



# NEWS&VIEWS

**GLASGOW UNITARIANS FEB 2012**

*I said to the man who stood  
at the Gate of the Year,  
"Give me a light that I may  
tread safely into the  
unknown."  
And he replied,  
"Go out into the darkness,  
and put your hand into the  
hand of God.  
That shall be to you better  
than light, and safer than a known way."*



*Christopher Howse*

*(Quoted by King George VI in his Christmas Day broadcast in 1939.)*



**May we all try as hard as these  
little fellows to connect with one  
another in 2012**

*Image contributed by Norman and Jane MacLeod*



**CHURCH NEWS**

Since the introduction of our new Constitution, all we have to do to signify that we want to continue in membership of Glasgow Unitarians is to make one identifiable donation in the year. This may be done by Standing Order, with a cheque, or through the envelope scheme, but whatever you do, it should be clear who has made that donation. Of course, if you are a tax-payer, and want the church to benefit from Gift Aid on your contributions, you should continue to make all of your contributions identifiable, so that they can be totalled, and Gift Aid claimed.

The future ministry initiative, which is being pursued under the auspices of the SUA and the GA, will be holding a seminar on Pastoral Care in Dundee on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March for anyone who is interested from all four Scottish churches.

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Scottish Charity Number SCO 16472  
Printed Newsletter by MBE,  
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You will be pleased to hear that our first tenancies have commenced. The old worship room (Unit 4) is now a Movement and Yoga studio, under the leadership of Mrs Jude Murray. And our old coffee room and vestry will be consulting rooms for Psycho-Therapist Alastair Moodie. There is interest in Unit 1, at the back, on the first floor, but as yet no decision has been taken.

And finally, as mentioned in church on 8<sup>th</sup> January, Lyanne Mitchell has taken over from Janet Briggs as Editor-in-Chief of this newsletter. Janet was thanked with flowers for ten years of service to the News & Views. She will continue to support Lyanne in her roles as Web-Mistress, Designer and Editor of our News and Views.

From now on, please send contributions for N&V to Lyanne. She is delighted to take on this job and with the congregation's support, will do her very best to make our newsletter as interesting as possible.



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## Some Problems of a Multiple Identity Church

By Iain Brown

My younger daughter sent me her latest piece on the multiple identities of Nepali women. She showed how, not only were they wives and partners, daughters, sisters, mothers and grandmothers but they are often also teachers, market women, freedom fighters, political agitators and tillers of the fields. But not all at once!

Multiple roles and the multiple identities that go with them are universal experiences for a social animal. But when we are in one role with one identity the others are usually in the background. Of course occasionally one person's experience as a treasurer for a cause illuminates their role as budgeter for a family, or another person's responsibilities as a manager prevents them from enjoying a close friendship with an employee. Sometimes in public life our multiple identities may lead to serious role conflict meaning that we cannot lead the campaign for X because of responsibilities for Y and painful choices have to be made. But the main point I am making is that generally we concentrate on one role at a time and, in action, are one person.

The analogy between multiple identities in individuals and multiple identities in churches does not run all the way. Analogies never do. But I am going to argue that, although other churches have multiple identities too, the Unitarian Church has them 'in spades' and in a way which is often a serious handicap.

We could discuss to infinity what are the major strands within the Unitarian church but, for the purposes of illustration, I shall take them as being Liberal Christian, Religious Humanist and Pagan/Earth Spirit.

The main danger (there are, of course, many advantages too) of being a multiple identity is that the church appears as a grey/green fudge with pinkish edges. It tries to be all things simultaneously. It cannot be anything definite and recognisable in current terms because, when it tries to be, the other strands prevent it. Above all it cannot be easily marketed, it cannot be promoted as anything but a grey/green fudge with pinkish edges.

Such a church needs to concentrate on one identity/role at a time. In doing that, it doesn't have to lose the others, doesn't have to deny them, but merely put them in the background to concentrate temporarily on promoting one of its multiple identities. I have been guilty of causing trouble myself when the promotion of only one of the Glasgow Church's potential identities other than the one I favoured, led me to fear that the church could fill up with people with whom I had less sympathy. That was not very clever.

Every successful political party in Western Democracies is a coalition of interests, a multiple identity but I particularly recall the Communist Parties of the Europe of the thirties through to the fifties, very successful organisations. They promoted themselves through front organisations that often dealt with single issues but fed fellow travellers, and so also members, back into the central organisation of the Party. Separating out the 'fronts' means sharper identities and better marketing.

