



GLASGOWUNITARIANS-SCIO.ORG.UK

GLASGOW UNITARIANS

APRIL 2025

NEWS & VIEWS



April hath put a spirit of
youth in everything.

William Shakespeare

GLASGOW UNITARIAN CHURCH (SCIO)

72 Berkeley Street, Glasgow G3 7DS Scottish Charity Number SCO 16472

Cover - Lyanne Mitchell

PROGRAMME and NOTICES

MARCH (update / reminder!)

Sunday 30th -11am in Church and on zoom - *Dr Glenda White*, Primary Teacher, Senior Lecturer in Primary Education, Inspector of Schools, and scholar invites us to share her thoughts on the poet Arthur Hugh Clough, contemporary of Matthew Arnold.

APRIL SERVICES

Sunday 6th -11am in Church and on zoom - TALKING TOGETHER.

Sunday 6th - 7pm on zoom - *Sister Isabel Smyth*, Part 2 – the Second Vatican Council. Members of all Scottish congregations are invited.

Sunday 13th - 11am in Church and on zoom - *Roddy Macpherson* - Reflections on a life - Our extraordinary and greatly loved Convenor and Chair of Trustees will be interviewed by *Margaret Macintyre McClymont*

Sunday 20th - 11am in Church and on zoom - Easter Sunday. *Alastair Moodie* will lead the service on this Easter Sunday with an alternative account of the events of Holy Week.

Sunday 27th - 11am in Church and on zoom - *Lyanne Mitchell* Our Evolving Journey. Unitarians, valuing individual spiritual exploration and freedom of thought, view the "evolving journey" as a core principle, emphasizing personal growth, open-mindedness, and continuous learning.

MAY SERVICES

Sunday 4th -11am in Church and on zoom - TALKING TOGETHER.

Sunday 4th - 7pm on zoom - *Jon Bagust* of Edinburgh Unitarians on the history of the Chennai Fund.

WEDNESDAY DISCUSSION GROUP

7 - 8 pm on zoom All Welcome!





One Floor Up!

On Sunday 16 March, we were met at the door of Unitarian House with an invitation to go one floor up for the service. The invitation came from the Buddhists who have occupied the first floor of our building for the last 18 months. The welcome was warm with spring sunshine flooding the room to the front where we were encouraged to make ourselves comfortable with blankets and cushions for the back and the feet. Before us was a huge hanging depicting the sun reflecting the selection of yellow flowers surrounding the Buddha.

As Unitarians we are open to the wisdom of the world and we willingly submitted to instruction to relax, be conscious of our breathing and listen to the welcome from Carunalaka, one of the ordained teachers. After a reading, Angela Lombardi, a member of this Buddhist community, shared her discovery of Buddhism at a time when her life was disappointing to her and she was experiencing depression and a lack of purpose. She found the practices of meditation, chanting and community, calmed her anxiety and enabled her to live more fully and more gratefully. During the 50 minutes we experienced a taste of the ways in which Triratna, Buddhism in the Western world, is communicated.

We retired for a cup of coffee and biscuits to the comfortable room at the back of the building where we had an opportunity to ask questions and learn about their new purchase, a ground floor and basement at 2 Woodside Terrace, Charing Cross. They assured us that we would be invited to their launch of a new beginning.

It was perhaps unfortunate that we should get to know each other just when they were leaving. They have much to teach us and a willingness to share their knowledge. Let us keep in touch with them.

*Alison Spurway and Margaret Macintyre McClymont
Preaching Schedule Working Group*

Thinking of Janet and Unicorns



Tickled pink, I think, perfectly describes Janet's reaction when, with suitable panache, I informed her that the Ninth day of April was National Unicorn Day.

According to the online sources we all may read, this celebration was first introduced in 2015. But I knew nothing of it until I got involved, much later, with Historic Environment Scotland's Unicorn Weekend. This takes place on the Saturday and Sunday nearest in date to 9th April, at Stirling Castle. The photo shows a scene from last year's event. It is out there on the web, with the caption (in reference, truth to tell, to me): *See these unicorns: only one is real!*

Janet and her family have been celebrating the Ninth day of April for very much longer, as her birthday. Do you remember how the plans to have our special Unitarian party for Janet's eightieth birthday in 2020 were completely stopped - by government order, no less? The Covid Lockdown astonished us all, just seventeen days before Janet's historic date. Sometimes the truth really is more like make-believe.

