



# GLASGOW UNITARIANS

JULY 2021

## NEWS & VIEWS

*When the summer sun is shining  
Over golden land and sea  
And the flowers in the hedgerow  
Welcome butterfly and bee;  
Then my open heart is glowing  
Full of warmth for everyone  
And I feel an inner beauty  
Which reflects the summer sun.*

*When the summer clouds of thunder  
Bring the long awaited rain  
And the thirsty soil is moistened  
And the grass is green again;  
Then I long for summer sunshine  
But I know that clouds and tears  
Are a part of life's refreshment  
Like the rainbow's hopes and fears.*

*Sydney Henry Knight (268 Hymns for Living )*

**GLASGOW UNITARIAN CHURCH (SCIO)**

**72 Berkeley Street, Glasgow G3 7DS Scottish Charity Number SC016472**

*Cover - Lyanne Mitchell*

# Programme and notices

## Sunday services

**4th July 7pm** Roddy Macpherson - 'A Fourth of July celebration of Unitarian independence - with some radical thoughts on ways to worship.' A few years ago, a Scots Episcopalian priest, on learning I was a Unitarian, in very friendly fashion, found common ground in this, to me astonishing, way. He told me that when he had visited the USA he had visited a Unitarian chapel, where services followed the Book of Common Prayer! I was as doubtful as I was intrigued. This 4th July, I shall share my gladness in discovering the truth in the anecdote. In part, that is because I hope we Glasgow Unitarians might yet be more free to consider the role of liturgy in worshipfulness.

**18th July 7pm** Rev. John Clifford 'The Conspiracy Theory of Knowledge' How do we know what is True? Can we know anything 'for certain'? How does Our Truth relate to the Truths of others? Whom do we trust and WHY?

## Wednesday meetings

**7th July 7pm** Scottish Unitarian Association priorities, introduced by Ruth Gregory

**14th July 7pm** Privileges of religion in society and in law - should they be reconsidered? Topic suggested by Jim Millar

**21st July 7pm** Have you got a favourite thinker, philosopher or author for making sense of things?

**28th July 7pm** Are we experiencing a worldwide species collapse and is there anything we can do about it? Short video and discussion

## Ministry Subcommittee

5th July 7.30pm

## Management committee

12th July 7.30pm

All GUC Zoom meetings are accessed through the following link:

<https://zoom.us/j/5291141523?pwd=YjdhaFgxakY0TWJHWENZMW1PYjhoZz09>

## Interfaith Glasgow AGM

**1st July 6.30 - 8.30pm** Keynote Address: 'A Critical Moment for Glasgow and the Planet: Building an Interfaith Climate Movement in the Year of COP26'

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/interfaith-glasgow-agm-2021-tickets-158560158703>

**St Mungo's Museum of Religious Life and Art** faces an uncertain future. A petition to ensure its future has been set up online here: <https://www.change.org/p/glasgow-life-save-st-mungo-s-museum?>

## Colin Brownlee

I am sorry to share the news that Colin Brownlee has died. Colin was a member of the Forth Valley Fellowship. He came to Glasgow Unitarians' services with me and others from Forth Valley and enjoyed the services and the company immensely. Colin always had an enquiring mind and loved the friendship and the breadth and warmth of the spiritual journey he found with the Unitarians. He had been a librarian and always kept a love for words. He was also a keen poet - in the English language and Scots - and in a stay in hospital a year or so ago he would write individual poems for each of his nurses. He will be sadly missed. Colin had a fall in April and had been in hospital for a while. The hospital says that he had a nurse with him when he died and that he was comfortable in his final hours. Colin's sister Rosemary is hoping to arrange an event to celebrate Colin's life over the summer. This is likely to be very informal and will probably take place in the Bridge of Allan Parish Church Hall. Rosemary knows about Colin's links with the Unitarians as well as with the Parish Church. Contributions to the event from both will be invited.

