

# waymark



unitarians in edinburgh

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**We wait too long between taking glimpses inside our rooms, our spirits,  
our souls, our selves,  
We rush by them when there's too much to do, meaning to go back and sort it  
all out,  
Then a 'something' happens and we have to STOP,  
Take a deeper look inside our rooms, our spirits, our souls, our selves,  
Look! Anger, raging in one corner, sadness lurking in another, needing  
cleaned,  
Those once spotless places are now dark and scary corners.  
A deep breath in, and a long breath out, breathing light into those places,  
Beginning of transformation,  
Pick up some tools: a sprinkle of joy onto the path you walk and into those  
hearts we have neglected, forgotten.  
Seeds of change sprout green shoots under the golden sun,  
Let it in to brighten the corners of our rooms, our spirits, our souls, our selves,  
When we stop and nurture ourselves we grow strong and full in peace and  
love and renovate ourselves with a new sense of love, joy, self, care.**

*Image by Rev Peter Fairbrother, words by Christina Harper*

# A Very Warm Welcome to St Mark's

from Rev Peter Fairbrother



## Are we in love yet?\*

This week I learnt that one of my favourite pop groups from the 1990s is reforming, recording new music, and once more going on tour. The news filled me with excitement and delight, and it catapulted me back in reminiscence to the years when the group's music was the backdrop to my life. The early 1990s was a hugely formative time for me: I was a student back then taking my first steps into adulthood. It was an adventurous and exciting time, a time of hugely influential connections and relationships, and one bountiful in possibilities. I look back on it with much fondness.

JOLT to 2019 and the somewhat disconcerting realisation that these memories are now approaching 30 years old. Where has the time gone? I often think of my student days as the happiest of my life (so far). Of course, nostalgia is a wonderful thing... The student-me did not live that time with such a sense of appreciation – consumed as I was with the worries and concerns that rubbed alongside the joys and delights I had back then.

I sometimes wonder what my younger self, bubbling with the energy of young adulthood, would make of the life I live now in my late forties? Would he feel happy or sad at 'how things have turned out'? The dreams that died, the new ones that emerged, the love that blossomed, the times of heartbreak... Would he see the essence of himself in all that was to follow?

Doubtless like you, I have gone through many transformations in my life, of all kinds, micro and monumental. Doubtless too, many more await us. And in it all, for me, the recurrence of the following question, possibly the most important question: can we embrace our past and present selves; the 'wonderful' and the 'woeful', the 'embarrassing' and the 'exalted', the perceived 'good' and 'bad', from the vantage point of this moment, from where we are now? *In essence, can we love our whole self?*

I was recently moved to learn of the spiritual practice of a fellow minister, one which holds in gratitude those things that many of us take for granted. Her practice opens with the following words: 'I'm alive and awake to each new day, and what a blessing it is'.

Friends, may each of us be alive and awake to each new day, to the joy of now (and then), and to the boundless possibilities that exist in every waking moment.

**I wish you a wonder-filled summer.**

**Peter**

\* '...Don't you know that's what it's all about?'

*From the album 'Hormonally Yours' by Shakespears Sister, 1992.*

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# Future Sunday Services at St Mark's

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**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.**

Our summertime services for June and July seek to connect us to the joy and nurture we find in nature, as we celebrate with our pets, the birds, and the bees! We also celebrate diversity with our annual Pride service, we hold an appreciation of the diverse work of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association (our good cause for June), and we undertake our own unique journeys into the labyrinth. Oh yes, and make space too for the unexpected!

## **2 June — A Wing and a Prayer**

*Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother*

Drawing upon the practice of 'bird therapy' developed by Joe Harkness, we explore the benefits to body and spirit of bird watching.

## **9 June — Honouring our Pets**

*Service led by Katie Brown*

A service celebrating our non-human companions.

## **16 June — Prelude to Pride**

*Service led by Karl & Mark Stewart from Bristol Unitarians*

"Who are you NOT to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" (adapted from Marianne Williamson). Igniting your little lights ready to shine ahead of next week's Pride celebrations!

## **23 June — The Edinburgh Interfaith Association**

*Service led by Lesley Hartley*

Iain Stewart from EIFA will be talking to us during this 'good cause' service.

## **30 June — In Search of Hope and Honey**

*Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother*

There's a real buzz about this service! What can we learn from the world of bees to support our spiritual growth?

## **7 July — Have you Tried Screaming?**

*Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother*

"You can throw away the ideal of the 'calm, cool, collected and rational one' right now, friend. It is a terrible lie. It is healthy to sob, to scream, to moan, to sigh, to laugh hysterically, to tremble, to feel fear, anger, profound sorrow, ecstatic joy, deep and powerful desire and longings." Words by Jeff Foster. How are we with anger and wrath as expressions of the human condition?