This year, 9th April arrives, for the first time in 85 years, without our dear friend Janet's bodily presence. Each time we notice a herd of unicorns, a *blessing*, so called, remember: Janet is real.

Visiting the Glasgow Buddhist Centre

We shall always remember, with proper pride, that, for a happy time, Unitarian House gave its fine flat roof to shelter both the Unitarians and the Buddhists. Our neighbours upstairs will leave us once their new building in Sauchiehall Street is ready. In the meantime, what a good time ten Unitarians had on Sunday, 16th March, when we were welcomed upstairs for an enlightening talk about Buddhism.

Seated comfortably and elegantly in the shrine - our shoeless feet set on cushions - Carunalaka welcomed us as the company, the *Sangha*, of the Triratna Buddhist Community. Angela then spoke, in an address which was both informative and moving, particularly because she told us of her transformative life experience through Buddhism. We were all chanting tunefully by the time that noon was announced. Alison spoke our words of thanks. Questions were then asked and answered, whilst we chatted over the teas and coffees that our kind hosts provided.

Roddy Macpherson



'Reflections on a Life'

This was Alison Spurway's idea to enrich our current programme of services. Various members have taken part, in conversation with Alison or Margaret.

I was sorry to miss hearing George Paxton's 'Reflections' on Sunday 16th February.

George has sent a few quotations by MK Gandhi which are well worth sharing.

*I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides
and my windows to be stuffed.
I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about
my house as freely as possible.*

*We have to make truth and nonviolence
not matters for mere individual practice
but for practice
by groups and communities and nations.*

*True economics stands for social justice,
it promotes the good of all equally
including the weakest,
and is indispensable for decent life.*

*I endeavour
to follow and represent Truth
as I know it.
I do claim to throw a new light
on many an old truth.*



TREES FOR LIFE

The latest 'Tree News' starts with the following quote by Dame Jane Goodall, DBE, the English zoologist, primatologist and anthropologist.

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

Glasgow Unitarians' Wildlife Conservation Grove was created on 24th May 2023. In less than two years we have planted 200 trees; No mean feat for our small number. We should be proud of this achievement.

Trees For Life's Dundreggan Rewilding Centre in Glenmoriston near Loch Ness has been awarded The Nature Tourism Award at RSPB Scotland's Nature of Scotland Award 2024. This Award is in recognition of its pioneering achievements in rewilding landscapes and people.

The Dundreggan Rewilding Centre opened in 2024 and is the first of its kind in the world. Not only has Dundreggan been a beacon for Rewilding Scotland's landscapes, the new Centre is Rewilding people too.

There is the unique opportunity for visitors to connect with nature, explore the stunning Highland landscapes and see rewilding in action.

Glasgow Unitarians contribution to the 10,000 acre Dundreggan Estate is small but nevertheless important. Trees for Life is restoring the Caledonian Forest and its wildlife. Dundreggan, a former deer stalking Estate, was purchased by Trees for Life in 2008. The Centre offers year round events and experiences, from accessible forest trails, an events space, a storytelling bothy, outdoor play area, a cafe and a purpose-built accommodation with 20 bedrooms.

Trees for Life is a member of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance. They are urging people to sign the Rewilding Nation Charter, calling on the Scottish Government to declare Scotland a rewilding nation, committing to nature recovery across 30% of land and sea. Sadly, Scotland is currently one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Many signatures can make an impact on important issues such as this one.

For more information, see the following links:

www.rewild.scot/charter

visitdundreggan.co.uk. There is an ethically sourced Rewilding Shop.

treesforlife.org.uk Glasgow Unitarians' Wildlife Conservation Grove. Our Grove number is 454020. £6 per tree.

Margret Macintyre McClymont.



Deism – A Personal View

Extract from Jim Millar's service, Feb 2025

Some years ago I led a service during which I talked about the English Deists which sparked quite a lively debate amongst our members, so I thought I would follow up with a look at deism as it exists today and why it appeals to me on a personal level.

Writing in the second century of the Common Era, the church father Tertullian posed the famous question, what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?

Athens represented philosophy and by extension all pagan philosophy and literature. In the modern context I would add scientific knowledge and the scientific method to this.

Jerusalem represents the church, Christian believers, the bible and by extension the doctrines of the church.

Now if it were the only show in town, I could be a Christian, at least one of the very liberal Unitarian kind. But if I reject the trinity, the divinity of Christ, the authority of scripture, salvation by vicarious redemption, and the virgin birth etc. what would I have left?

