the pandemic. This is a huge loss to them, and also to all of us because we are missing out on some incredible talent.

I'm lighting this candle for all musicians and all the music burning inside them that has not yet been heard, and in hope that we will one day be able to hear it.

## **Kate Foggo lit the chalice on 21 February with these words.**

Today I want to talk about 'home'. We've seen a lot more of our home and other people's homes in this last year. Home is one of my favourite words - to me it evokes comfort and familiarity, but I often wonder about those who have travelled to find themselves somewhere else that perhaps isn't home. With today's speaker in mind, I thought of my great grandfather Alexander Durno who travelled from Scotland to Sydney, Australia and then after some time there came back. I wonder if despite having a family there he felt homesick. I know I struggle whenever I spend occasions that I'm used to spending with my family such as Christmas away from home.

Alexander came back, married again and went on to have four more children, one of whom was my granny. And then on another side of the coin are those like my Dad's wife, who came from Uruguay because of the dictatorship in the 1970s and 80s, and she still considers Uruguay to be home despite living in Scotland for longer than she lived there. Home has such an emotional pull really and comes in many forms. We say things like 'make yourself at home', we 'feel at home', 'it felt like coming home', all alluding to what it is to be somewhere you are known and loved. I would say home is made more from the people and memories than bricks and mortar. I know I say this from a place of privilege having never felt at risk of losing my home although I have felt unsafe at home and that is not pleasant, so to lose a home due to war or other destructive circumstances would be heart breaking.

It is a privilege in many ways to be able to call this my home, the flat I live in, the city of Edinburgh and the faces I see here on my screen. I light my candle today for all our homes, wherever they may be, and in the hope that everyone has somewhere like this to come home to.

# The Gods of Destruction

Reflections from our Minister Rev Peter Fairbrother from our gathering on 28 February.



## What you looking at?

I had such fun creating the image of this little stone figure on my shoulder. I hope it raises a smile. A friend asked is the wee character was a cherub or an imp? I'll let you decide. And as for the stone figure, who knows?

I hear it said that we live in a time of heightened division, of devastation: lurches left and right; the rise and fall of tyrants and dictators; the emergence of truth-seeking conspiracy theorists; and social media 'influencers'.

All with something to say about the key issues of our time, whether that is climate change, human rights, Brexit, nationalism or unionism, Covid... The list is endless.

So many questions... But what is fact? What is fiction? Who to believe? Who to trust?

The stories we create, those we believe in, those we share, are important because they frame how we understand the world, or rather the worlds, that exist around us. We live in an age where control of the narrative colours how we think, feel and respond to events around us.

But what's new? Hasn't it always been such?

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"Take back control", "Make America Great Again", "Build back better" may be the slogans of the day, but in the longer term their prominence is likely to be as fleeting and as transient of all the others we've received over the years — "Your country needs you", "You've never had it so good", "Yes, we can".

All encapsulating moments in time, each seeking to assert narrative. For each a moment in the sun.

Like those who decry this era as one of heightened division, worse than any other, I would encourage such folk to look again at the stories they are telling themselves.

**Yes, we live in a time of division. The thing is however, it has always been such. This is just the latest iteration.**

Our species has the most remarkable propensity for self-delusion. (I guess you could call it the shadow of our great capacity for storytelling.) And in the worlds of division, destruction, devastation that we choose to inhabit, we are so very keen to pin the blame on others.

If we are of faith, perhaps we believe in the omnipotence of a wrathful God: the vengeful patriarch of the Old Testament; the many faces of Shiva, great God of Destruction; Morrigan, the Celtic Goddess of battle and strife; or even Hel, the bringer of death and devastation, as told in Viking mythology.

For those of us of a more secular mindset, perhaps we seek to lay blame at the door of our elected representatives, civic leaders, corporate giants for leading us to 'hell in a handbasket'?

