

# Glasgow Unitarians News & Views April 2026

Love  
Interdependence  
Equity  
Transformation  
Pluralism  
Generosity  
Justice



**Glasgow Unitarian Church - SC016472**

**Unitarian House; 72 Berkeley Street, G3 7DS**

# Glasgow Unitarians Services

## April 2026

5th 11am - Alastair Moodie will be leading the Easter Service

7pm Zoom Service - Reverend Janine Sim

12th Margaret Macintyre McClymont, with "how Can I Keep from Singing"

19th Kish Sultana - Reflections on an Islamic Life

26th Marjorie Mackay

## May 2026

3rd 11am Glasgow Unitarians AGM

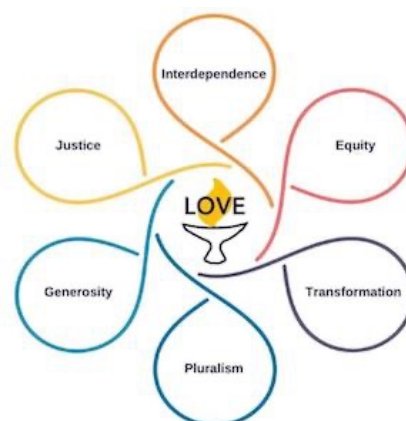
7pm - Wheel of the Year - Beltane

10th GA past president Geoff Levermore will be coming to Glasgow following his visit to the SUA AGM on the Saturday.

- Following the service, there will be a Community lunch on 5th April 2026
- The Tuesday morning Coffee Hour, hosted by Barry Bell on Zoom. It's on the usual link. If you need a reminder please let me know.

## On the front cover of this month's News & Views:

The new Unitarian Universalist (UU) values, adopted as Article II of the UUA bylaws in 2024. These are a shift from the list of seven principles and are a covenant centred on love.



# Reflections on Two Lives

## Ruth & Donald Jacobs

In a recent instalment of our popular series Reflections on a Life, GUC members Donald & Ruth Jacobs talked to Alison Spurway about their journey so far.



Born and raised in Vienna, Austria, by loving parents and grandmothers who were initially all Jehovah's Witnesses, Ruth first explored religious writings from outside that faith after moving to Scotland for work and meeting Donald in the book room of Greenock Kingdom Hall.

Many members of Donald's large family from Greenock and Gourock had had some contact with Jehovah's Witnesses, and Donald decided to get more involved in the religion in his early teens. Once at university in Aberdeen he moved from accounting to history, his real passion, and discovered the writings of the counter cult movement.

Back in the 1970s, Ruth's dad was looking after a small but growing congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, and was very happy at the time to see the congregation through 1975 when Armageddon was expected but did not come, without losing members.

Ruth's dad later became an agnostic after close reading of the bible and witness literature, and some thoughtful conversations with the tour guide on a trip to the Holy Land. On the condition that he would not talk about

religious matters to Ruth, her dad was allowed to keep playing a part in Ruth's life after the breakdown of her parents' marriage. They explored the city of Vienna together on many Sundays.

Both Ruth and Donald enjoy reading and they first bonded over their love of books. Originally Ruth had decided against higher education as it was discouraged by Jehovah's Witnesses.



For about 15 years Ruth stayed aloof from any organised religion, while Donald kept visiting and researching many different churches including Jehovah's Witnesses.

While attending a conference on small religious movements in 2016 they shared a taxi with George Chryssides and his wife

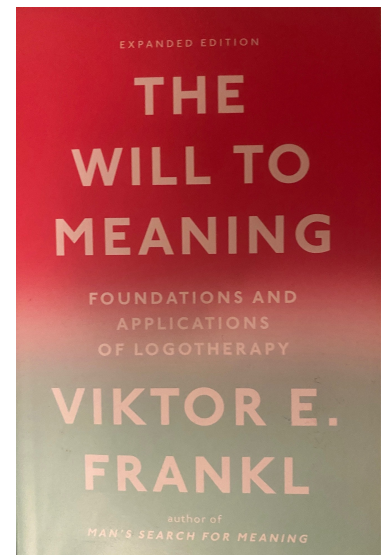
Margaret, who have researched both Witnesses and Unitarians. The couple recommended them to look into Unitarianism. Nothing happened for almost a couple of years until Donald attended GUC, among a few other small churches, while Ruth was in hospital in 2017. On their first visit to GUC together, Iain Brown was talking on the subject of Roman philosophers.

