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GLASGOW UNITARIANS

FEBRUARY 2021

NEWS & VIEWS



You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

GLASGOW UNITARIAN CHURCH (SCIO)
72 Berkeley Street, Glasgow G3 7DS Scottish Charity Number SC016472
Cover - Lyanne Mitchell

Events in February

Sunday Services will take place via Zoom at 7pm on the first and third Sundays of the month.

Sunday 7th, Iain Brown shall be looking at a succinct survey of visions of afterlife across the centuries, the civilisations and the major world faiths (as far as is possible in the time allowed).

Sunday 21st, worship will be led by Joyce Ashworth from the Rochdale UC. Joyce has been an active member of her church, and her District and the Women's League for many years. She has held the position of Unitarian President, and is this year's President of the Women's League.

Members with Internet access also have the opportunity to attend services every Sunday at 11am from Edinburgh or Dundee. So that this would be possible, here in Glasgow, we deliberately chose a different time for our Services. This is an easy and interesting development of church buildings being closed during the pandemic. Our Church Officer posts links to these events.

Wednesday Discussion meetings begin at 7pm. Covid-19 is teaching us not to plan ahead, so the suggested topics for discussion can only be tentative, to be cast aside should an item of local, National or International News capture the interest of those attending. With that in mind, I suggest the following:

Wednesday 3rd February – Ritual in life, in worship and online.

Wednesday 10th – The USP of Unitarianism. Is it a religion?

Wednesday 17th – Music in Worship

Wednesday 24th – Social time, activities, respecting 'otherness'.

Tuesday Coffee Mornings at 11am – We can meet for a friendly chat, with no particular theme

Other Events

Monday 1st February at 2 pm - Publicity sub-committee

Friday 5th February at 7.30 pm – Ministry sub-committee

Friday 12th February at 7.30 pm – Management Committee

Chalice Lighting at St Mark's on 3rd Jan 2021

Friends, we come together in the spirit of worship during challenging times. Our life journeys involve many companions, some fleeting, some enduring. Our mental health, some would say our very existence, depends on the links we have with these travelling companions; it depends on the quality and sincerity of the questions and answers that comprise so much of conversations that link us; it depends on recognition of each other and recognition of our goals, particularly our shared goals.

2020 saw our departure from the European Union; whether we like this or not, at least 2021 starts with new priorities and decisions to make; 2020 also saw the emergence of a virus which has been stalking the world for 12 months AND it also saw the development and approval of vaccines against the virus.

But one impending crisis which we have yet to properly address is global warming, caused by our dependence on fossil fuels, that is threatening the destruction of the fragile ecological system that supports all life on this planet. This globe, that circles our sun annually, nourishes us through its annual growth cycle of edible plants and protects us by its electromagnetic field. Human lives are stressing the systems that uphold life, all life, on the surface of the Earth and one possible future is that of an almost lifeless globe continuing its orbit to little practical benefit.

May the light of truth and the warmth of love, as symbolised in our flaming chalices we are about to light, serve to foster cooperation and collaboration in our community as we face these challenges. May the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Love, and the Spirit of Beauty, which some would call God, inspire us and strengthen us as we move into the future. Amen



Rev John Clifford

TANKA by Dogo Graham

sunshine, bus stop —
young woman with down syndrome
says her friends left her. she needs
to get home. her friends left her. she
needs money for the bus.



Not everything is locked down! Click link for video:

<https://youtu.be/V7vEoP88y6Y>

TESTING POSITIVE



Don't panic. I have not tested positive for Covid 19.... but today, as we all enter another Lockdown, I decided to use my *imaginary* self-testing kit for a different kind of result.

I decided to change my thinking

These are grim times. So many people are suffering on so many levels - physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, financially. I know that I can't change the Lockdown but I CAN use this time to look hard for the things in my life that I *can* change, with a bit of effort.



Like all of us, I have my own list of bad habits and failings. If you think I am going to share that list with you, think again (!) It is far too personal. I have two choices :-

- 1 - I can focus on them and think myself into a dark, depressing space....or
- 2 - I can begin to change and improve each one bit by bit and think myself into a brighter, more hopeful space. Some of them will be stubborn and will be stuck deep into my 'life script' - but I can try.