**Some Problems of a Multiple Identity Church (continued)**

The internal unity of our beloved grey/green fudge with pink edges does not have to be lost if we follow such a strategy. Certainly we have to take the risk that a promotional campaign might be more successful for one particular strand than a different one for another strand, just as I foolishly feared. But, if we are strong enough in our mutual tolerance and in our enjoyment of diversity, the internal unity which exists need not be lost. And if we are not strong enough do we deserve to survive?

I have amused myself with some fanciful and not so fanciful names for groups for my own church in Glasgow:

- **For the Liberal Christians – Truly Ancient Heretics of Glasgow**
- **For the Religious Humanists - Humanism With Spirituality**
- **For our pagans – Neo-Pagans With Less Ritual.**

I can think of, and you can too, many ways to promote each of these strands, 'fronts' or special interest groups which will provide a sharper focus than promoting the negative image of the Unitarian church as a whole that we were saddled with by our orthodox Christian opponents two hundred years ago when it once meant something to the man in the street.



***If you think.....  
you are beaten, you are.  
If you think you dare not, you don't.  
If you like to win, but think you can't  
It's almost certain you won't.***

***If you think you'll lose, you're lost.  
For out of the world we find  
Success begins with a person's will  
It's all in the state of mind.***

***If you think.....  
you are outclassed, you are.  
You've got to think high to rise.  
You've got to be sure of yourself before  
you can win the prize.***

***Life's battles don't always go  
to the stronger or faster one  
But sooner or later,  
the one who wins.....is the one  
who thinks they CAN.***

C. W. Longenecker (adapted)



# AN INVITATION TO JOIN OUR MULTIFAITH DAY

We are arranging a **Multifaith DAY on Thursday 22 March 2012** at Langside Primary School G41 3JW. Last year was a great success & the children loved all the workshops & talks.

The idea is to create a fun day with lots of different activities around school. There will be workshops, talks, slideshows, stories, activities, crafts or performances in classes by visitors like you!

Perhaps you would like to participate or have friends or contacts who could take part. We are hoping for a wee talk or slideshow or workshop or making craft or dance performance or workshop or music performance. Any ideas!  
You would probably go to visit a few classes.

Let me know if you have any ideas or friends who would be willing.  
Of course it would be voluntary as there is no budget at present!

Anything would be greatly appreciated, for any part or all of the day.  
Please let me know if you would like to participate or if you have any questions.  
Best Wishes - Hope to hear from you in the New Year.

**Marilyn Gordon**

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Last year, I had the pleasure and privilege of representing Glasgow Unitarian Church at Langside Primary School's Multifaith Day 2011. I taught primary 4 and 5 children '*Spirit of Life*' and we were asked to sing it at the end of the day to assembled teachers and parents.

It was a great day - positive and inclusive. The children were enthusiastic and we put actions to go with the song. They loved it! I think Marilyn (who is one of our guest speakers) is to be congratulated for organising this event and I would like to support it again.

**Please contact me if you are willing to assist me in taking a second golden opportunity to share our Unitarian message with the wider community.**

**Lyanne Mitchell (Editor)**

## **IN MY VIEW - 1** *Continuing our responses to Vision Day.*

### **WHO ARE WE? by Margaret Paxton**



Unitarians? Who are we?

Are we a religion or a philosophy or a philosophy of religion or not any one of these? Religious beliefs without a philosophy do not satisfy the intellect. Philosophy by definition reaches no lasting conclusion. The search for truth of any kind is without end. Philosophy of religion is definitive and got the early Christian Church into a rut where it has more or less stuck. Unitarians burst from the cocoon some centuries ago and have been altering the shape of their beliefs ever since. But are we in Glasgow Unitarian Church too cerebral?

If so, and I think until recently we have been, we appeal only to a few who are of an independent sort of mind who to all appearances seem not to be seeking the kind of nurture that makes us feel loved, wanted and needed. There is a lack of attraction to us from young families such as attend other worship providers. Children and young parents do expect a warm and a loving congregation. I think we are beginning to be that type of community. At our Sunday morning meetings in our new attractive worship room do we create an atmosphere of receptiveness or provide a quiet space for thinking? Do we want this? Do we need this? What is it that we need? What do we want as a congregation? The Vision Day held over two sessions so far has made clear a number of wants and needs which now require the congregation to act on as a body.