*Jon Cape*



## SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

*Extract adapted from a service led by Lyanne Mitchell at GUC 2012 .*

***“Far more indispensable than food for the physical body is spiritual nourishment for the soul. One can do without food for a considerable time, but a person of the spirit cannot exist for a single second without spiritual nourishment. Poetry and art nourish the soul of the world with the flavours of beauty, wisdom and truth.” Gandhi***

We have not been able to physically meet together; sing together; worship together; for many months. Zoom has been a life-line but I think we would all agree that it cannot hold a candle to actually *being* together.

***What have you missed most? What are you seeking or yearning for within our services when we can once again be together? Please share with us?***

Speaking for myself, I am definitely seeking spiritual nourishment - hoping to be inspired. I hope to have my vision expanded and to have my energy levels shifted and raised. I need all the help I can get to to become the best human being I can possibly be - to be kinder, more understanding, more useful in the world.

Inspiration can come from so many sources. Our Unitarian hymns, are a huge source of inspiration for me. So much so that I will be attending a local Church of Scotland here on Bute which is offering 'Praise Services' ( ie hymns only - no sermons.)

Some time ago in *News & Views*, Dorothy Moodie reviewed '*Bringing God Back to Earth*' by John Hunt . She ended her article by quoting the author's words about religion. Dorothy commented that she felt this is a fine definition of a worthwhile religion and a way to a meaningful life.

I whole heartedly agree and would like to end this article with it :-

***'The religion we need, has as its defining characteristics the search for truth, the appreciation of beauty, and the practice of love'.***

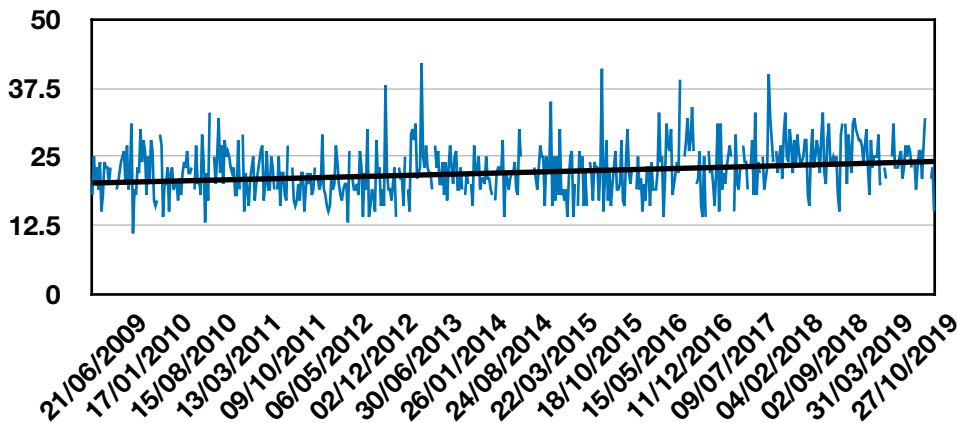
# Unitarian Numbers in Glasgow and the UK

How is Glasgow congregation doing in terms of numbers? The first graph below shows attendances at Sunday Services of the Glasgow Unitarian Church from June 2009 to March 2020. The data are derived from attendance figures that Wilma Paterson meticulously recorded over these years. The graph demonstrates a relatively stable pattern of attendance around an average of 22.5 congregants, with a slight upward trend over the period. The lowest average attendance was 19.9 in 2012 and the highest was 25.9 in 2018. Wilma points out that the average age of attenders has no doubt gone up too.