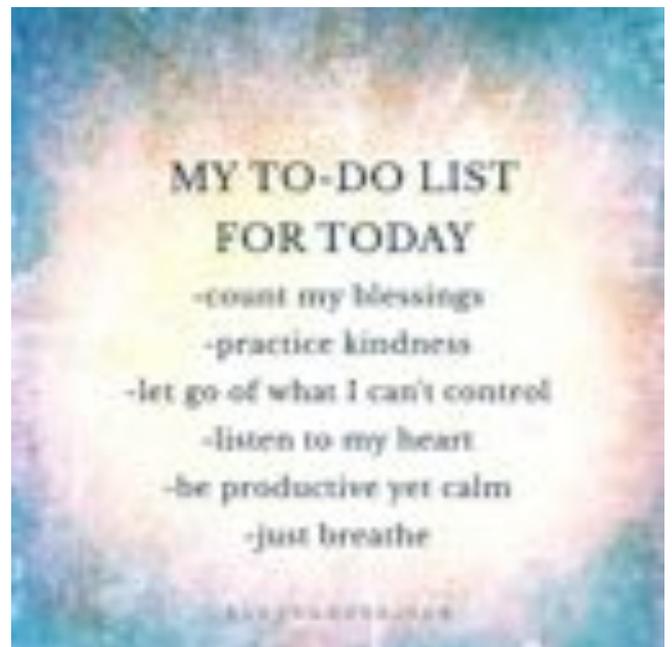


There's no shortage of wise writings about the power of positive thinking.

I really like this one (right) which I found on the Internet, from Tiny Buddha.com.

One last quote.....

Even if you stumble, you're still moving forward. – Victor Kiam



Lyanne Mitchell



Some members have recently been the target of '*phishing scams*'.

Phishing is a type of online **scam** where criminals impersonate legitimate organizations or individuals, via **email**, text message, advertisement or other means, to steal sensitive information.

Phishing emails appear to be sent from someone you know and trust, asking for your help. Of course, you want to do anything you can to help your friends. However, please take care and ensure the request is genuine.

Think:

1. Is this something I would expect my friend to do?
2. Does this seem to be a reasonable request?

Check:

1. Has this come from the correct email address?
2. Is the request for anything you would normally consider to be confidential, like your date of birth or your bank details?

Do:

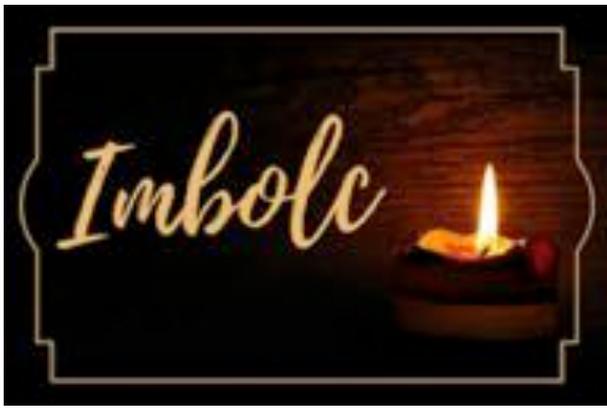
1. Confirm with the sender, either using an email address you have saved previously or phoning them on a number you know.
2. Report the email to your service provider.
3. Delete it. If you move it to the **JUNK** folder on your emails, any future emails from this address should go straight into the same folder.

Don't:

1. Don't use the 'reply' function on the message.
2. Don't send money!

Link for further Information:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/suspicious-email-actions>



The Wheel of the Year – Imbolc

The beginning of February marks the earliest signs of Spring, the Feile Brighde, the quickening of the ewes. It is celebrated as Candlemas in Roman Christianity, and Groundhog Day in the United States – the last sounding strangely appropriate this year. The name can be traced back to the Irish Gaelic for in the belly.