## **14 July — Labyrinth**

*Service led by Lesley Hartley*

Exploring a labyrinth can help you focus on the moment because there is no choice about which way to go — simply follow the path.

## **21 July — Kindness, Positivity and Joy — how do we use these in our lives?**

*Service led by Christina Harper*

Bring your joy to service! Seeing people who seem to always be positive, encouraging, joyful, makes me wonder what they do to be that way. In the face of war, climate change, personal tragedies, and the turmoil in the world today, how do we find kindness, positivity and joy and pass it to others?

## **28 July — Leave your Expectations at the Door**

*Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother*

# Lighting the Chalice

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**St Mark's member Niall Urquhart lit our Chalice on 28 April with these words in memory of Polly Higgins who died on 21 April, and to affirm the need to carry on the work to which she dedicated her life - the struggle to have ecocide accepted as a crime under international law.**

Following the Second World War, the first session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that 'affirmed' that genocide was a crime under international law and it went on to define it as the denial of the right of existence of entire human groups, and a denial of the right to live of individual human beings.

In the 1970s, following the Vietnam War, there were calls for ecocide, the mass damage and destruction of the Earth, to become a crime under international law and for the creation of a legal duty of care for all inhabitants that have been or are at risk of being significantly harmed due to ecocide.

It is now becoming increasingly evident that the greatest threat to all life on earth is the threat of ecocide. We are reminded of the fatal impacts of climate change and environmental destruction on an almost daily basis. The need for a legal duty of care for the earth and its inhabitants has never been clearer.

Born and raised in the west of Scotland, Polly Higgins made it her mission for 15 years to have the United Nations and the International Criminal Court recognise ecocide as a crime under international law. Recalling the response of RBS's CEO in the first meeting after the Government bailed the bank out as to "Why are you financing the destruction of the Athabasca tar sands?" she recalled that he laughed and said "It's not a crime is it?" Polly made it her mission to make such actions a crime and set out the rationale in her seminal book 'Eradicating Ecocide'. Her second book, 'Earth is our Business' contained a draft Ecocide Act and model indictments against those who destroy the environment on which all life depends for survival. She was named one of the world's top 10 visionary thinkers by Ecologist magazine.

Polly died of cancer a week ago today, aged 50. She died at a time when her call is being taken up by Extinction Rebellion, whose actions around the world demand the establishment of a law against ecocide, and when support for the introduction of an international law on ecocide is rapidly gaining traction across the world.

However, Polly's vision continues to face strong opposition. In September 2018, John Bolton, President Trump's national security adviser, denounced the prospective ecocide law in a Washington speech, warning that the aim was to "intimidate US decision makers and others in democratic societies", despite the US not being a member of the ICC.

Before she died she told George Monbiot that

*"If this is my time to go, my legal team will continue undeterred. But there are millions who care so much and feel so powerless about the future, and I would love to see them begin to understand the power of this one, simple law to protect the Earth – to realise it's possible, even straightforward. I wish I could live to see a million Earth Protectors standing for it – because I believe they will."*

# An Introduction to...Christina Harper Hamilton

**"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 Christina Harper Hamilton.**

My father was transferred in 1963 to Newcastle-Upon-Tyne for work. I was born that year but at the age of three we returned to Edinburgh and went to live with my paternal grandmother, Jeannie. From there we moved to the Gorgie area of Edinburgh where we lived until 1986 when I moved to the United States. My two daughters and I returned to Scotland in 2014.



My road to Unitarianism came in 1996. I was living and working in the Seattle area of the USA and had, for many years, been searching for my 'faith home'. One Monday morning I was busy at my desk in the newsroom of the daily paper I worked for. One of my editors was telling someone what a great time she had at church the day before. "Where is your church, Robin?" I asked. "What kind of church is it?" That's when she told me about being a UU, Unitarian Universalist. It sounded interesting. "Come along next Sunday," Robin said. "We are having an ice cream Sunday!" That's all it took to make it a date!

When I went to the Edmonds UU Church just north of Seattle I walked through the door and felt like I was home. It sounds corny. But it's true. I could tell that the friendly people, the lovely songs, the message of love, peace, inherent worth and dignity, was exactly what I had been searching for.

Fast forward a few years and I moved to another town. There I joined The Evergreen UU Fellowship in Marysville, Washington. Another perfect fit with a wonderful program for children including Our Whole Lives (OWL) an age appropriate look at birth, life, death, sexuality, and LGBT issues. My daughter Wendy learned so much and thoroughly enjoyed her time singing in the Pine Cone Choir.