They returned for the non-dogmatic broadening of horizons on offer, and for the friendships they made in GUC, and within the wider Unitarian movement, especially the UCA (Unitarian Christian Association). They noticed that in GUC services the bible was rarely mentioned and used only to prop up the lectern. Ruth was happy to realise that there is no need to reject other faiths and traditions.

Both love the idea of interconnectedness, and viewing all areas of life through this lens. While we are a small community, the sharing of ideas, and food, such as at the agape meals, is a timeless and nourishing experience.

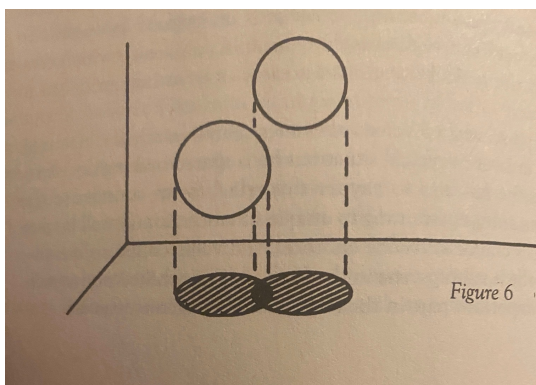
Ruth Jacobs

You may have come across the bestseller *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl, holocaust survivor and founder of logotherapy. I'd like to share with you some points from *The Will to Meaning* by the same author:



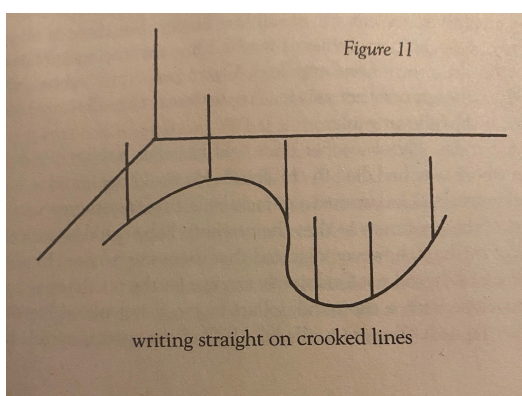
Frankl asserts that meaning can be found, rather than created, by every person at any point in life. Meaning has the power to transform even suffering and the transience of life into a triumph.

Each person has unique opportunities to fulfill meanings once and for all. These are never lost but are rather stored irrevocably in the rich granaries of the past.



Frankl uses dimensional anthropology to demonstrate that there can be no true conflict of values, as in overlapping circles on a page, which are really only shadows cast by objects suspended above it at varying heights. So in a higher dimension one value will always take precedence.

Consider this graphic illustration of how God can write straight on crooked lines:



In relation to God, Frankl offers a variation on Wittgenstein's famous phrase: what we cannot speak about thereof we must be silent. Frankl asserts that while we cannot speak about God, we may speak **to** God, in prayer. Compared to echolocation which will elicit an echo from the seabed, in prayer to God who is infinite there will not be a definite echo. Hence the absence of an answer to prayer

may be taken as an indication that the message has reached the recipient.

# Glasgow Unitarians - in Pictures



Clockwise from top:

