



GLASGOW UNITARIANS

MAY 2025

NEWS & VIEWS

*Blessed Spirit of my life
Give me strength
through stress and strife
Help me live with dignity,
Let me know serenity
Fill me with a vision,
Clear my mind of fear
and confusion.
When my thoughts
flow restlessly,
Let peace find
a home in me.*

*Spirit of great mystery,
Hear the still,
small voice in me.
Help me live
my wordless creed
As I comfort those in need.
Fill me with compassion
Be the source of my intuition.
Then when life is done for me,
Let love be my legacy.*

*Shelley Jackson Denham
Hymn 11 - Sing your faith*



GLASGOW UNITARIAN CHURCH (SCIO)

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

Cover - Lyanne Mitchell

PROGRAMME and NOTICES

Sunday 27th APRIL - 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 - The Tasks of Life – *streamed live from Kensington Unitarians at the Essex Church in London*
The link will be sent a few days before the service

Sunday 4th - 7pm on zoom - Rev Jean Bradley – *Do we experience awe and wonder in our modern age?.*

Sunday 11th - 11am in Church and on zoom - Reflections on a Life.
Iain Brown in conversation with Alison Spurway

Sunday 18th - 11am in Church and on zoom - Dogo. The End of the Story
"Life is suffering," the Buddha taught. Our suffering arises not from our pain, but from the stories we tell ourselves about our pain. Some psychologists call it "main character syndrome," while Zen Buddhists call it "attachment to self." How can we live our life, rather than a life story?

Sunday 25th - 11am in Church and on Zoom - Tom Serb (a recent visitor) will talk about 'Against Fate' by Glen Tinder.

JUNE SERVICES

Sunday 1st - 11am in Church and on zoom - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
preceded by a brief reading by Alison Spurway.

Sunday 1st - 7pm on zoom - TBA



**WEDNESDAY
DISCUSSION GROUP**
7 - 8 pm on zoom **All Welcome!**





Jon Cape - Extract from his service on Sunday 23rd march.

How do we find hope amidst a climate of fear?

TS Eliot, wrote in his poem - *Wait Without Hope* :
*"I said to my soul Be still and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing;
wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing;
there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope
are all in the waiting."*

But I don't believe we just sit here and wait.

One of the people I admire most is the Palestinian Christian, Daoud Nassar. Daoud is founder of Tent of Nations, a farm and a community seeking to embrace those of all faiths sitting in the hills above Bethlehem. Carved in rock at its entrance is the message "*We refuse to be enemies*". Daoud brings to life for me in today's world the two wings of which Hildegard speaks. Talking to Tent of Nations supporters amidst the increasing level of threat and fear, he says:

"I have written and spoken often about the power of mutual encouragement as we journey this long and challenging road toward justice. We are called to stand firm in faith, even when the path is difficult. Your support continues to sustain us here at the Tent of Nations, reminding us that we are not alone in this struggle. To work the land is to affirm life in the face of oppression. This is our act of nonviolent resistance, rooted in the deep faith that God's justice will prevail. May we remain steadfast in faith and justice. With gratitude for your walk with us with faith, love and hope."

Here is a link to the UK Friends of tent of Nations <https://www.facebook.com/fotonuk> or if you are not on Facebook, here is the email tonfriendsuk@gmail.com



HOPE by Salome Agbaroji -(this poem was read by Lois at Jon Cape's service)



*When I was ye high, my hopes were way higher.
Inspired by the fairytales and princess dress attire.
If you just believe, they said, everything bleak becomes beautiful,
The pebbles become pearls and we all get our happy endings.
But when I outgrew those glass slippers, I saw no hope on our screens,
In the children's screams.
As the story unfolds more smoke unfurls and all of a sudden I'm that child
again tugging at the pant leg of History
Asking, "is there more to the story or is happily ever after only a thing of
fiction?" But then I remember the hero's journey is long and hard and always
only won in the final act.
And the valiant protagonist of this epic called "Earth" Is named HOPE.
But this HOPE isn't the idle optimist that sits on stumps plucking petals.
Instead, we are getting our hands dirty and planting the seeds ourselves.
This HOPE isn't wishing on a lucky star.
It is imagining a future where stars are visible in the first place
Past the clouds of CO2 we struggle seeing through. In this story,
Women across the globe are their own knights in shining armour,
or presidents or bankers, or mothers or farmers.
HOPE is a call to the unseen and a claim to what's yet to be.
HOPE is the hero we need.
I'm not concerned with whether you call it a glass half full or a glass half
empty. This HOPE is ensuring there is clean water in that glass
Today, tomorrow, and every tomorrow after that.
We are not kissing lucky quarters and throwing them into wishing wells.
We are convening in common quarters to protect and preserve health and
wellness. This is the difference between a wish and a goal.
We do not seek magic potions or genies in bottles,
We exercise our devotion with potential at full throttle. With 5 years left,
Marvel at the mountains we scaled, the dragons we've slain,
Remember that the sweetest victories ae the ones with the buzzer-beater
turnarounds, when the hero on the lowest bars of health falls face-to-face
with certain defeat, but with faith, rises to their feet and fights on.
HOPE is not the way that we cope, but the way that we conquer.
So this year and beyond, we aren't crossing our fingers,
We're crossing finish lines.
Let's write a finale worthy of applause because every life on this planet has
its own narrative worthy and deserving of its own happily ever after.*