Brigid was the pre-Christian goddess of fertility, healing, poetry and blacksmithing. Traditionally Imbolc was celebrated with a bonfire, with visits to Holy Wells, as well as feasting and the making of Brigid's crosses. It signals the start of spring-cleaning.



If making up a seasonal altar, this might include blackberry leaves and fruits (the healing bramble being sacred to Brigid), and potted sprouting bulbs, adorned with white (for snow), silver (for purity) and green (for growing things).



*The sun rekindles its fire, brighter
Spring, fragile hope of the warmer
Times, green shoots on the bough
New seed with spade and plough.*

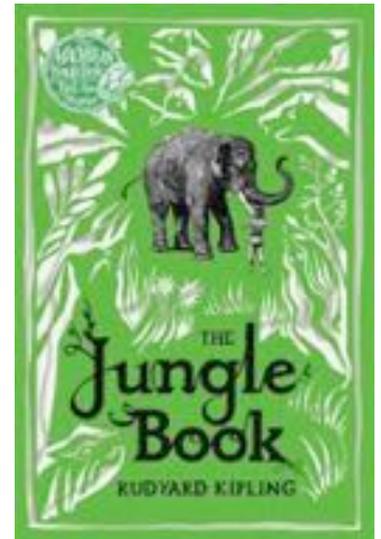
*Imbolc is here, the Celtic Sabbat
So light candles in every habitat
Celebrate the ever dawning light
Days lengthen, all will be right.*

Contributed by Janet & Lyanne

A Favourite Book from Childhood - (what's yours?)

Over Christmas and new Year we watched many films on TV - most of them repeats. I enjoyed three separate versions of 'Little Women' which was my 2nd favourite book when I was young.

My all time favourite book was 'The Jungle Book' by Rudyard Kipling. I loved it. Lost by his parents as a baby in the Indian jungle during a tiger attack, Mowgli (little frog) is adopted by wolves and grows up with the pack. Bagheera, the black panther, befriends Mowgli and Baloo the bear, teacher to the wolves, has the thankless task of educating the 'man cub' in *the Law of the Jungle*. Shere Khan the tiger, relentlessly hunts Mowgli as fair game, but eventually Mowgli finds a weapon he can use against him – the red flower - fire.



When I saw the 1967 animated musical comedy film produced by Walt Disney, quite frankly, I was appalled! To my mind, it completely lacked the serious, almost spiritual essence of Kipling's book. The comical animated characters of Bageera and Baloo were nothing like my image of them as Mowgli's wise teachers. That, combined with the cute songs throughout just seemed to demean the original story. (However, I must add here that when I watched it again as a *grandmother* and saw it through my two young grandchildren's eyes - seeing how they laughed and loved it well, I had to revise my ideas a bit!)



Disney's 1967 version

In 2016 a second version was produced by Disney - this time, a live-action / CGI film which is hugely visually impressive and I feel, much more faithful to the spirit of the book. Mowgli is guided by his animal guardians, Bageera and Baloo, who advise him that it is time to leave the wolf pack and return to his own kind. The visual content is amazing and shows Mowgli setting out on a journey of self-discovery while evading the threatening Shere Khan.



Disney's second version - 2016

'Now this is the Law of the Jungle — as old and as true as the sky; And the Wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the Wolf that shall break it must die. As the creeper that girdles the tree-trunk the Law runneth forward and back — For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.'

This story really touched me deeply as a child. When Mowgli is rejected by the wolves, because he is no longer a 'man-cub', I was heart broken for him. When he bravely stands up to Shere Khan, I was elated. Kipling's language and writing is elegant and inspiring. Although Disney's second version is visually impressive, I urge you to read the book to your grandchildren....or just for yourself!

Lynne Mitchell



Sermon delivered at Zoom worship with Glasgow Unitarians on 3rd January 2021 by Rev John Clifford

Slightly abridged by author

Hellos and Goodbyes

Here we are, in the post-Christmas New Year. New Year's Day, like the chosen birthday for Jesus, is set near the longest night and with the New Year the nights slowly get shorter by a minute or so each day. Time marches on, step by step – second by second, hour by hour, day by day in a regular rhythm. But **we** experience time differently from a clock. Our years have ups and downs, quick periods and slow periods, happy times and sad times. Because we are all different, for some of us Christmas and New Year are not really happy times as we remember family and friends who are distressed or even those who died at this time of year. And some people are very affected by all the darkness and lack of light, becoming easily depressed and discouraged.