Highs: record attendance was 42 on the 1st of July 2013 when the service included a

naming ceremony. Does anyone remember who this naming ceremony was for? (Online News & Views records only go back to November 2013.) There were 35 in attendance on April 26th 2015 when the congregation was encouraged to bring children along to hear the Unitarian national Youth Officer Rev. John Harley speak on the topic "Robots, Humans and Gods". Forty one people attended Barbara Clifford's service

**Sunday Attendances at Glasgow Unitarian Church  
2009 to 2020**



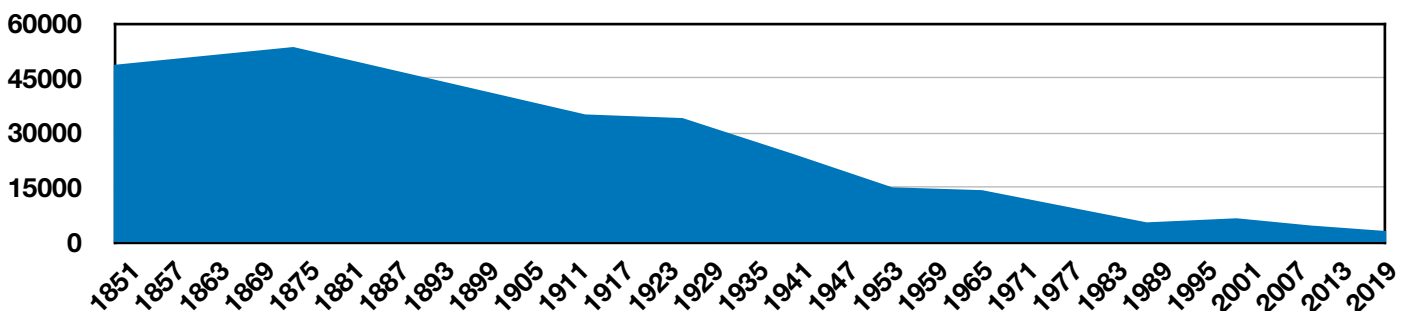
"The Season of Light" on the 20th of December 2015; and the following year there were 39 present on the 18th of December 2016 for Barbara's service "A Christmas Wish". Thirty two people turned out to hear Roddy Macpherson's "Elargissez Dieu" on January 22nd 2017 (which was followed by a Burns Lunch) and three weeks later 34 heard Ruth and Jon Cape's "Tent of Nations". On the 2nd of February 2018, Rev. John Clifford and Iain Brown conducted a joint service with the Nurture Society with forty people filling out the worship room.

The lowest attendance was 11 on 27th of December 2009, no doubt due to the season. Wilma notes that snow caused a low attendance of 13 on the 28th of November 2010; that 14 came to Berkeley Street despite a local running event on the 2nd of October 2016; and 18 struggled to reach the building during a racing event on the 5th of August 2018.

Below is a graph of UK Unitarians compiled using data from the GA and 'British Unitarianism in the 20th Century – a survey' by Alan Ruston, *TUHS* vol 25:2, 76–88 (2012).

<https://www.unitarianhistory.org.uk/pdfs/20thcentunit.pdf>

**UK Unitarians 1851 to 2020**



Donald Jacobs

# The way we were....17th June 1971



*I would like to thank Margaret P and Roddy for sending lovely cards on behalf of the congregation and Trustees. This was the pic I sent to them in response....*

*I did not expect it to appear in the July issue! ( thanks D & J )*

*We had a lovely celebration with our family and 'nearest and dearest'. Lyanne.*



So young and so much in love!

And now....we're a couple of old 'choochters' celebrating 50 golden years



# Roswell and All That

Roswell, a town in the U.S. state of New Mexico, between Arizona and Texas, is famous for an event that was headlined in the Roswell Daily Record of 8th July 1947 as the crash of a flying saucer, but was claimed by the authorities the next day to be nothing but a weather balloon. The authorities were very powerful in Roswell because there was a very important air base there – it was actually where the atom bombs dropped on Japan and which ended the Second World War were stored – and no ordinary person around there was allowed to say anything different from what the military police said.

About fifty years later some of the locals signed affidavits in front of lawyers to affirm that a flying saucer really had crashed. What the locals didn't know was that news of the event had already reached the President, Harry Truman, and that a vast amount of extraordinary equipment had been salvaged from the crash, plus at least one living creature from another planet and several bodies. There were in fact many reports around 1947 and 1950 of unknown

flying objects often travelling at enormous speeds (see *Riddle of the Flying Saucers* by Gerald Heard, published in 1950) but no other reports of their crashing.