Chat GPT and AI have changed the conversation on universal basic income



This is the headline of an opinion piece in the 31st March issue of the weekly Big Issue sold by street vendors who may be homeless, at risk of losing their home, long-term unemployed or dealing with mental health issues.

Since my schooldays back in Austria in the 1990s, the Big Issue has been to me the voice of an admirable, sophisticated and welcoming Britain, and to revisit a current issue after a fairly long break has felt like a sort of homecoming to a kinder place I had feared lost in recent years.

The writer Alison Hawdale, co-founder of UBI Lab Manchester got involved in 2019 as she needed to see hope within the climate crisis. Universal Basic Income (UBI) seemed an answer to moving from a fossil fuel economy to a green one. However when she first started engaging the public about UBI fellow activists advised her not to bother with 'the robots are coming' as automation was not an issue for the average person on the streets of Manchester at that time.

More recently though, when Hawdale asked Chat GPT for good reasons to introduce a UBI, one of the reasons was: adapting to changing work patterns. What will be left for us to do and what will we live on when then majority of us are no longer paid to do work as we have known it? Who will buy goods and services produced by the 'robots' when most people won't have an income? All jobs from repetitive and low-skilled to white-collar and creatives look to be on the line.

While a basic income will be a vital part of sustaining the economy, there are deeper moral arguments for its introduction. Guy Standing who has been advocating a UBI in the UK for many years, points out that 'access to the commons' was taken from us and should be compensated for. Similarly, Artificial Intelligence models derive their output from the content created by all of us, making us entitled to a cut of the profits, and a basic income not a mere handout but a dividend rightfully ours.

In this way, AI will not only be used to extract and consolidate wealth for a few, but will offer untold opportunities for our collective future.

Ruth Jacobs

Easter - by Rev Andrew Hill

We look, this Easter, to rise above tombs of unreasonableness.

*From the tomb which confines God to supernatural orders,
Let God rise respecting nature's universal laws.*

*From the tomb of literalism and exclusivism and fanaticism
Let rise imagination and inclusiveness and cooperation.*

*From the tomb where we hear nothing but our own voices' echoes
Let rise voices reasoning together.*

*From the tomb which chains human minds
Let rise minds which test and quest without resting.*

*From the tomb of never ending sorrow and despair
Let rise new beginnings and new hope.*

*From the tomb of conflict and war
Let rise listening, tolerant and participatory government.*

*From the tomb where after-life claims all life's meaning
Let rise new meanings for this life.*

*Most reasonable God, warm our hearts
and may our hearts' fires be led by reason.*



Report from the 2025 AGM of the Unitarian Christian Association

by Donald Jacobs

On Saturday, March 15th Ruth and I attended the AGM of the Unitarian Christian Association which was held at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, a most impressive church building in north London. The meeting began with a packed lunch at 12 noon, followed by the AGM at 1pm, a service led by Rev Kate Dean at 2pm, and a short talk by a representative of the charity Church Action on Poverty at 3pm, followed by time for sandwiches, cakes, tea, and conversation.

The AGM reported on the business of the Association which consists of: the production of a magazine, *The Liberal Christian Herald*, online services on Sunday evenings, supporting Bible discussions on Monday evenings (which I help coordinate, and some in Glasgow and Edinburgh have attended), social media engagement, annual gatherings, presence at the GA, support for publications through the Lindsey Press, maintaining a website, support for a nominated charity (this year Church Action on Poverty), and pastoral care for members. The UCA is also exploring ways to collaborate with the GA in providing educational courses. The aim for this initiative is not to proselytise for Christianity but to serve as a resource that the wider Unitarian movement can draw upon in the liberal Christian tradition when they find this useful.