Or maybe we cast about in the realm of the personal — trying with all our might to intellectualise the traumatic, or philosophise the pain away. (A term commonly used for this is "spiritual bypassing" and isn't it prevalent? The great lengths so many of us will go to, from time to time, to avoid connection with some of the stories we'd rather not admit to.)

Friends, there are a multitude of ways we can cast about in attributing blame to others for the division and destruction we see around us. **If you ask me to name the Gods of destruction, it isn't the stone cherub or imp that is alongside us (in whatever guise), but the God of destruction that lies within each and every one of us.**

For better or worse, we are the makers of our own stories. Let us live with the consequences.

### **Fight, flight, embrace?**

We tell ourselves to fear the oncoming storm. So often we tell ourselves to loathe the division we experience, to abhor that which we describe as destruction. But is that the whole story?

Those of us who connect with the story of nature, give value to the concept of 'lifecycle' — the circle of life. Division and destruction are an intrinsic part of that cycle, for without death, life becomes the undefinable, the unknowable. The narrative of science agrees — energy cannot be destroyed, but merely transformed from state to state. For some of us, we are presently coming out of the dieback of winter, but it is precisely the devastation of the season that creates space for new life, new growth. Without it there is nothing.

Divisions in time and space, which we call seasons and which we see in the manifestation of the worlds both around us and within us, is part of the whole. Yesterday I was sad, today I am happy, tomorrow I might be fearful. Who knows? Yet, it is in our difficulty in accepting division and destruction as part of the cycle of all things, including ourselves, that damage is caused.

It is when we start telling ourselves that division and destruction are intrinsically bad forces, and decide to use them (moreover abuse them) as weapons, that problems occur. When we invert the energies of division upon itself the output is increasingly reductive. If we fight fire with fire all is burnt.

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The call back is when we see division and destruction as a healthy part of our diversity, our interconnectedness, parts of the whole, rather than as oppositional elements. For those seeking to inhabit a 'better world' (in itself a loaded construct - don't get me started), the mission is less to shake our fists at the divisions we see, but rather to weave stories of deep profound acceptance of what we think cuts us off from each other. Acceptance, and its friend forgiveness, enable the most remarkable transformations.

Each exist in a myriad of interconnected states. The irony is that one of the few constants in each of our lives is that we are in a constant state of change. And as the cliché goes if we aren't changing, we're dead, but even in death the cycle continues. Why? How? Because our stories continue, in all we pass on.

It is in devastation, that we most frequently turn to our defence behaviours for support. Those ways of being that have rescued us in the past: fight or flight in their many different guises. The question is not the validity of these approaches, but whether they are serving us in the circumstances that we presently find ourselves in?

Perhaps there's another option to both fight and flight. **Embrace.**

*Embracing that which causes discomfort.*

*Embracing division with curiosity.*

*Embracing destruction with compassion.*

*Embracing the fear with love.*

Instead of using one's energies in resistance, perhaps we could dance with the Gods of destruction? And then see what happens...

## May we not forget

It is said that this time of Covid is one of terrible loss, a time that has laid bare the many divisions that exist among us.

For many the devastations are evident, personal, and tragic. This is part of the story. And so too is this...

*From the devastation of our ways of living,*

*from the fear and the panic and the mourning – adjustment*

*And from the first painful, jarring adjustments – the emergence of contingencies*

*and from contingencies the flicker of possibility*

*And from the flicker of possibility, hope of the new.*

"I can't wait to get back to normal" I hear some say. But back to what? The old script? The old ways that never served us? The things that held us back? Friends, it isn't possible to go back. And even if it was, would it be desirable? To my mind the worst thing we could do is try to attempt to recreate the past. Instead, let us be in acceptance of the devastation.

Let us focus our hearts and minds on what we've learnt about ourselves during this time. In the words of Pastor Jon Owen, our recent guest, let us not forget what we've been through. From the ashes of past scripts, let us step into possibility, opportunity, and new stories.

Let us begin again, just as we have always done.