Whoever we say we are and of whatever mould of religion we have become we must take account of scholarship especially in science. We have to be able to argue the case for our beliefs with relation to what we learn from, for example Professor Brian Cox's *The Wonders of the Universe* and other researchers who study, for example the science of decay and how that impacts on afterlife initially in a physical sense. That there is no nothingness in the universe is scientifically as well as philosophically accepted now. Can science ever be compatible with religion? It would appear that these two, religious truth and scientific truth, are drawing closer though the methods of arriving at the truth are different. Religious truth presupposes the existence of that which we call God and believe to be the principal cause of all creation. Why is it that we human beings find it so difficult to shrug off the belief in this Creator? Where is the religious proof of the existence of God? Are we Unitarians who call ourselves religious humanists merely playing safe?

My personal belief in the existence of God arises from the fact of conscience. My reasoning is that conscience, the still small voice within, is the pull of our ancestors on us all as we act and think and interact with others and that this pull stretches right back to the first of our kind when the Creator moved in and with the universe. The hymns of the Revd John Andrew Storey (1935-1997) for me say quite clearly what Unitarians aspire to be. We look outward enthused by the inner thrust to be as complete as we might be through eagerness for education, feeling compassion and showing love. We are an evolving religion with a set of principles grounded in reason. We actively embrace and try to understand the beliefs of other religions seeded in cultures different from our own. Why do we do this? It is philosophy which drives and justifies our interest. Human beings want and need to get at the truth whether scientific or religious. Aloneness is not an option.



## ***IN MY VIEW - 2***

**WHO ARE WE? by Jane MacLeod**

I have been attending GUC and calling myself a Unitarian for about 20 years now. Why?

That is not an easy question to answer.

As an essentially practical person I have never felt a great spiritual or religious need. I was at a high anglican boarding school during the impressionable age of 13 to 16 where I was swept along by the highly charged teaching for Confirmation in the Anglican tradition. I got 'God' during that time, but only briefly!

Between then and finding GUC, I would call myself a cultural Christian, living in a christian society and conforming to the usual ceremonies of hatching, matching and dispatching. As a family we did not attend any church regularly, though attending beautiful churches and enjoying beautiful church music and singing was always pleasurable and satisfying.

Unitarian enlightenment came when we attended a Unitarian church on the advice of much respected American friends. Here was a historical and rational take on the bible and the creed which immediately appealed to both me and my husband. And we sang hymns to traditional tunes but with words that dwelt on the wonder of nature and humanity, not the supernatural. It was like a home-coming. We found like-minded, thoughtful, compassionate and understanding people with whom it was easy to share our thoughts and feelings.

So, who are these unitarians?

In Britain, a country with a christian culture, unitarians are free thinkers with an almost worshipful attitude to the world we inhabit and are a part of. We acknowledge that religions belong to the culture in which they were first founded, and that all religions attempt to set a path for individuals that promotes order and social harmony. It is the intolerance of the beliefs of one religion for the beliefs of another religion that causes strife.

We do not have a code of beliefs, which is why the three unitarian precepts of freedom, reason and tolerance could be so useful in the world today. Tolerance promotes peace. Unitarians are peace makers. We need more unitarians. The question is, how do we get them?



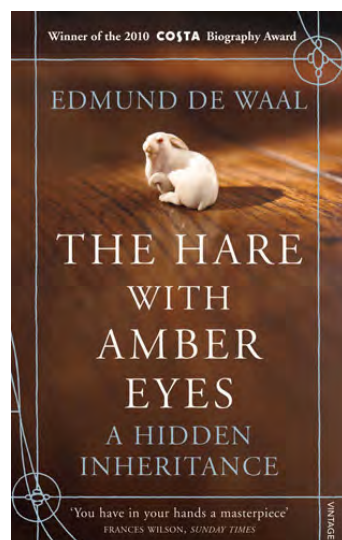
### **Contributed by Margaret Murray**

I was charmed by this biography of the Ephrussi family. It contrasts the acquisition of wealth and objets d'art with the Nazi art of annihilation.

Two characters take a stand against anti-Semitism. In 1867 the Austrian Emperor, Franz Josef I, gave civic equality to the Jews and said they could always count on his protection. Psychological persecution persisted however. A man's hat could be knocked off just because he looked Semetic and lectures were sometimes disrupted by shouts of "Jews Out" until every Jewish student left the room.

