

waymark



unitarians in edinburgh

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Early nightfall bathes the sky, dark and darker,
Morning Frost sparkles through,
Frozen leaves crunch beneath heavy booted feet,
Breath like smoke from chimney stacks floats in
the freezing air,
Then on turning a cold corner toward home ...
A bright burst of colour just to let us know
That along with the cold dark comes bright light
and red berries
To warm our path and our souls

Image & words by Christina Harper

A Very Warm Welcome to St Mark's

from Rev Peter Fairbrother



Back and forward

I've been reflecting on the past twelve months — the first full calendar year that I've served as your minister. And what comes to mind is a phrase that never grows old, nor worn, not tired, no matter how often its said, and that's **'thank you'**.

As an expression of gratitude I was going to use this space to list everyone who has contributed to and/or supported our community over the past year. However, it soon became pretty evident to me that such a list would be ENORMOUS, and with it there's always the risk of accidentally leaving folk off. So suffice to say dear reader, my deepest thanks to you for your involvement in our community over these last twelve months. Whether you're new to St Mark's, an occasional visitor, a friend from afar, or a long-standing member, we are all the richer for your connection with us. In thanks and in celebration, I do hope you can join us for our annual festive lunch which will be held in the Upper Hall on 22nd December (and our other forthcoming gatherings outlined in the pages ahead).

As well as looking back, this is also a great time to look forward to what is to come as we prepare to enter a new year. I'm delighted to say that our Sunday service programme for 2020 is taking shape nicely. In the next issue of Waymark I'll share with you what we have planned so far. Also, further to the success of our recent Autumn programme of community events, preparations have begun in the development of a Spring programme. Needless to say, if there are events and activities you'd like to see held within our community in the new year, and/or if you wish to support developments as they emerge, please give me a shout. Your input and involvement would be hugely appreciated.

And the Waymark editorial team would also love to hear from you too! If you have pictures, art, and/or writings you'd like to share in future issues please don't hesitate to email the team at editor@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk. All contributions gratefully received. They'd also welcome your feedback on recent issues too.

So dear reader, whether you receive these words in a place of reflection or one of actively planning ahead, I wish you a tender, gentle end to the year, and a happy opening into the next one.

With love,

Peter

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Unitarians in Edinburgh



@UnitariansInED

Future Sunday Services at St Mark's

Services are at 11am in the church, with coffee and conversation in the hall afterwards. Children sit with their parents for the opening part of the service, and then follow their own programme.

1 Dec — Deck the Halls

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother with representatives from Waverley Care

We take time together on the first Sunday of Advent to create and decorate our church Christmas tree. Crafts will be provided for those who wish to participate. 'Arty skills' are not required, simply bring a sense of fun. We will be joined by representatives from Waverley Care to mark World AIDS Day.

8 Dec — Walking with Spirit

Service led by Paula Rowe, with Rev Peter Fairbrother

Paula Rowe, a well respected Spiritualist medium and healer, and co-founder of the Rainbow Meditation and Healing Trust, based in Musselburgh, speaks to us about her faith and spiritual path.

15 Dec — Blue Christmas

Service led by Members of the Ministry Team

Loved ones missing from the table, pressure to live up to expectations, and economic challenges can make us feel more blue than festive as Christmas approaches. Share sacred space with kindred spirits during this special service to acknowledge and honour the challenges of the season.

22 Dec — Family Service — Celebrating the Winter Solstice

Service led by Sara Robertson and Team

We explore the darkness of the Winter Solstice, the light and joy of community and celebration, and look forward to the return of the sun.

24 Dec — Carols and Readings for Christmas Eve

Service led by Lesley Hartley

A service of carols, with readings from members of our congregation. The service will begin at 4pm and will be followed by mulled wine and Christmas treats.

29 Dec — Time for Rest

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother

A quiet end to the year - join us for a post-festive service of rest, relaxation, and tender loving care.