# **How?**

**by Suzie Weigert**

**How does a tree do it? How does it know?  
When it should stop and when it should grow?**

**How does it know when it's got to its top?  
How does it know when it really should stop?**

**How does the hazel beside our front door  
Know it should twist and then twist some more?**

**How does the rowan know its berries are red?  
How does it know? Was it something I said?**

**How does the holly know its leaves are so prickly?  
How does a feather know to be tickly?**

**Well...**

**It's all tucked away in a tiny wee seed  
Add water. Add light. It's all that you need.**

**And off the tree goes, heading straight for the sky  
It has roots in the ground or off it would fly.**

# I Doodle

by Donna Brown



**Someone said if you are blocked or you think you can't write, just doodle. Keep doodling and the words will follow, a story will reveal itself.**



So, on a cold, snowy Sunday morning in February I sit with the heater and my dog at my feet. Looking out the window at the falling snow...I doodle. My mind wanders from one thought to another. Mostly I am thinking about a church service I attended via zoom at 6am. The service was in Edinburgh, Scotland. It was based on a book called "The Midnight Library". I was intrigued from the start because I am a bibliophile. I love old books and libraries. Not the new modern libraries but the old ones. The ones that smell like polished wood and leather books. The libraries with metal spiral stairs leading to the upper floors, the lighting soft as candlelight. No computer screens, no tapping of keyboards, only hushed silence can be heard.



I love to look at the dusty leather-bound books with their gold leaves and gold engraved lettering on the front. I love the weight and feel of the books in my hands. I probably won't read these. The print is too small, and the lines spaced close together. My aging eyes find those hard to read. I do love to page through the large coffee table books and dream. I like to pretend I live in that storybook house or walk along a path deep into the picturesque woods. I'd stop to pick up a stone that called my name or pick flowers that caught my eye. I'd sit on a moss-covered rock by a babbling brook and think about "The Midnight Library".

The service was about regrets, regrets of our past lives, and would we do anything to change things. As I listened to others share their stories I was deeply moved. I could tell it was painful for some to remember. The stories were sad yet beautiful. We all have regrets, but do we learn from them? Would we change anything, everything, or just some parts?

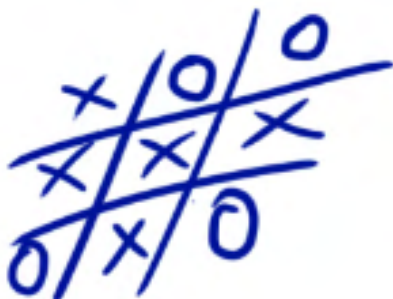


I sit and ponder my regrets as the snow falls and covers everything with clean white purity. Would I change anything? Do I have regrets? Of course, I have regrets. I regret when life was trying to teach me a lesson and I didn't listen. I didn't listen because I was having fun and I knew better than spirit, my teacher. I regret that it took me too long to learn the lesson, lots of wasted time and energy I could have used to pursue another regret. Why didn't I do this sooner, or why did it take me so long to discover \_\_\_\_\_ fill in the blank. I wasted 35 years looking for answers that were right in front of me. Or maybe I should say within me. I am still learning and I know I will keep learning until I take my last breath.



So I doodle.