In 1938 Germany annexed Austria and the Ephrussi family fled Vienna with just one suitcase. Their gentile maid Anna was suborned by the Gestapo to pack the household treasures. She secretly ferried the netsuke, a few at a time, from her apron pocket to the sanctuary of her mattress. After the war Anna returned them to de Waal's grandmother.

I would like to chain the tiger netsuke to my handbag – a fierce little amulet daring me to confront inequality.



## **The Hare with Amber Eyes** **By Edmund de Waal**

*Almost 20 years ago, Victor de Waal, a 62-year-old minister of religion, stood up in a house of worship to invoke 'abundant peace from heaven' for his mother who had just died, nine decades after her birth in Vienna. His words were those of the Kaddish, the traditional Jewish prayer of mourning. Rarely can it have been recited in such unlikely circumstances. De Waal was a Dutch-born, C of E clergyman and the setting was a British parish church.*

*Although the deceased, Elisabeth de Waal, had lived out her latter years in Tunbridge Wells, she had been a member of one of Europe's most illustrious Jewish families: the Ephrussis. Her grandson, and Victor's son, is Edmund de Waal, the renowned potter and author of 'The Hare With Amber Eyes', a remarkable memoir of that family, one that had rivalled the Rothschilds.*

*Charles Ephrussi, cousin of de Waal's great-grandfather, lived in palatial splendour in Paris. He commissioned Degas, Renoir and Manet. He also employed the poet Jules Laforgue as secretary and was a friend of Marcel Proust. The anchor of his collections, so far as de Waal is concerned, lay within an elegant vitrine: 264 netsuke, the exquisite miniature Japanese carvings used as kimono sash toggles. He eventually gave this collection as a wedding present to de Waal's great-grandfather Viktor in Vienna. They later passed to Viktor's son Iggie in Tokyo – the netsuke neatly returning to their land of origin after playing their part in 19th-century Paris's love affair with Japonisme – and finally to the young Edmund in London.*

The Telegraph

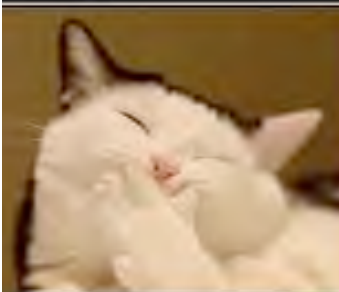


**Weds 28th Dec - Christmas afternoon tea at GUC**

*Pics above by Jim McKenna.*

**THIS SORT OF PUTS THINGS INTO PROPER PERSPECTIVE DOESN'T IT?**

*(Received via an email from Jim McKenna)*



**Pythagorean theorem: .....  
24 words.**  
**Lord's Prayer:.....  
66 words.**  
**Archimedes' Principle: .....  
67 words.**  
**10 Commandments: .....  
179 words.**  
**Gettysburg address: .....  
286 words.**  
**US Declaration of Independence : .....  
1,300 words.**  
**US Constitution with all 27 Amendments: ....  
7,818 words.**  
**EU regulations on the sale of cabbage:.....  
26,911words.**



## Transylvanian Unitarians Celebrate

### the Proclamation of the Act on Religious Freedom

On January 13, 2012 the Consistory of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church honors the 444th anniversary of the proclamation of the first law on freedom of belief and conscience, and religious tolerance. In January 1568, King Janos Zsigmond and his court preacher, David Ferenc had the Diet of Transylvania pass, at its session held in Torda, the Patent of Toleration, which stated:

***“In every place the preachers shall preach and explain the gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well; if not, no one shall compel them but they shall keep the preachers whose doctrine they approve. Therefore none of the Superintendents or others shall annoy or abuse the preachers on account of their religion, according to the previous constitutions, or allow any to be imprisoned or be punished by removal from his post on account of his teaching, for faith is the gift of God, this comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”***

The celebrations start in the morning in the Unitarian church of Torda with a worship service that includes a history lecture on the importance of the Act on Religious Freedom. Then, the congregation will walk over to the National Museum of Torda which was reopened in fall 2011 after many long years of restoration. The purpose of visit is to salute the new exhibition of the famous painting on the 1568 event, which was also restored over the past decade. The painting entitled The Proclamation of the Act on Religious Freedom at the 1568 Session of the Transylvanian Diet was painted by Aladár Körösfői Kriesch in 1896.