5 Jan — 2020 Vision — an Opening into Gratitude

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother

In the depth of winter, in shivering dark days, the light is returning... slowly, but surely. For our first gathering of 2020 we acknowledge and give thanks all that is light and bright around us, and within us, as we step into this new year.

12 Jan — Wallace Tavener — Minister at St Mark's 1927-1958

Service led by Lesley Hartley

Tavener was an exponent of humanistic theology before it became a significant factor in British Unitarian thought. Lesley Hartley will look at Wallace Tavener's influence in what was known as 'the red church'!

19 Jan — All About Humanism

Service led by Lesley Hartley, introducing Lara Celini

'Humanism is the outcome of a long tradition of free thought that has inspired many of the world's great thinkers and creative artists and gave rise to science itself.' Lesley Hartley will lead this service with Lara Celini, a Scottish humanist celebrant.

26 Jan — Stand Together

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother and Katie Brown

'Don't be content in your life just to do no wrong, be prepared every day to try and do some good' - Sir Nicholas Winton, who rescued 669 children from Nazi-occupied Europe. Genocidal regimes throughout history have deliberately fractured societies by marginalising certain groups. Indeed 'demonising the other' is an approach which is commonplace in today's politics, both globally and domestically. On the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day we explore what it means to 'stand together' (the theme of this year's commemoration) for each of us, for all of us, in opposition to division and hate.

Lighting the Chalice

Earlier this year, Julie Godfrey and Rob Cracknell lit the Chalice with these words.

In a recent study, residents of two towns in Colorado were asked to debate their political views with each other. Before the debate they filled out questionnaires about their views. The residents of the first town started out as centre-left and the residents of the second started out as centre-right. After engaging in head on debate for a few hours they filled out the questionnaires again. Can you guess what happened? At the end of the experiment the residents of the first town had gone from centre-left to far-left and the residents of the second town had gone from centre-right to far-right. Their arguments didn't persuade, all they succeeded in doing was polarising each other's opinions even further.

When we enter a conversation with the goal of persuading the other person, we are not open to hearing them. They pick up on that and get defensive and won't listen either. From the moment we enter a discussion with the goal of persuading the other person we have engineered a confrontation not a conversation.

If we want to have meaningful discussions with people who have radically different views from us, we need to be willing to listen and seriously consider their perspective. This can be difficult if the topic is something we are passionate about. I know I struggle to keep calm when debating topics like welfare, gay marriage or homelessness with my family. But we need to have open minds and try to understand where the other person is coming from. If we approach others with genuine curiosity and willingness to see the world through their eyes, they are far more likely to open up. As a bonus, they may even be willing to gently hear how we see the world. But this is a bonus, it should not be the goal.

I light the peace candle for people on all sides of the spectrum. My hope is that we can debate in less divisive ways and understand each other better. May compassion and understanding be our guide.



An Introduction to...Margery MacKay

“An Introduction to...” is a great way to find out a bit more about the people you may be sitting next to on Sunday mornings. In this issue we meet Margery MacKay.

Long-time member of St Mark's, Margery MacKay, has a history with the church that started before she was born.

Her parents were married at St Mark's on 1st September 1950.

Baby Margery was christened by minister Rev Wallace Taverner who developed the pacifist, social and religiously progressive traditions of the congregation during his tenure of 1928 to 1958.



Margery attended Sunday school where she found the teachers encouraging and kind. “We learned about world faiths, Christianity and the world in general.”

Sunday school picnics and Christmas bazaars are fond memories for Margery who during her teenage years didn't attend church often. It wasn't until 1976 after she was invited to the 200th Anniversary Service at St Mark's that she attended more regularly. She became a member in 1978.

The spiritual ethos at St Mark's suited Margery and when she was invited to attend the UGA Annual Meeting in Manchester that year, she went. “Little did I know that in 2013, I would become the Church Secretary myself,” Margery said.

St Mark's has fed Margery spiritually, given her friendship, broadened her horizons and given her confidence to become involved in activities Unitarian and otherwise.