How do I know about this? From another book, published in 1997, *The Day After Roswell* by Colonel Philip J Corso, who was in charge of the Foreign Technology Desk at the Pentagon, and was given the job by his superior, General Arthur Trudeau, of passing on the equipment salvaged from the crash to suitable high-powered technology firms for what's called reverse engineering. This is where you start from the end product and work out how it was

produced. Gadgets such as Image Intensifiers, Fiber Optics, Supertenacity Fibres, Lasers, Molecular alignment metallic alloys, and Integrated circuit chips, and much more, was produced this way. If you want further details, you can find them in Corso's book.

So it seems that many of the advances of Silicon Valley in fact came from that crashed flying saucer in 1947. But there's no easy way of proving that this is true in any particular case. How can we know that all this about Roswell isn't just nonsense, isn't just a fairy story?

I'd refer to another book, *Witness to Roswell*, published 2009, by Thomas Carey and Donald Schmitt. This book has a foreword by Edgar Mitchell (1930-2016), one of the Apollo astronauts who grew up in the area of eastern New Mexico and attended elementary school in Roswell. Mitchell is so well known that his being prepared to introduce a book about the Roswell business is itself a pretty good demonstration that it should be taken seriously. He knew personally the son of one of the participants in this extraordinary story – Jesse Marcel, an information officer at the base who was ordered to deny that a 'flying saucer' had crashed, and to pretend that a bogus explanation was correct, that it had really been a wrongly identified weather balloon.

Carey and Schmitt have managed to trace practically all the people who were originally involved and are prepared, after sixty years, to tell the truth of what actually happened. I've just been rereading one chapter, Chapter 11 "Some Things Shouldn't Be Discussed, Sergeant!" Precise details about what happened on 9 July 1947 when a 'military convoy composed of one large, 18-wheel, low-boy or flatbed trailer protected by an escort of jeeps in front of and behind it, each carrying a contingent of armed MPs [military police]', passed down the Roswell main

street. An observation by Richard Talbert, a Roswell Daily Record paperboy, 'of something he had never seen before in his young life.' It's a whole chapter of similarly precise details; indeed that is true of the whole book. Detective work, after 60 years – fascinating stuff! Enough to convince any sceptic, one would think.

And furthermore I believe that Colonel Philip Corso is telling the truth in his book, *The Day After Roswell*. He's not a fiction writer. Why should he be inventing all this?

But a very puzzling thing Corso tells us about the bodies of the aliens is that there was no sign of food in the flying saucer, and apparently no mouth to speak of in the corpses. Could they absorb food through their skins? Or were they robots of some sort?

And where did they come from? Remember there were many other accounts of flying saucers, even squadrons of them. (See *The Riddle of the Flying Saucers*, and e.g. *UFOs* by Leslie Kean (2010).) A friend of mine thinks they have bases on the Moon, or Mars, or Phobos, one of Mars' two small moons. The *Riddle* mentions the enormous speeds they could go at. But they couldn't pop back home. Presumably their home is millions of miles, in fact a few light years, away.

Corso never discusses how they evolved. But they must have. And I think (following Richard Dawkins) that that must have involved natural selection. At least we now know where they could have evolved. The first exoplanet (i.e. one not in our own solar system) was found in (I think) 1992. We now know apparently of 4,687 exoplanets. The nearest exoplanets are 4.2 light years from earth and orbit Proxima Centauri, the closest star to the Sun.