The celebrations will continue with an evening worship service in the Unitarian church of Kolozsvár, and a concert featuring the children’s choir of the Unitarian High School. The day will be closed with a reception at the residence of the Unitarian bishops, built in the 15th century, currently expecting the launching of a major restoration work.

The Consistory of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church thankfully acknowledges the contribution of the Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist international community to urging the completion of the restoration works at the museum in Torda. Among other things, it was due to the international campaign lead in 2009 and 2010 by the International Council of the Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU), the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council (UUPCC) and the International Relations Office of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) that the renovation works were speed up, and eventually finished. This way, the painting, a symbol of the struggle of our liberal faith for the recognition of the religious freedom, became accessible again for the public.

*Rev Steve Dick - Executive Secretary,*

*International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) Email: [execsec@icuu.net](mailto:execsec@icuu.net)*

## Two Poems for February

### PRINGLE IN THE GALLERY

Walk on floors of golden wood,  
soak up cedar smells.  
Sit and breathe the scent and move  
along the length of walls.  
Before you, shady figures loom  
showing never-ageing faces.  
Framed and gazing like a jury  
on canvas beauty pasted.  
Fastened tight on lumpy paint  
are limpid eyes reproaching you,  
a moving figure passing on to life.

Now comes a favourite, 'Loch Indaar'  
such freshest blue, a sparkle seen in  
purest white  
of clouds that float above the deepest mauve.  
My heart reaches out, eyes that rest upon the  
watery waves believe the heart and hand that  
set about the scene.  
'Loch Indaar' by Pringle. I breathe.

Corinna Tyagi

*To judge by this poem, the ingredients of a  
happy life - as spelled out by the Roman writer  
Martial and reinterpreted by the Irish poet and  
dramatist, Brendan Kennelly - have not  
changed much in 2000 years.*

*In his foreword to his book Martial Art,  
Kennelly says that 'Latin and English seem to  
dance with each other, such is the energy  
generated by the old classical language.....'*



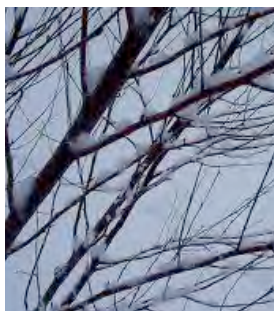
### A HAPPY LIFE

What constitutes a happy life?  
Enough money to meet your needs  
steady work  
a comfortable fire  
a clear distance from law  
a minimum of city business  
a peaceful mind and a healthy body  
simple wisdom and friends  
enjoyable dinners and plain living  
nights free from care  
a virtuous wife who's not a prude  
enough sleep to make the darkness short  
contentment with the life you have  
avoiding the sneer, the poisoned sigh;  
no fear of death  
and no desire to die.

*The Herald 14th Jan 2012 - Lesley Duncan's  
'Poem for the Day' received in an email from  
Jim Mckenna*



# February Diary



## FEB SERVICES at 11am

## Music

**5<sup>th</sup> Iain Brown** - *“Mummy, if God loves us all, why does he let all these boys and girls starve to death on the TV?”*

Lyanne

**Burns lunch following service - All welcome**

**12<sup>th</sup> Alastair Moodie** - *Happiness*

Lyanne

**19<sup>th</sup> Rev Alex Bradley**,  
Principal, Unitarian College, Manchester

Margaret

**26<sup>th</sup> Jim Millar** - *New Atheism*

Tom



## OTHER EVENTS IN FEB

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb.** Management Committee at 1.45pm.

**Oor Wee Words** - Mitchell Library (Herald Cafe) at 10.30am

**Sat 4<sup>th</sup> Feb - Leaping Lizards!** It's the Year of the Water Dragon

**Sat 18<sup>th</sup> Feb - Oor Fave Film**

**28<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> Feb** - back to back meetings as Linda will be away 21-26 February.

**3<sup>rd</sup> March** - Alastair Moodie will lead a training day on Pastoral Care at Dundee Unitarian Church. 10.30pm to approx 4pm.



## COFFEE

5<sup>th</sup> Feb - Janet  
12<sup>th</sup> Feb - Janet  
19<sup>th</sup> Feb - Jane  
26<sup>th</sup> Feb - ?



## FLOWERS

Wilma  
Janet  
Jane  
?