So our vital “unit” is not minutes/hours/days, rather relationships, interactions, even intimacies – some fleeting and some enduring but ALL with a beginning and an end. In fact one central theme of my reflections today is that since we are finite beings, the good-byes are built into the hellos. This has an inherent tragic dimension, but it also has inherent creative dimensions. The “Gap”, so to speak between the hello and the goodbye gives us a chance to build something which endures, even potentially beyond our selves and our specific relationships.

New Year is traditionally a time when we “Mind The Gap”, as they say in London. We look back, we look forward as we are able, and we consider how we might resolve to do things differently – for if there is one dynamic in life certain enough to believe it is a law of nature, it is this: it is madness to believe that repeating the past will result in a different future.

There is a section of sensible humanity that believes we should not look either backwards or forwards – we should live in the moment, fully to the exclusion of any intellectual process. I was well exposed to this in the writings of Thich Nhat Hanh during the American war in Viet Nam. The bravery of his Buddhist community was a very strong backing for at least listening seriously to those who fought both American troops and North Vietnamese soldiers using non-violent methods. I deeply respect this approach when undertaken sincerely, but what is now called 'mindfulness' is not a living mode for me. I can try to suspend judgement, I can try to take people as they wish to be taken, I can hold ambiguities to my heart as the quantum physicists tell us is one of the foundations of the way the universe itself operates, but ultimately, living fully in the Gap leads me to consider the hellos and the goodbyes, the past and potential futures.

These potential futures can lead to a determination to commit time and effort to one potential future rather than others. Whether we call these determinations New Year Resolutions is not important, just as it is not really important where in the orbit of the Earth around the Sun we start from. 1 January is really fairly arbitrary, as is the supposed setting of Jesus' birthday on 25 December. A more logical date for the start the 'circle' of the Sun would be the traditional first day of winter, 20-21 December, but any date will do for starting the year. The Chinese and Jewish calendars have different dates and they seem quite content with their choice. But we have this time of year to make our Resolutions and generally a week or two to keep them before admitting defeat.

Barbara and I watched a nature programme recently set in Cairns, Queensland. We once spent a few days in Cairns, soaking up wildlife, from the Great Barrier Reef to the Karunda Rain Forest. The programme showed a turtle at the Sea Life Rescue Centre, getting its life back after almost 3 years' care. The presenter kept referring to the turtle as a 'girl' until one of the workers pointed out that she was probably 80 years old. Her life expectancy was well over 100 years. The gap between her hello at the centre and her goodbye in the nearby ocean was three years, probably 4% of her life to date and about 10% of the lives of the rescue workers to date.

Some trees have very long lives – the longest on our planet – potentially thousands of years. If you relate to one of these trees, caring for it for decades, there will still be a goodbye when you are no longer there to care for it. This is quite different to a Mayfly, who lives in its adult form for less than a day – hello to the world in the morning and goodbye, having hopefully found a mate to continue the species during its Gap, within a 12 to 16 hour window.

The most tragic goodbyes are of those who did not use their gaps wisely enough to tell those they love that they do so. A few weeks ago a lone gunman committed suicide by shooting himself in an American shopping mall. Most shoppers assumed that a gunman was on the loose looking for people to kill.

What did these shoppers do as they sought hiding places in shops? Many of them phoned family to tell them they loved them before it was too late.

Something similar occurred during the Twin Towers terrorist attack: people trapped in upper floors with no way out used their last minutes to phone family.

If we remembered that every relationship has a quality that we help determine, perhaps more of our goodbyes would be loving ones...

Rev John Clifford



Do Congregations Dream?