There are around 150 members of the UCA across the country, with clusters in the north west and the south east. There are five individual members in Scotland and the Dundee church is affiliated along with 12 other Unitarian churches across Britain. There were around 25 in attendance at the AGM in Rosslyn Hill, which is similar to the attendance at last year's AGM held in Cross Street Chapel in Manchester. Office bearers on the committee have been in position for many years and hope that others will take over. In particular, Alex Bradley has served since the early days of the UCA in the 1990s, and Cathy Fozard has been doing the vital duties of treasurer and membership secretary for a long period.

The well designed service led by Rev Kate Dean, who has been minister at Rosslyn Hill for 8 years, comprised Bible readings and testimonies by Rev Sheena Gabriel, Rev John Carter, and Rev Alex Bradley about what brought them to the UCA and the liberal Christian tradition more generally. Excellent hymns played on the organ were included from green and purple books as well as an entertaining adaptation by Jean Bradley of a biblical parable about inheritance transported to a rural Welsh village.

The short talk about Church Action on Poverty included videos and brief discussions, and emphasised tackling the root causes of poverty, treating people with dignity, and initiatives from people themselves. In the Manchester area this charity is a organisation where Unitarian churches work along with other churches for a common cause. Regrettably, in our view,



UCA service in Rosslyn Hill Chapel on Saturday 15th March, led by Rev Kate Dean: photo courtesy of Rev Jim Corrigan



Golders Green Church on a sunny but cold Sunday, 16th March 2025

working to bring about a universal basic income (UBI) is low on the charity's agenda, being deemed too far away. (Ruth sends further thoughts on this in a separate article.)

After the meeting it was a great to meet people again who we met for the first time last year, as well as a number of new people, including some from Zoom meetings in real life for the first time. One man shared that he is working on a book length history of the Unitarian church in Hastings which he hopes to complete and publish this year.

We stayed Saturday night in a private Bed & Breakfast in St Albans run by a friendly and engaging older woman, Nora, who is originally Armenian, grew up in Egypt, and has run her B&B in England for decades. Alex and Jean Bradley were at the same accommodation and we had a good opportunity for conversation over an evening meal and at breakfast before we left for home on Sunday. Nora joined us for dinner and shared how Ruth's accent reminded her of a dear deceased Belgian friend.

Before we headed back to Scotland we took a short detour and attended the service at Golders Green Church in London. What a beautiful little church! It was built in 1925 and they will be celebrating their centenary later this year. One of the congregants told me it was established as a more radical offshoot from Rosslyn Hill Chapel. The Rev Michael Allured's powerful presence and dignified speech made the occasion all the more memorable. He conducted a thoughtful service which addressed all the senses and included chalice lighting, joys and concerns, and concluded with a traditional recitation of a group blessing holding hands in a circle. The blessing was authored by members of the church in the 1970s and is included in the purple hymn book. There were ten of us in the church and three joined us by Zoom. We were made very welcome and enjoyed lively conversations over tasty homemade cakes, and teas & coffees. There is a fantastic mural on the wall of a forest scene by the artist Ivon Hitchens. A detail from the mural was used for the cover of Stephen Lingwood's book *Seeking Paradise: A Unitarian Mission for our Times* (2020). Rev Michael Allured from Golders Green and Rev Kate Dean from Rosslyn Hill coauthored the book called *Soul Deep: Exploring Spirituality* (2024) which can be used to structure an eight week course, as Unitarians in Edinburgh have recently done.

Below are links to the Unitarian Christian Association website and YouTube links for a video of the AGM, service, and presentation by Church Action on Poverty.

<https://unitarianchristian.org.uk>

https://www.youtube.com/live/_lqTJ7MAtRA?si=ooL5gNAANbXogEA1

<https://www.youtube.com/live/wl3xxFwcHXQ?si=xV8Jo24onBzSCs1>

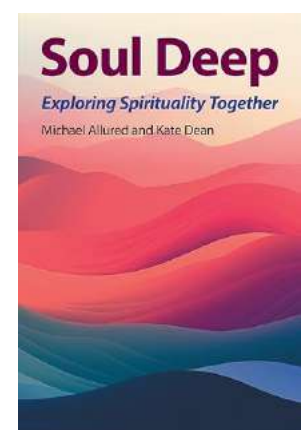
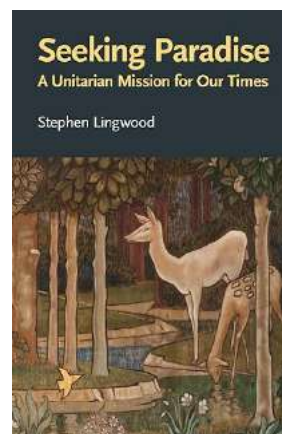
<https://www.youtube.com/live/egZSyRIKAcc?si=xdGg3G61aToHg1X>