**Glasgow Unitarians in Edinburgh 17 January 2026.**

**Reverend Janine Sim Inaugural service.**

**Jim Millar 15 February 2026**

**'Reflections on a Life (so far), with Medhi Saki**





**Susan Seigel with Alison Spurway 8 March 2026  
“Reflections on a Jewish Life”**

**Tris Gale**

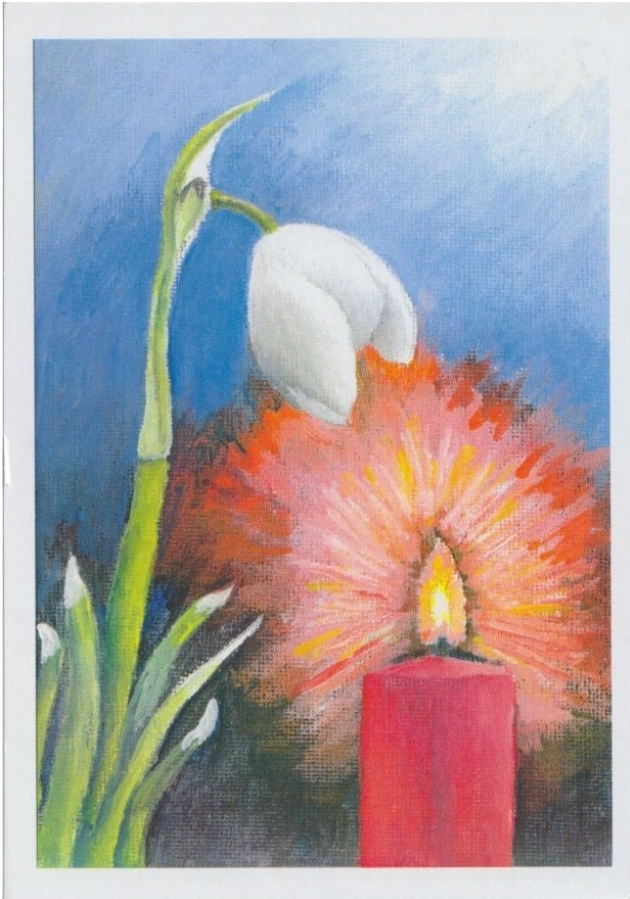
**Neelam & Rory - Discovering who you are 22  
March 2026**

**Frances Hume - ‘Reflections on an Indian  
Journey’ 15 March 2026**



# The Wheel of the Year

On the 1st of February instead of our normal evening Zoom service some members of Glasgow Unitarians joined Rosslyn Hill Chapel for a service to celebrate Imbolc.



**Imbolc** (or Imolg) is a festival of returning light and the beginning of Spring, celebrated on or around 1st February. It is also known as Candlemas.

Imbolc celebrates the goddess Brighid and at this time folk sought her blessings on homes and livestock. It is a festival of the hearth and home, and a celebration of the lengthening days and the early signs of spring. The lighting of candles and fires represents the return of warmth and the increasing power of the Sun over the coming months.

Imbolc was also believed to be when the Cailleach — the divine hag of Gaelic tradition — gathers her firewood for the rest of the Winter. Legend has it that if she wishes to make the Winter last a good while longer, she will make sure the weather on Imbolc is bright and sunny, so she can gather plenty of firewood. Therefore, people would be relieved if Imbolc was a day of foul weather, as it meant the Cailleach is asleep and Winter was almost over.

Our next service for the Wheel of the Year will be a 'home grown' affair for **Beltane** at 7pm on Zoom on 3 May.



# Beltane

one of the four quarter day festivals, saw members of communities come together to celebrate the return of the summer.

The observance of this hugely important time in the turning of the wheel of the year was characterised by a celebration of the return of the fertility of the land, and would have been a time when livestock would have been put out to pasture.

The word 'Beltane' roughly translates as 'bright fire' and, as such, one of the most important rituals, which survives today in our modern festival, concerns the lighting of the Beltane bonfire. Fire was seen as a purifier and healer and would have been walked



around and danced/jumped over by the members of the community. Farmers would also have driven their cattle between bonfires to cleanse and protect them before being put out into the fields. In ancient communities, all hearth fires would have been extinguished and a new neid fire lit which would have then been used to relight people's hearths in their own homes. In this way the community was connected to each other by the sacred fire which was central to all. The festival would also have been a time of courtship rituals and a celebration of personal fertility!



# Building Our Congregation

AI: It's hardly a surprise that congregation numbers are falling given the combination of structural, societal, and demographic factors faced.

The problems:

Aging Congregations are not being replaced by younger generations. Approximately 42% of churchgoers in Scotland are aged 65 or older. Only 5% of 18-24-year-olds report attend church regularly.