So there are a fantastic number of planets (even in the Milky Way) in which life may have evolved. But that's not the same as evolving to the stage of producing ultra-intelligent life like our own. In fact there seems to me only one such planet we know must exist beside our own, the planet where the creatures that crashed in that 'flying saucer' evolved. Such planets probably won't be numerous because it was a near thing even here. Life started on earth fairly soon after the earth's formation, but took a very long time to reach human-like intelligence. Nearly 99% of the time since it started, according to Ernst Mayr, a distinguished head of zoology at Harvard. Most of the time it was only bacteria. Multicellular life has only been here a fraction of the time, say 3/10, that single celled life has. And primates a lot less than that, and humans only at the very end of the primates. So Mayr rules out the possibility of intelligent life elsewhere, but of course (I presume) he didn't know about Roswell.

*Stephen Bostock*

## The Dark Side of Green Energy

I present my jottings from a half-hour programme on Al Jazeera highlighting the extent to which the technology of 'green' energy depends on more or less rare metals.

For example, Norway can boast electric charging points for cars, conveniently placed along the whole length of the country. In consequence, Norway has managed to achieve the highest number of electric car sales in the world. Think of the copper used in those supply-lines! The Atacama Desert in Chile is rich in copper. It last rained in the Atacama 500 years ago. A lot of water is needed to refine copper, so water is piped in from the coastal wetlands. Come to think of it, electrification will require lots and lots of copper. Working in the copper mines causes miners to develop lung-cancer. Take a moment to imagine their living conditions!

Bolivia is rich in lithium, used in battery production. It is found in the sands of salt flats above the level of 11,000 feet. Bolivia is a poor country, and cannot afford the machinery to extract the lithium, so it has gone into partnership with the Chinese, ensuring steady income for the country, and a secure market for its lithium. Shenzhen is famous for producing lithium batteries for electric vehicles. China has roughly 75% of the world's rare metals, obtained as a result of its Belt and Road policy whereby roads, railways and ports have been built (with local agreement) all over the developing world, both to eradicate poverty, and to facilitate access to the products of mining. Chinese expertise and workers have built these, and a continuing

Chinese presence on the ground can ensure that nothing is missed. (See 'The New Silk Roads' by Peter Francopan.)

Wind turbines are mainly made of aluminium which is a soft metal. The blades wear out, and must be recycled. Scrupulous recycling must be part of our answer to the energy crisis precipitated by global warming. Who knows what rare metals were used to make your electric and electronic devices? Even recycling methods are always a work in progress. The World cannot afford to have great areas of land blighted by useless, or dangerous rubbish.

Janet Briggs

## Ash Dieback on the March

This tree disease, which was first identified in the UK in 2012, is expected to affect upwards of 90% of ash trees in the country. It is caused by a fungus that coexists with ash trees in east Asia, but is deadly for European varieties of ash that are being exposed to *hymenoscyphus fraxineus* for the first time. The situation is exacerbated by the emerald ash borer, a beetle



which attacks weakened ash trees. An initial outbreak in the southeast of England has spread inexorably, and now the effects of ash dieback are in evidence in all parts of the UK. In the Glasgow Botanic Gardens a venerable weeping ash, holding pride of place in the park since it was replanted in its current location in 1841, is suffering from well advanced disease and may need to be felled for safety reasons.

The disease is proving devastating because the fungus spores spread for miles, carried by the wind, and once a tree is infected there is no cure. Researchers at Kew Gardens hope that some ash trees will prove immune to the illness and that diligent efforts to identify and propagate resistant specimens will avert the extinction of native ash trees, but this is not guaranteed. In the meantime, millions of dead ash trees will become hazardous and need to be removed from public spaces, roadsides and railways, costing an estimated £15 billion over the coming decade. The disease typically presents as leaves are lost from the crown of the tree and spreads until the whole tree is bare from top to bottom. Saplings and young trees

succumb more quickly than mature trees, and there is some evidence that pollarding slows progression.

Globalisation has resulted in pathogens transmitting around the world faster than at any time in the history of our biosphere. The loss of ash trees from our woods, parks and gardens is part of the broader crisis of worldwide species collapse. Other trees and other species will follow. This short video explains how bleak the outlook is for ash trees and what is being done.