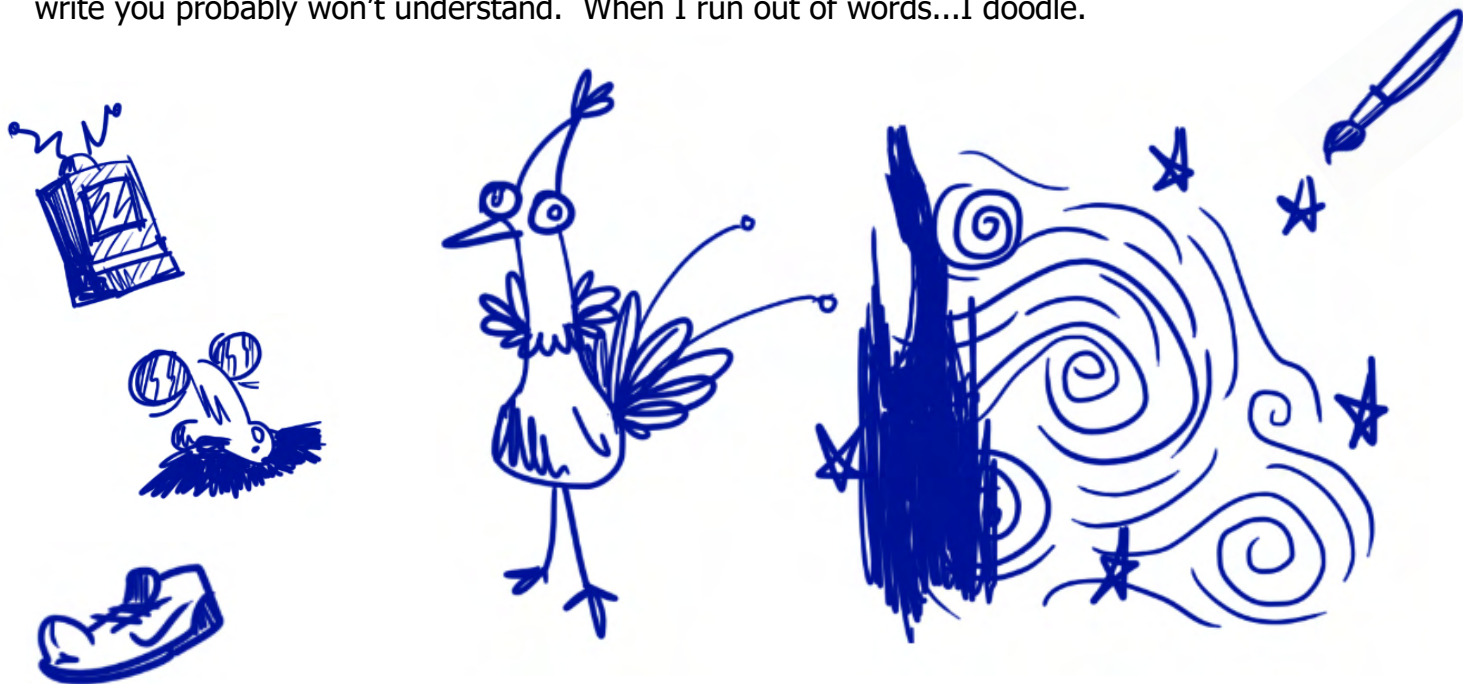
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Thoughts - Vincent Van Gough, Starry Night, Don McLean's song, a tribute to Vincent. "Now I understand, what you tried to say to me. How you suffered for your sanity. How you tried to set them free. They would not listen, they're not listening still, perhaps they never will." "And when no hope was left inside. On that starry, starry night — you took your life as lovers often do..." Vincent painted what he saw. I think he saw the world differently and because he tried to express it, he was criticized and not accepted. His paintings were not recognized or bought until after his death. Did he have regrets? Would he have lived if someone had listened or tried to understand? We will never know. We need to be kinder to one another and listen. Listen to their stories, their regrets, and be kind. We all want to be recognized for who we truly are, if not loved. Sometimes we hide that person because we are different and we want to belong.

I want to write and have my writing recognized. Last week when I journeyed to the upper world, I was told to write... Write for myself, not for others. So, no-one may ever see my writings and ramblings or maybe they will see snippets here and there. Most of what I write you probably won't understand. When I run out of words...I doodle.



*Random doodles by Jamie Calder*



## **Friday Night is Quiz Night!**

Moira Holmes hosts the next quiz nights on **2 April** and **7 May** at **7pm**.

The Zoom details are:

Meeting ID: 889 0401 6144  
Passcode: 938953



# How to save your life

## By Susan Carleton

We suffocate, in this half light  
No change of air  
Few shafts of light  
The trees are closing in, we've lost where we begin  
It feels without end  
As we suffocate  
We climb, up through the trees to the canopy  
The sky fills our sight  
The wind blows gloriously past our faces  
As we watch the birds take flight  
As we watch the birds take flight.