Meanwhile, Scotland is becoming rapidly secular. 74% of young people now say they have no faith. By 2022 the Church of Scotland had lost over a million followers in about 20 years From 42.4% of the population in 2001 to just 20.4% in 2022.

We have more disposable income. Since the 1950s this increase has enabled Scots to follow individual interests, with a "kaleidoscope of different spiritualities" (yoga, meditation, personal wellness) replacing organised religion.

The Church of Scotland is selling hundreds of buildings because it doesn't have the members to afford to maintain them.

Ministers are aging and minister's numbers are shrinking.



From this:

For many, traditional Sunday services no longer feel relevant to modern life and shifts towards progressive or liberal theology has led to internal conflict and alienated many conservative members who have left.

Churches are no longer the centre of community life.

**My Opinion (not AI):** While I think much of this is true, I also think there are other reasons for the loss of members in Churches.

1. Work - many working age people work on Sundays. When I was a child, going to Church was a distraction from an otherwise incredibly boring day. Which brings me on to;-
2. There is so much more to keep us entertained on a Sunday, now. Or, it might be the only day off you have in the week and chores need to be done.

**Glasgow Unitarians** have been looking for ways to grow the Congregation for as long as I can remember, its not a new thing.

Focussing on the things we do well and doing more of them seems to me to be a good plan.

One thing which always attracts people is food. Our Burns' lunch is always popular. The agape lunch at the end of 2025 was a success. The current community lunches will hopefully attract new people.

These few examples of sharing food are still significantly reduced from a few years ago. Covid hit hard and we have never quite managed to get back to where we were.



To this

We also need to ensure we aren't neglecting the members we still have. One of our members asked if we were having a Burns lunch this year. While the member in question would have made the considerable effort to attend, there was nothing to turn up for.

I don't claim to know the answers. I do however, hope that you, Dear Reader, will have some suggestions. If you do, trust me when I say the Trustees and the Publicity Team would welcome them.

# Zoom:

Narrowcasting services on Zoom:

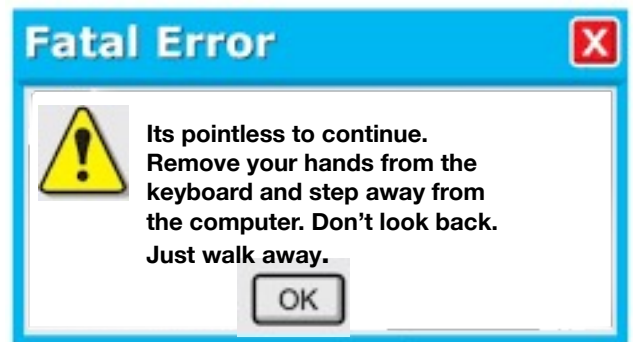
Zoom is not the ideal application for narrowcasting services. As those of you who attended Neelam's service online noticed, we had a problem on Sunday.

The internet failed us completely.



It's nothing new for the service to be disrupted by the technology. Tom Serb and I have worked hard to improve the production and to some extent we have done so. Yet, its far from perfect.

Tom and I will continue to try to iron out the issues.



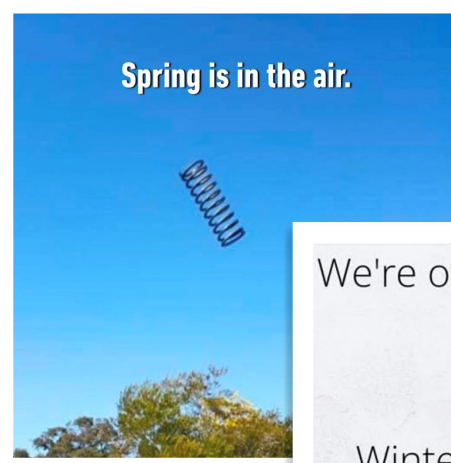
# Finally:

Spring is coming- please be patient

## Did You Know?

### There are actually 11 seasons

- Winter
- Fool's spring ← We are here
- Second winter
- Spring of Deception
- Third winter
- Mud season
- Actual spring
- Summer
- False fall
- Second summer
- Actual fall



We're officially in fake spring.

Don't trust it.

Winter is waiting around the corner with a chair.