<https://youtu.be/LWWEBdMx2eM>

The Woodland Trust provides basic information including how to identify ash dieback.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/ash-dieback/>

An Action Plan Toolkit, produced by The Tree Council, outlines the background, likely impact, and proposed responses to ash dieback in the UK.

<https://treecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Tree-Council-Ash-Dieback-Toolkit-2.0.pdf>

Donald Jacobs



# Unitarian Women's League

Conversation at a recent Tuesday morning coffee gathering uncovered the fact that some of the church members were unaware of this organisation. It was no surprise to the two current members (Barbara Clifford and Sheena Bluer) as it has long been the case that the Glasgow congregation, while supporting the efforts of the Women's League members, has shown a reluctance to join them.

The League was established in 1908 - in line with the Women's League in the Church of Scotland and the Mother's Guild in the Anglican Church. The structure is similar to that of the GA with branches, districts and a central committee. In Scotland the branches were Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Sadly only the Aberdeen branch continues. Information of activities and events are publicised in our 'League Letters'.

Our membership supports an 'India Fund' which raises money for the Unitarians of Khasi Hills where Dr Margaret Barr taught, nursed and ministered. We also have a Memorial and Benevolent Fund. For a nominal sum past members' names are inscribed in a memorial book. The income is devoted to assisting Unitarian women and ministers' widows who suffer bereavement, theft or hospitalisation.

The one fund which involves non-members is the Annual Project. A wide ranging number of charities have benefited from this over the years. In fact in the last 10 years a total of £82,500 has been raised for charities as diverse as Meningitis UK, Send a Child to Hucklow, National Deaf Childrens Society as examples. The 2019-2020 charity was 'Smile Train' for which £7,960 was collected. The charity chosen for 2020-2021 was to have been EMMAUS an organisation which supports the homeless by offering a home AND employment until such time as recipients are able to 'go it alone'. Unfortunately the pandemic has halted efforts to fundraise but it is expected we will be able to restart when conditions improve. Barbara and I continue as individual members and are proud to have raised significant funds by providing after-service coffees thus adding to the Scottish District Contribution.

But it's not all about money and fundraising. Regular District gatherings and National Rallies in varying parts of the country give us the opportunity to develop friendship with other members and the enjoyment of meeting up and exchanging views and ideas.

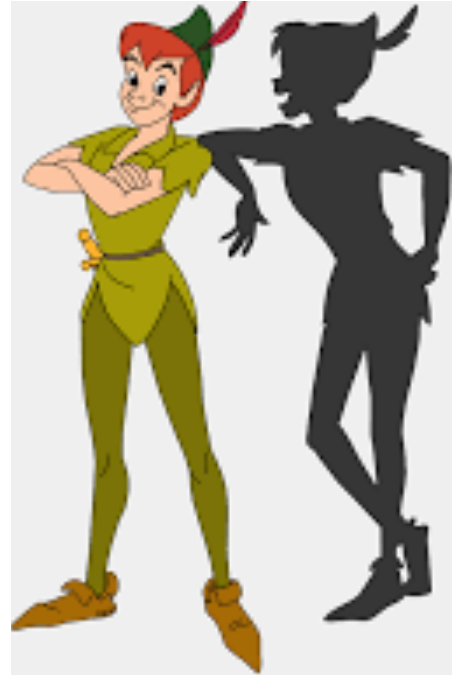
*Sheena Bluer*



# SHADOWS

J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* remains one of the most well known and best loved literary fantasies for all ages. While pirates, mermaids, and fairies give the story intrigue and adventure, Barrie's underlying themes are seen most clearly in the play's subtleties.

Of particular interest to me, is Peter's shadow which gets trapped in the Darling's nursery window and 'falls off' in the first act. The notion of a free shadow, detached from its source object, is intriguing. Barrie embraces themes of courage and fear, fantasy and reality, happiness and sadness, strength and weakness, and past and future. Peter Pan's extraordinary shadow can be seen as a possible symbol of each of these elements, and this sheds light on childhood and the process of growing up.