We are alone, no one is here  
Cast away from home  
Broken by fear  
The isolation is a pain we cannot bare  
Hope ebbs from us  
But we can't disappear  
So, we just kept on breathing  
In a limbo no one should ever endure  
Then a sail washed up to make a raft  
So, keep breathing for what may come to shore  
So, keep breathing for what may come to shore.

We are not free, bars hold us tight  
We should not be here,  
It isn't right  
Time and time again they try to make us break  
We try to hold on  
Because our souls at stake  
We grab hope and dig down despite injustice  
Tunnelling through the shit of where we have been  
We escape in a river bathed in moonlight  
And with love, wash ourselves clean  
And with love, wash ourselves clean.

We are not whole, we have forgotten how  
Our spirit's unwell  
We are lost to now  
Shut away we forget what we can become  
Grief swallows us,  
Hope turns numb  
But a key opens a garden of healing  
We break open like a seed in our soul  
Growing flowers where there previously were none  
Shouting I'm alive, and I can be whole  
Shouting I'm alive, and I can be whole  
Shouting I'm alive, and I can be whole  
Shouting I'm alive, and I can be whole.



# International Woman Dr Elsie Maud Inglis

**Each year on 8 March, International Women's Day celebrates the achievements of women. David McGill pays a timely tribute to Edinburgh woman, Dr Elsie Maud Inglis, who is celebrated abroad perhaps more than she is in her own country.**

For a century now we have honoured the sacrifice of the millions of men slaughtered or wounded on the battlefields of Europe and beyond in that 'Great War' to end all wars. Europe abounds with memorials and graveyards, yet little mention has been made of the role of women, and one woman in particular — Dr Elsie Maud Inglis.



*Dr Elsie Inglis — celebrated in 2009 on the Clydesdale Bank £50 note*

A qualified doctor and surgeon, and prominent in the Suffragette Movement, she was determined to play a part in the First World War. This extraordinary woman didn't take up arms or fight in the conventional sense, but took on and overcame the British Establishment for the right to mend and heal the casualties of war by founding the Scottish Women's Hospital for Foreign Service.

Told by the War Office to "...go home and sit still" she was invited by France to set up a battlefield hospital unit run entirely by women. The London Suffrage Society financed Inglis and eighty women to support Serbian soldiers fighting for the allies and during the First World War arranged fourteen such medical units to serve in France, Serbia, Corsica, Salonika, Romania, Russia and Malta.

One government official who saw the doctors and nurses working in Russia remarked that: "No wonder Scotland is a great country if the women are like that."

*Continued on next page...*



Although she died in Newcastle on her journey home to the city of her upbringing, *"Her people brought her back to the city of her fathers. Over her hung the torn banners of Scotland's history. On her coffin, as she lay looking to the east in high St Giles, were placed the flags of Great Britain and Serbia."*

After the funeral service, the coffin was placed on a gun-carriage. *"Across the Water of Leith the long procession wound its way. Within sight of the grave it was granted to her grateful brethren, the representatives of the Serbian nation, to carry her coffin, and lower it to the place where the mortal in her was to lie in its last rest."*

*Elsie Inglis grave in Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh  
Images by Kris Calder*



Arthur Balfour, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs commented on her death: "Elsie Inglis was a wonderful compound of enthusiasm, strength of purpose and kindness. In the history of this World War, alike by what she did and by the heroism, driving power and the simplicity by which she did it, Elsie Inglis has earned an everlasting place of honour."

One can only surmise as to the number of troops whose lives were saved by Inglis and her colleagues, and marvel at the number of their descendants alive today: thousands, perhaps tens of thousands.