When I came back to Edinburgh on vacation I looked up St. Mark's. My minister in Marysville had mentioned he had attended a service when he was in Edinburgh. St. Mark's was quite different from the US churches I'd been a member of. But I enjoyed the service and when we moved here we joined!

Being a Unitarian, or in my case a UU, means so much to me. Our Seven Principles are a wonderful guide to life and how to be while we are in it. There are many things I'd like to do at St. Mark's and I hope to achieve them all, including leading a service and visiting Chennai, India, (one extreme to the other), and continuing to build on my faith along with my husband, Craig, and daughters Wendy and Lucy.

# Reflections on the GA



The Annual Meeting of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches was held this year from 16 to 18 April in Birmingham. Nine members from St Mark's attended, including our minister Rev Peter Fairbrother. Jane Aaronson, Kate Foggo, Lesley Hartley and Rodger Hartley reflect on what they found when they went to Birmingham...

## JANE AARONSON

Last year's decision to reduce the meeting time at the GA from 4 days to 3, was made with the hope that this might encourage wider attendance. Conference Organiser, Andrew Mason, reported that 356 people attended this year and of those, 70 people came for the first time. A positive result.

Women led our opening reflections every day. Terri Quaye, a Unitarian lay preacher, offered hers on the theme of music. Quaye is a singer, songwriter, pianist and percussionist and her reflections were an amazing experience, full of energy, which set the tone for the opening plenary session. Stephanie Bisby, a ministry student, gave reflections on Wednesday and Rev Maria Pap, minister of the Mansfield church, led the reflections on Thursday.

The Lyndsey Press book launch session stood out for me, particularly the interview (pictured right) of Rev Dr Ann Peart, the editor of *Unitarian Women: A Legacy of Dissent*, by Rev Claire MacDonald.

As a 7<sup>th</sup> generation Unitarian, Helen Mason is an ideal Director to launch the new Unitarian College. Mason and Rev Ant Howe, the college ministry tutor, talked about their ambitions for the college.



Rev Dr Ann Peart and Rev Claire MacDonald

Along with ministry training there will be opportunities for much-needed lay leadership training too. There is a link to St Mark's as our own Joan Cook, a former GA president, will be one of the Trustees.

Each year I ask myself whether, as a physically disabled woman, I really want to go through the increasing physical strain of attending the meetings. The answer is still a resounding 'yes'. Furthermore, my hope is that some of you will join me next year from 7 to 9 April in Birmingham.

## KATE FOGGO

St Mark's member Kate Foggo was St Mark's 'GA Zette' link at the meetings. Kate attended many sessions and still found time to be part of GA Zette team, producing and contributing to issues. Kate was inspired by a workshop that took place to write the following piece, as published in the Zette.



### Annual Meetings Prayer

Our Community, who art in the Hilton, hallowed be thy Annual Meetings.  
Thy delegates come, their will be done, having read all of the report. (No?)  
Give us each day our daily Zette, and forgive us mishearing, as we forgive those who can't use microphones properly.  
And lead us out of temptation, by being late for the evening event so we have to miss out on dessert (and coffee!)  
For thine is the workshops, the worship and the expensive bar bill which puts us into debt forever and ever.  
Amen.

## LESLEY HARTLEY

On the opening day of the 2019 General Assembly there is no Edinburgh banner being paraded. Perhaps we'll do something about that for next year.

The John Relly Beard lecture was combined with the keynote speaker this year, Lord Mark Price, currently chair of Fairtrade. He was a government trade and development minister for a couple of years with David Cameron but made his name from work with John Lewis about achieving workplace happiness. "Nobody knows how much you know until they know how much you care" Price said.

I was delighted to find out at the Women's League meeting that a grand total of £8,600 had been raised for the Sepsis Trust UK charity. As one of 170 Unitarian churches, St. Mark's played a part in that.

I think the best speaker of all the meetings was Patrick Hall who was invited by the Penal and Social Affairs group to speak about the problems of social care. Patrick delivered a seamless presentation about a sustainable care policy to incorporate statutory care leave. He looked in particular at care leave provision in other countries. It does work.

There were some exciting presentations about the new Unitarian College. What a coincidence that Helen Mason, who is the College Director, is the many-time great-granddaughter of John Relly Beard who was a co-founder of the first Unitarian college in the 1860s. The New Unitarian College has a very flexible approach to ministry, based on 32 competencies. For instance, it enables the single mum who works part-time to train alongside full-time students.