The shadow contributes to the fantasy of the play. In reality, a shadow is simply a dark spot on the ground. In *Peter Pan*, the shadow has human shape. Barrie develops the concept of a shadow with such complexity that it becomes a character in the play! In many productions of *Peter Pan* for the stage, an actor plays the part of the shadow. In Barrie's stage directions, he personifies the shadow. He writes in Act 1 :- '*The shadow awakes and is glad to be back with him as he is to have it. He and his shadow dance together.*'

The shadow carries different meanings for the different characters. To children watching this play, the shadow is simply an element of fun and amusement. They are not aware that the shadow helps define childhood. To Tinkerbell, the shadow represents competition for Peter's affection. Mr. Darling believes he can make money by selling the shadow to a museum. The shadow provides Wendy with an opportunity of being a mother, as she sews it on to Peter.

What does it mean for Peter? - the boy who didn't want to grow up? At some deeper level, he knew he needed it and that he wasn't complete without it. Barrie's use of the shadow gives the adult audience insight on childhood and growing up. Whether as an element of fantasy, amusement, or symbolism - the shadow plays a fascinating role in the intriguing and imaginative world of *Peter Pan*.

It is extremely challenging to recognise and to face up to our shadows, be they dark with fear, grief, pain or distorted by the past. It is so difficult to accept them as a part of ourselves. It feels almost impossible to embrace them.... far less to *dance with them* like Peter Pan! - but paradoxically, our shadows help us to fully appreciate the light. Do we need them to be whole?

These are the thoughts which prompted my 'take' on Peter Pan's shadow :-

Deepak Chopra writes :-

*'I believe that the shadow is one of the greatest gifts available to us.*

*One of the futile strategies in dealing with the shadow is that the "good me" takes aspects of the "bad me" and stuffs them out of sight. In the end, these stuffed behaviors eventually surface with rage. There is a holistic approach to the shadow whereby we can move towards a vision of unity. The split self is the most pernicious illusion. Instead of feeding the shadow by keeping secrets from ourselves and others, by harbouring guilt and shame, or by needing someone to blame, we turn things around and stop projecting - we detach and let go - give up self-judgment and rebuild our emotional bodies. Wholeness overcomes the shadow by absorbing it - Wholeness grows in a field beyond good and evil, light and darkness.*

Jung wrote :- *'Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.*

*Maybe the only thing each of us can see is our own shadow.'*

Carl Jung called this his shadow work. He said :- *'We never really see others. Instead we see only aspects of ourselves that fall over them. Shadows. Projections. Our associations. In the same way old painters would sit in a tiny dark room and trace the image of what stood outside a tiny window, in the bright sunlight.*

*The camera obscura. Not the exact image, but everything reversed or upside down.'*

Jung called the shadow a 'sparring partner'; *'It is the opponent within us that exposes our flaws and sharpens our skills. It is the teacher, the trainer, and the guide that supports us in uncovering our true magnificence. The shadow is not a problem to be solved or an enemy to be conquered but a fertile field to be cultivated.'*

How does the shadow operate within spiritual and religious thinking? Most traditional theologians say we cannot solely rely on ourselves and the limited power of the ego to deal with the shadow. Instead, we must call on the power of God to overcome evil. *"You can't do it alone... lean on the Lord!"* the traditional religious person exclaims.

I think most people spend their whole lives trying to avoid or hide from their shadow side. What do you think?

*Lyanne Mitchell*

# 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.



*Jacob's dream of a ladder of angels, c. 1690  
by Michael Willmann*

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*



*A sculpture by Joe Rush, named Mount Recyclemore, was unveiled on a hill overlooking the recent G7 conference in Cornwall. It depicts the seven world leaders, and is made from about 20,000 pieces of discarded technology. It was commissioned to highlight the world's e-waste problem.*