Margery has always been a Universalist and interested in other cultures and faiths. She feels strongly about promoting diversity and equality and has been involved with the Edinburgh Interfaith Association since 1993.

“Unitarians are a caring and open faith community celebrating diverse beliefs, supporting one another through life in searching for meaning. They originated from the liberal Christian tradition, but now include people of all faiths and none.”



Interfaith World Peace Event



Visit from Liz Slade



Celebrating our Minister, Rev Peter Fairbrother

Image Roger Har



Unitarians in E



Edinburgh 2019

Festive Offerings at S

For many Christmas can be a difficult time of year. For some it is the challenge of being with celebrations with which they feel no personal connection, and the irritation of living with the accompanying frenzied commercialism of it all. For those living with bereavement it can be a hellishly lonely time to get through, one that sharpens the edges of grief. And for those who choose to be on their own, the relentless social pressures of 'being-together-at-Christmas', and having a 'wonderful-family-Christmas' can make the whole thing feel pretty miserable.

This year at St Mark's our seasonal offerings endeavour to honour those seeking respite and breathing space from some of the more traditional festive trappings. Our 'Blue Christmas' service on 15 December acknowledges the challenges many of us face, on many levels, as we approach the holidays. The heart circle on the 11th provides a safe, private space to share our thoughts and feelings, apart from the expectations and needs of others, as Christmas draws near. And our Winter Solstice service on the 22nd, the darkest day, holds us in knowing that light is returning.

I hope you'll join us for the events listed here — Rev Peter Fairbrother.

Blue Christmas

Sunday 15 December at 11am in St Mark's

St Mark's is holding its first 'Blue Christmas' service, designed for those who may have faced loss of a person, a job, a relationship, or faced a difficult event or circumstance in their lives.

For more than 20 years in the US and Canada, this service has been held on the longest and darkest night of the year, and during the season of merriment and warm family get-togethers, 'Blue Christmas', 'Longest Night', or 'Hard to be Merry' services serve as an acknowledgement, in a comfortable environment, to people in pain. It's a chance to share your journey, if you wish. If not, it's a chance to sit, reflect and feel at ease.

"The service will be an opportunity to acknowledge and meditate upon the sadness that people may feel, for many reasons, around the festive season" said Rachael King, a member of St Mark's Ministry Team.

The deep ache of grief felt by many after the death of a loved one is only compounded at this time of year when everyone else seems to be jolly and festive. It can be a painful and lonely time for many people who feel the blanket of grief and loss weigh heavily upon them all over again as the festive holidays roll around.

Christina Harper reflects "At my first service of this kind, in 2003, I met a woman whose husband had died. Three years later she lost a son to cancer. Until this service was offered she felt that there was nowhere she could walk into and feel sad, sit quietly, or shed a tear. Some who attended found the candle lighting and quiet had a calming effect and were a wonderful time of remembrance."

This service is also a time for people who feel joyous to be supportive of others. You don't have to be sad to attend.

St Mark's

Heart-Circle — Be by Candlelight

Wednesday 11 December at 6.30pm in the Upper Hall

Does the festive season fill you with stress and dread? Frazzled by all the rushing around, the expectations and demands? Give yourself an early Christmas gift of a little spaciousness and join us for a pre-festive heart-circle. A group of us will simply sit by candlelight for an hour and honour what arises. Silence will be honoured. Tears will be honoured. Laughter will be honoured. Anger, sadness, joy will be honoured. Simply come as you are and know that you will be welcomed and accepted. The circle will be facilitated by our minister, Peter.

Celebrating the Winter Solstice

Sunday 22 December at 11am in St Mark's

Robin likes day and Owl likes night. Can they live in a world with only day or night? Will one win outright or will a balance be found? At our Winter Family Service we will be honouring the Solstice with an interactive, animal filled story, depicting the annual struggle between day and night.