One of the last workshops I attended was about Communications and how social media can help churches. Rory Castle Jones is the Unitarian Communications Officer based at Essex Hall and he very kindly helped the ageing meeting members through the intricacies of setting up websites, Twitter and Instagram. I liked his comment that if a congregation decides that social media is at the top of their priority list then the work will get done. When Rev Andy Pakula arrived at New Unity church 12 years ago, there was a congregation of six. Now with hard work and excellent use of social media his congregation is the largest in the UK.

So how did I find this year's GA - a little short on controversy and good debate, but there were well-attended meetings and workshops, excellent networking and I was very encouraged by the New College. Was it worth it? Of course it was.

## ROGER HARTLEY

This year's GA sessions were more focused and did not include the trivial battles and grandstanding that previously occurred during the full-length meetings of prior years. This was due to the event being shortened to one full and two half days. Even so, the sessions were relentless with typically only 10-minute breaks leaving me tired by close of business; about 9 p.m. both days. The downside was that there was little time for 'fun' or chatting with old friends and making new ones. I understand that this may have helped to cut costs but I feel something has been lost.

Each day there was at least one act of worship including the anniversary service which almost everyone attends. These were moving. Ministers seemed inspired and hearing 350 or so people belting out some of our favourite purple-book hymns was stirring.

Meetings consisted of two types of gatherings beginning with Plenary Sessions, to which all representatives attend and where decisions follow debates then are voted on by those eligible to vote.

When sessions were not running, 'break out' meetings were set up and attendees chose which of these to go to according to personal preference or congregational need.

I attended "The Inquirer" reception break out session where the new layout of the publication was circulated. Much comment was made about the size of the small font, and the pale grey colour. For those using reading glasses it's hard to read out with direct sunlight. Having said that the new look is more modern, maybe more attractive to younger readers. There was discussion on the example shown with a colour front and back page but the rest monochrome. Questions were asked about the difference in costs between full colour and part colour but unfortunately the costs were not available to us.

I also attended the National Unitarian Fellowship (NUF) Meeting where a talk by Rev Ant Howe and Helen Mason was presented. They spoke about the new Unitarian College - a college without a building. Ant Howe, is a volunteer Ministry Tutor with the college as well as being minister at Kingswood Chapel, Birmingham. Helen Mason is the Director. The course teaches the 13 competencies of ministry, online learning and placements, and takes two to five years depending on whether the student can study part or full time. The college without a building might be a turning point in bringing about growth in the Unitarian movement and needs £150,000 per year to operate. Thanks to an initial grant from the GA the first 3 years are funded.

Pride Edinburgh 2018: True Colours, saw a massive rainbow of more than 5,000 people take to the streets with fun, love and a real sense of oneness. Even though the sea of participants marched like a moving, massive snake, filling almost every nook and cranny of the Royal Mile, it was very much a 'go at your own pace' march with fun along the way. The rain did not deter marchers, musicians, speakers, and those not on the walk to stop and speak, blow a whistle or shout out with huge smiles.

This year's event will be held on **Saturday 22 June** and will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. The theme will be **Pride Edinburgh 2019: This is me**. Anyone interested in attending the march as part of the Unitarian group should contact Rev Peter Fairbrother (email [minister@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:minister@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk)). It's a great day out!



# On Learning and Unlearning

## JULIA MACINTOSH

It was my pleasure to facilitate the "Exploring our Values and Behaviours" workshop that took place on 9 March, and to meet some of the people involved as committee or congregation members here at St Mark's. We were talking about values, and about how we live our values – a big topic to address in a relatively short space of time.



*Julia Macintosh (back) with Hilary Anderson, Jane Aaronson and Katie Brown at the workshop*

Of the six values which were identified as being of significance to those gathered – community, learning, kindness, integrity, peace and joy – I was most intrigued by this community's commitment to learning as a shared and esteemed value. Learning resonates with me deeply, as a way to approach life – with the humility to understand that I will never know it all, or know for sure. But while I may never know it all, I can always be open to learn – a grounding and foundation of open-mindedness and open-heartedness.

Something I learned at the workshop, for example, was that I missed the opportunity to help one attendee feel as welcome and heard as possible. The feedback I received indicated that I had neglected what they had said, and while I certainly never intended to do so, the impact was still felt in a hurtful way. I have learned that I need to work on my presence when facilitating in order to avoid missing such opportunities to actively listen and to connect.

But can we really speak about learning, without acknowledging the need for unlearning? Learning is an organic process. When we learn, we don't simply pack more information on top of existing information; we change existing information into something different and new. Charles Eisenstein has described unlearning as "a clearing of the ground" that creates a fertile space in which new ideas and patterns can grow. To stay with my own example: if I am to learn to listen better in groups, I must also unlearn my predisposition to get distracted by the many things being said.