In a short video-presentation on the most recent Uni-News, the Rev Bob Janis Dillon asks the question, “do congregations dream?”. He suggests that in quiet times – and surely this is one – we tend to entertain ourselves by thinking how things might be different, even improved.

I know I do. I need a church with values I can truly believe, so that I can feel comfortable to say that I belong. I need to know that it will continue whether or not I can attend it regularly. It follows from that, that I must be willing to offer it some financial support and serve it practically, as and when I am able.

I hope that its regular Services will be interesting and inspiring, offering some moral guidance. I hope, too, that it will be possible for other activities to be offered, discussions, visits, participation in Interfaith activities, so that members and friends can share experiences that help them to forge friendships. We need to offer support and events to people of all ages, or how can we attract the young people, without whom our congregation is destined to close.

For these things to work, we need to be kind to each other, yet not afraid to be honest and outspoken where we see misunderstandings.

Of course, much of this will have to wait until we can safely travel, and meet again. Meanwhile, we rely on the mail, and on electronic Zoom meetings and telephone calls. Thank goodness we have them! A phone-call can bring great comfort to someone who is feeling lonely.

Perhaps now is a good time to share your dreams for our church community, so that we can try to ‘build back better’ when the time comes. Please send your thoughts to Donald Jacobs, Lyanne Mitchell or myself to be shared in News & Views.

Janet Briggs



It seems unlikely that we shall be able to meet in our Centre in 2021. For that to happen, we must feel safe from Covid-19. The same applies to all the groups that rent the rooms. Meanwhile, some of the expenses continue – insurance, maintenance contracts and works, and some part-time wages. Your regular small contribution helps to minimise the work of our Treasurer, and help to ensure our future.



Glasgow Unitarian Church- Standing Order

To the Manager (insert your bank address)
--

I/we hereby authorise you to debit my/our account

Account Name:	
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Account details

Sort Code	Account Number	Amount	Frequency week/month/quarter/year
		£	
Reference (Name/membership No.)			

Start Date:

dd / mm /2020	Until Further notice/end date
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Credit Account (pay to)

Glasgow Unitarian Church (scio)	s/c 08-92-99	a/c 65312966
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Signature/s of account holder/s

Date

PERSONNEL

MINISTER EMERITUS – Rev. John Clifford

LAY PREACHER – Iain Brown

WORSHIP LEADERS - Barry Bell, Barbara Clifford, Rev. John Clifford, Roddy Macpherson, Jim Millar, Lyanne Mitchell and Alastair Moodie

WEDDING CELEBRANTS

Iain Brown - iain.brown13@gmail.com

0141 339 7815 or 07742 653 305

Rev. John Clifford - revclifford@fastmail.com 01355 235 324

CHURCH CONVENER – Roddy Macpherson

0141 632 2970 or 07802 349 898

convener@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk

CHURCH SECRETARY – Iain Brown – 0141 339 7815 or 07742 653 305

secretary@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk

CHURCH TREASURER – Charlie Dand – 0141 943 0819

treasurer@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk

CHURCH OFFICER – Alison Briggs - 07533 140612 or 0141 221 3154

churchofficer@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk

07533 140 612

SAFEGUARDING – Barbara Clifford

01355 235 324 – barbaraclifford@fastmail.com

MUSIC CO-ORDINATOR – Roddy Macpherson

0141 632 2970 - macphersonRA@aol.com

SOCIAL CONVENOR - Ruth Gregory

01294 822 544 - rlgregory1765@gmail.com

PROPERTY MANAGER – Charlie Dand

0141 943 0819 - crdand@kooked.co.uk

FIRE & SAFETY OFFICER - Alison Briggs and Charlie Dand

NEWS & VIEWS - Janet Briggs and Donald Jacobs

j.briggs159@virginmedia.com and donrayjay@aol.com

0141 571 2610 and 01475 732344

NEWS & VIEWS LAYOUT / WEBSITE Lyanne Mitchell

lyanne.mitchell@mac.com

0170 050 4694

and John Wilkinson

WEBSITE www.glasgow-unitarians.org.uk/

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/GlasgowUnitarians/>