St Mark's Christmas Lunch

Sunday 22 December at 1pm in the Upper Hall

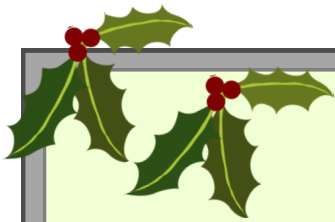
Join us for St Mark's traditional 'bring and share' Christmas lunch after the service on 22 December. Everyone is most welcome! There will be a sign-up sheet in the Upper Hall on Sunday 1 December for those who are able to offer their help, or who can bring along food. For anyone interested in helping, there will be a short meeting after the service on 1 December.

Carol Service

Tuesday 24 December at 4pm in St Mark's

The tradition of singing songs in mid-winter has been around for hundreds of years. The Victorians, however, with their love of Christmas, can be thanked for giving us many of the carols we sing today. They composed new ones, and rewrote some old ones to give them a clearer meaning. In some cases they used existing tunes, for example the tune for Ding Dong Merrily on High dates back to the 1500s, while the tune for Good King Wenceslas is an old medieval dance tune from the 1200s. Join us in keeping the tradition of singing songs in mid-winter alive at our Carol Service on Christmas Eve.

In and around St Mark's



Christmas Collection for St Catharine's Homeless Project

From Sunday **17 November** to **15 December**

We will be collecting **new** items as gifts for
St Catharine's Homeless Project this Christmas.

Please bring to the church donations of men's **socks** and **gloves**; **hats** and **scarves**;
small toiletries such as **shampoo, shower gel, soap, hand cream, tooth
brushes, toothpaste** and **razors** (for women and men).

Our grateful thanks to Brian Robertson who will take the donations to St Catharine's
after the service on 15 December.

Any questions speak to Lesley Hartley
or Jane Aaronson.



Poetry & Prose Reading for Pleasure

Sunday **5 January** at 1pm

Come and share some favourite
poems or prose.

For more information contact Margery MacKay
e: stmarkssecretary@btinternet.com

Heart-Circle — Be by Candlelight

Wednesday **11 December** & **15 January**
at 6.30pm

A safe, private space to honour what we're with.

For more information contact Rev Peter
Fairbrother

Mindfulness @ Lunchtime

Every Tuesday at 12.15pm

For more information contact Jon Bagust
f: mindfulnessatlunchtime

The Bereavement Support Group

Saturday **11 January** at 11am

The Bereavement Support Group offers support
to anyone suffering a loss through bereavement,
separation or estrangement.

For more information contact Jane Aaronson
e: ja@ednet.co.uk

Earth-based Paths Exploration Group

Wednesday **18 December** at 12noon

Explore your connections to the Earth and
nature's cycles as they support your own
spirituality.

For more information contact Eli Roth
e: eli.roth.personal@gmail.com

Soup & Social

Wednesday **4 December** & **8 January**
at 12noon

Join us for a bowl of heartening soup, some nice
bread, tea or coffee, and some good company.

For more information contact Rev Peter
Fairbrother

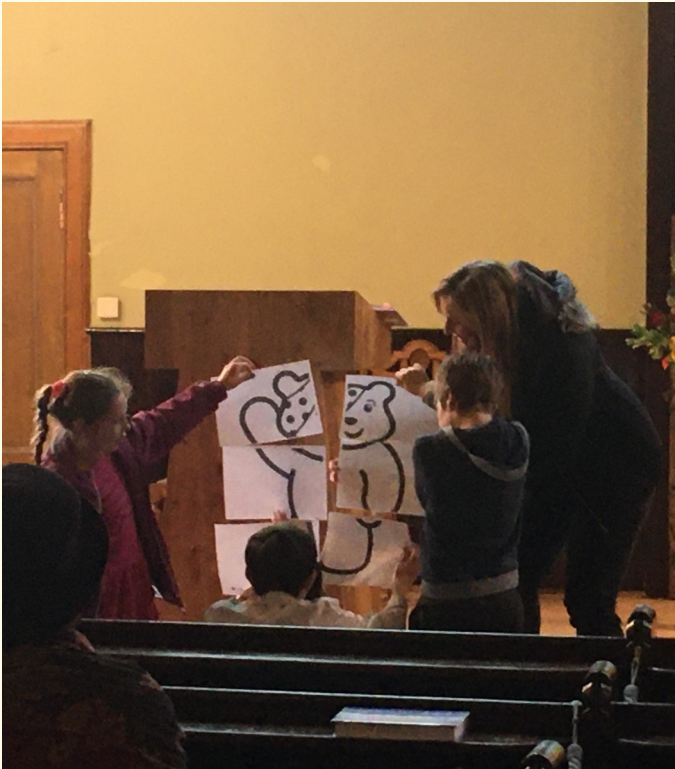
Edinburgh Wild Geese Sangha (Interbeing Buddhist Meditation)