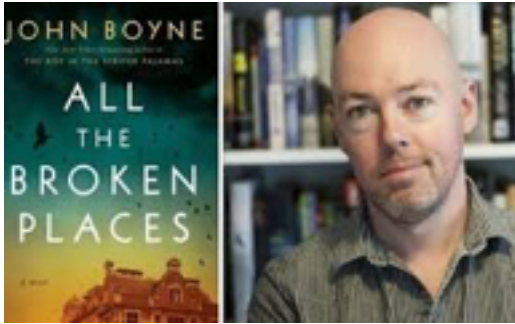
Inside Golders Green Church



Mural by artist Ivon Hitchens inside Golders Green



BOOK REVIEW contributed by Sheena Bluer



In response to the appeal for book reviews, I wish to bring to your attention two books which have recently given me the pleasure of 'a good read'.

The first is '**All the Broken Places**' by John Boyne (author of 'the Boy in Striped Pyjamas)

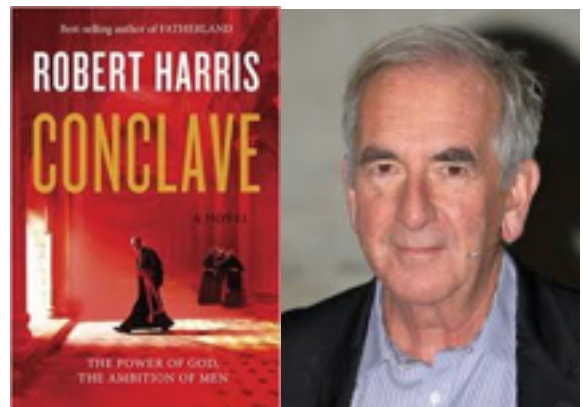
The story introduces us to the family (husband, wife, daughter) of a Commandant of a nazi concentration camp towards the end of WW2. The daughter is only 8 -10 (?) years old and with her mother, she retreats to France to try to settle into a life of anonymity. It is not a success - she moves to Australia, but the past catches up with her again. Eventually, in her 80's she is happily married and living in luxury in England, but not everyone in the block of flats is as happy as she is. The final chapters reveal how she copes with that.

The story was all the more appropriate as I was reading it when the News was reminding us of Belsen and Auschwitz.

The second book also seemed very topical. It is '**Conclave**' by Robert Harris (the film version of it was recently in the running for an oscar.)

On the death of the Pope, the cardinals assemble in Rome from all over the world to elect his successor.

The system of election is very complex and requires more and more sessions to achieve a two thirds majority. In this story it takes eight votes over several days to come to a decision - and then!!.....



Of course the present Pope is still alive but it would seem that a Conclave may have to be called in the not too distant future.

Reviews by the Guardian.

All the Broken Places is a defence of literature's need to shine a light on the darkest aspects of human nature; and it does so with a novelist's skill, precision and power.

Conclave is unputdownable : the Pope dies, the cardinals gather, there is the first ballot, there is the second ballot, there is the third ballot, and so on, each stage being accompanied by another twist, some new mystery or complication.

Have you enjoyed 'a good read' recently? Please share with us what it was and why you enjoyed it?



A Fond Farewell

*My heart is rather sad today
It makes me heave a sigh
It's time for me to bid farewell
To you, old friend - "Goodbye".*

*I'm getting older nowadays
My confidence is low
I've lost my nerve in many ways
So now it's time to go.*

*You are a special instrument
Unique beyond compare
Working pipes, electric keys,
You were chosen with great care.*

*You only have four octaves
Your notes can't reach too high
This makes you rather tricky
I cannot tell a lie!*

*I love to sing my favourite hymns
But this I cannot do -
I just can't read their special words
While I'm playing you.*

*You'll be under new hands now
You won't miss a beat
And I'll sing hymns with everyone
Oh what a lovely treat!*

Lyanne Mitchell



PERSONNEL

MINISTER EMERITUS – Rev. John Clifford

LAY PREACHER – Iain Brown

**WORSHIP LEADERS - Barry Bell, Ali Briggs, Barbara Clifford, Rev John Clifford,
Ruth Gregory, Donald Jacobs, Roddy Macpherson,
Jim Millar, Lyanne Mitchell, Margaret Paxton**

**TRUSTEES – Iain Brown, Charlie Dand, Ruth Gregory, Margaret Macintyre McClymont,
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