"Learning is an organic process. When we learn we don't simply pack more information on top of existing information."

Unlearning may seem daunting. It suggests that we will be letting go of something familiar and reliable: our knowledge! Yet how many of the world's troubles lie in our inability to let go of ideas and patterns which no longer serve us well? Perhaps unlearning will help us to reach new ideas which serve us better and which help to create what Eisenstein calls "the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible."

As I continue to work with the St Mark's community, I look forward to both learning and unlearning together.

# In and around St Mark's

## Interfaith for Peace Event

Tuesday **2 July** at 7.15pm

Rev Brian Cooper invites you to an evening of talks, readings and meditations with speakers from different faith communities including Unitarians, Muslims for Peace and Edinburgh Interfaith Association.

With music and refreshments afterwards.

## Earth-based Paths Exploration Group

**19 June** at 12.30pm

Explore your connections to the Earth and nature's cycles as they support your own spirituality. This month we will focus discussion on the Druid path.

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

## Poetry & Prose Reading for Pleasure

Sundays **16 June** & **21 July** at 1pm

Come and share some favourite poems or prose.

For more information contact Margery MacKay  
e: stmarkssecretary@btinternet

## The Bereavement Support Group

Saturdays **15 June** & **20 July** 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

## Mindfulness @ Lunchtime

Every Tuesday at 12.15pm

For more information contact Jon Bagust  
f: mindfulnessatlunchtime

## Edinburgh Wild Geese Sangha (Interbeing Buddhist Meditation)

Every Thursday at 7.15pm

# Celebrations at St Mark's!

Huge congratulations to **Michelle Moran** who recently competed in the Special Olympic Games held in Abu Dhabi in March.

Michelle represented Great Britain at Ten-Pin Bowling, winning a silver medal in the singles event, and bronze medals in both the team and doubles event.

Michelle told us about the event at the Sunday service on 7 April. Rev Peter Fairbrother presented Michelle with the church flowers in recognition of her great achievement.



## Waymark Deadlines

**12 July** — August / September issue

**13 September** — October / November issue

**15 November** — December / January issue

**17 January** — February / March issue

e: editor@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

# Children's Corner with Sara Robertson

**Hello from the Children's Programme!** We would like to invite everyone to our summer picnic on **Sunday 23 June** after the service. Please bring something for yourself and something to share. Until then, have some summer fun with our wordsearch!

## WORDSEARCH

CALM  
CANDLE  
CELEBRATION  
CHALICE  
CHAPEL  
CHURCH  
COMMUNITY  
EDINBURGH  
FAMILY  
FLAME  
FREE  
HYMNAL  
INCLUSIVE  
JOYFUL  
LIGHT  
LOVE  
MUSIC  
PEACE  
QUIET  
STMARKS  
UNITARIAN  
WELCOME  
WORSHIP

Y X Z I N Z T C I F K H O K R  
P L L K O Z O W C E H Z E X E  
J I I D I M U S I C E R I V M  
O E H M T E D I N B U R G H O  
Y M N S A M C F H V I T F C C  
F A F I R F T O Y A N Z H F L  
U L V U B O P S M N C A C L E  
L F R Y E P W W A M L H S H W  
Q E Z A L L E I C I U T F H G  
U P C E E Z R A C R S N N F T  
I O Y P C A L E C Q I A I H T  
E R A R T M O H O E V M G T Y  
T H Y I H Y M N A L E I I S Y  
C S N S K R A M T S L E V O L  
F U E L D N A C R E B N E T L



*The children helped with the Flower Communion on 19 May*

UNITARIANS IN  
EDINBURGH

## UPCOMING FAMILY EVENTS

JUNE 9TH - 11 am - INTERGENERATIONAL  
SERVICE - Honouring our Pets

JUNE 23rd - 12 noon - FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
PICNIC IN PRINCE'S ST GARDENS

AUGUST 4TH - 11am -  
INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE - The  
Return of the Church of Pop

If you are interested in visiting or being a leader in the Children's Programme, we would love to have you. Email us at the address below, or speak to Sara on a Sunday for more information.

Contact [stmarkschildrensprogramme@gmail.com](mailto:stmarkschildrensprogramme@gmail.com) for more information



**“Show forgiveness,  
enjoin kindness,  
avoid ignorance.”**

**Words from the Qur’an 7:199**

*Image: the altar depicted was created to honour all affected by the Christchurch tragedy, March 2019*