Every Thursday at 7.15pm

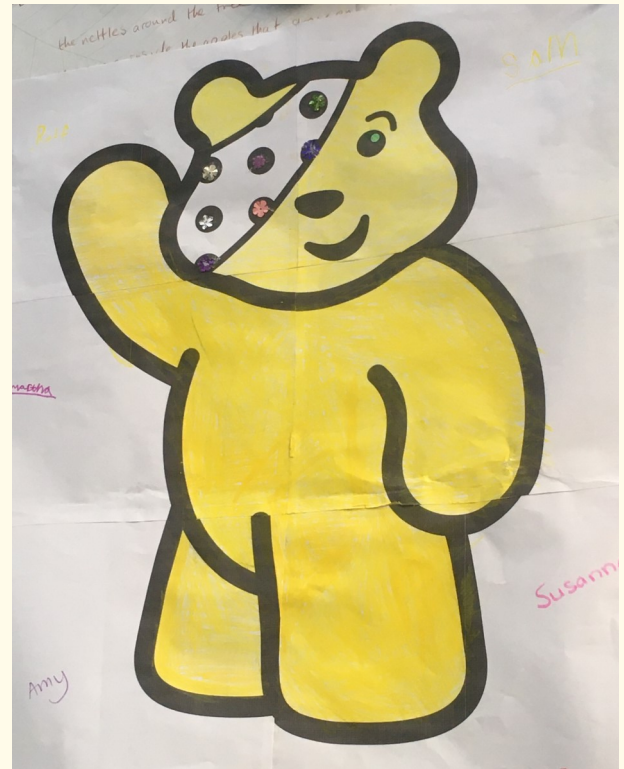
Children's Corner with Sara Robertson

Hello from the Children's Programme!

On 17 November Lesley Hartley spoke about Smile Train, an international charity which provides medical help for children in third world countries who need cleft palate surgery. In the 'time for all ages' Lesley talked with the children about Children in Need activities which had taken place just a couple of days earlier. One of the children's activities that morning was to decorate a HUGE picture of Pudsey, and they did it beautifully — complete with sparkly spots!



Pudsey before...



Pudsey after!

This year again at St Mark's we are having a 'Reverse Santa' for the children — Blàthnaid Quinn explains.

"In the run up to 9 December, family groups and members of the congregation are asked to consider donating an unwrapped new gift, suitable for a deserving child as part of the Forth Radio Cash for Kids Christmas Toy Appeal.

Gifts can be donated from Sunday 17 November to a collection point in the church, and they will be taken away for donation to the Christmas Toy Appeal on **Sunday 9 December**. If you would like more information, please email me at blathnaid@blathnaidquinn.com.

But don't worry, Santa will arrive at St Mark's, as ever, in full regalia on 22 December to the Family Christmas Service, with small gifts for the children."

It would be helpful to have an idea of how many children will be at our Family Christmas Service. If you are intending to come along, please email Blàthnaid with the number of children and their ages.

Contact stmarkschildrensprogramme@gmail.com for more information



'Be silent or say something better than silence'
Pythagoras

Image of the October heart-circle altar by Rev Peter Fairbrother