Just how many Jenga bricks can you pull out before the whole thing collapses?

You know, I was listening to a podcast by John Dominic Crossan during the week and he was asked the question, "Who was Jesus?" His answer was, "A peasant with attitude".

Could I really follow a faith like that?
I don't think I could.

Surely, at least it seems to me, it is better to be a good citizen of Athens than a bad citizen of Jerusalem.

Jim Millar



Winter is the oldest season
 But quietly beneath the snow
 Seeds are stretching out and reaching
 Faithful as the morning glow

Carry nothing but what you must
 Lean in toward the Light
 Let it go, shake off the dust
 Lean in toward the Light

Today is now, tomorrow beckons
 Lean in toward the Light
 Keep practicing resurrection
 Lean in toward the Light



The shadows of this world will say
 There's no hope why try anyway?
 But every kindness large or slight
 Shifts the balance toward the light

Waters wind and open wide
 Lean in toward the Light
 Don't just walk when you can fly
 Lean in toward the Light

When justice seems in short supply
 Lean in toward the Light
 Let beauty be your truest guide
 Lean in toward the Light



The shadows of this world will say
 There's no hope why try anyway?
 But every kindness large or slight
 Shifts the balance toward the light

The prayer I pray at eventide
 Lean in toward the Light
 All left undone be put aside
 Lean in toward the Light

When forgiveness is hard to find
 Lean in toward the Light
 Help me at least to be kind
 Lean in toward the Light

Unitarian Music Society

Summer Conference

8th-11th August 2025

Nightingale Centre
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire



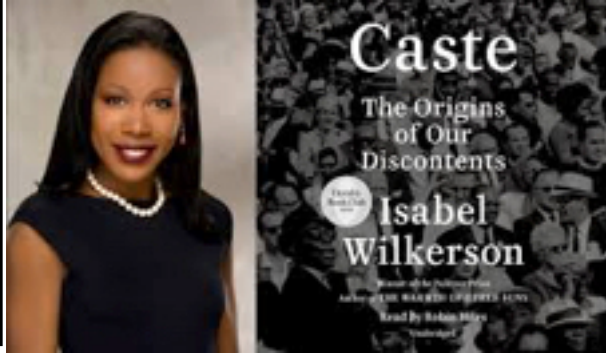
Folk Songs Forever!



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April's Book Review

Caste – The Origins of our Discontent by Isabel Wilkerson



This is not light reading! It is a devastating thesis by a black African American journalist that argues that the origins of our discontent are not race but caste. She sees the parallels of the desperate injustices meted out to her community by white Americans with the horrors of the holocaust in Nazi Germany and the continuing cruelty to the Dalits (the Untouchables) in India.

Like many of you, I was not unaware of social injustices in history but this book details them in such horrifying detail that I have had to face up to the fact that, resting in my unconscious white privilege, I have become blind and accepting of such arrangements as so many generations before me.

The book was published in 2020 and was a "success" in terms of sales, perhaps the outcome of time to read during Covid. In 2023 it received a film adaptation called "Origin" which is available on Netflix. The book is much more detailed but it is a long and difficult read.

As I write this brief summary, I am aware of the triumph and destruction carried out in the US by two white men who dismiss as "woke" any action which is remotely aiming at redressing the balance of inequities in their society. Only this week, the highest ranking general in the US military was sacked. He just happens to be black. His fault apparently was his support of diversity and equality in the ranks.

In American schools, 1600 books have been banned on the grounds that they intensify political, racial and cultural divisions. Caste is one of them.

Isabel Wilkerson believes that the US is in a period of backlash and retrenchment after the election of Obama for two terms. Unitarians were in the forefront of making the case for same sex marriages and have long supported lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. This book will heighten your awareness of the social stratification in many cultures and the demonisation of certain groups on the basis of the family into which they were born.

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir Spring Concert



The Glasgow Phoenix Choir return to Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's New Auditorium for their Spring Concert with special guests the Ballianlay Choir from the Isle of Bute!

Saturday 26th April at 2.30pm
2 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow City Centre G2 3NY

Tickets £20 & £22.50

Go into the arts. I'm not kidding. The arts are not a way to make a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable. Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.

Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut
American Unitarian
Universalist author.



We all place ourselves in danger to one degree or another when we stand up. However, we place our children and grandchildren in even greater danger when we don't.



Memos contributed by John Clifford

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LAY PREACHER – Iain Brown

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Jim Millar, Lyanne Mitchell, Margaret Paxton**

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