Although Edinburgh was to honour her with the creation of the Elsie Inglis Memorial Maternity Hospital in 1925 (with surplus funds arising from disbandment of the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service, which she herself had formed) it was closed in 1988. There is the odd plaque in her name dotted throughout the city and even a short cul-de-sac – the Elsie Inglis Way – near the site of the former memorial hospital, but nothing substantive. In Serbia they have street names, exhibitions, museums and even some new facilities named after, not just Elsie Inglis, but a number of the other women who served in the Scottish Women's Hospitals. In 2015 Dr Inglis and five other female volunteers were honoured by appearing on commemorative Serbian stamps. Founded by Graham Perolls in 1991 Hospices of Hope has seen the organisation develop from very small beginnings into the leading hospice care organisation in South East Europe. Their latest project - the BELhospice in Belgrade - is now underway and is the first purpose-built hospice in Serbia. One of the wards will be named after Dr Elsie Inglis.

As there are more than 43 statues of men in Edinburgh city centre, but only two statues of women – one of Queen Victoria and one of a female victim of apartheid – now might be the time for us to honour this truly remarkable woman in her native city.



# The Defiant Spring

## By Susan Carleton

The audacious snowdrop thrusts past snow and frosted ground  
Its delicate resolute drops of white  
Peppering the promise of,  
The Defiant Spring  
It breaks into our Winter souls with tinkling bells  
Day begins to relentlessly peel back the night by degrees  
Dissipating the fog of stasis from us  
That condensed and clung  
Through the lockdown of life that Winter brought  
That suffocated our stifled hearts  
The crocuses boldly rise their cups aloft of cherry orange  
Without looking towards this pandemic  
That still shrouds us  
The stems of daffodil, tulip and bluebell  
Make no reference either  
To the data of death or economic hardship  
As they obstinately point towards the sun  
That will drag us into its coming warmth and light  
And in our grief and anxiety we yearn for it to penetrate us  
Desperate to be persistently pulled into life renewing  
Willing societies wellbeing to mirror nature's insistence to continue  
Cascading vibrant growth across the landscape  
We long to thrive sustainably without yielding  
Rolling forward with the Spring momentum  
I embed myself mentally to embrace this season  
I buy seeds regardless of whether I can sow them  
I plant hope despite knowing if it can bud  
I stretch roots without feeling the capacity for shoots  
I prepare the future without reassurance that I will live to flower there  
To seek resilience I dig down into my anger and rage  
Into the injustice and pain  
The ignorance and privilege  
that brought us here  
ploughing up the courage to progress  
That germinates from the lost lives and suffering  
That I have witnessed been part of or subject to  
So that it might help scaffold my stem through the soil to the light.  
To assist me to resist feeling hopeless and helpless  
That rises to choke my soul's breath with despairs ivy  
I wrench it off  
Deciding obstinately to still seek life and joy  
compassion and love  
Despite what we have left to endure  
For this is how I choose to make all we lost matter  
Sorrow and fear remain companions but  
I turn my soul, pointing it towards the sun  
Joining nature and it pushed its way into this new season  
Not to forget what was gone but to honor what it meant  
Let it help heal the trauma  
I ring the snowdrops bell as loudly as it will sound  
May we hear it and become  
The Defiant Spring.

*Image by Kenna Calder*



# Children's Corner with Rachael King

## Hello and welcome to the Children's Corner!

For our friends in the Children's Programme, the beginning of this year will be remembered for snowy weather, a return to home-schooling, the arrival of a special puppy and birthdays. The children devised a wonderful quiz to keep us entertained during the school holiday and we have also been impressing each other with our lego skills, origami, baking, computing and solar-powered junk engineering.

We really enjoyed finding out about Wayside Chapel and Alrowwad, discovering where they are based, what the weather is like there at the moment, what the time difference is.

A number of our children have had birthdays over the past month or so and our Sunday morning Zoom regulars now reach a collective 102 years of age (that's including Rachael of course!).



*Cora's colourful birthday cake*



*Euan's 9th birthday cake*



*A lone daffodil photographed on Arthur's Seat by Noah King*





**Spring: a lovely reminder of  
how beautiful change can be.**

**Anonymous**

*Image by Moira Holmes*