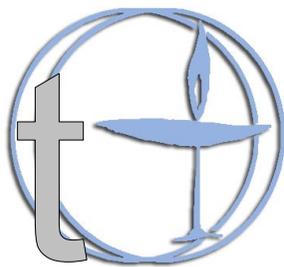


# Oscailt



August 2021

IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.17 N° 8



# Oscailt

**Oscailt** since January 2005 has become the monthly magazine for Irish Unitarians. Originally it was the calendar for Dublin but due to popular demand by non members this new format was born and continues to grow and flourish.

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**Front Cover:** We're going on a bear hunt, Jane Meredith knitted bears.

(photo Maeve Edwards)

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# Oscailt

Our magazine title, ***Oscailt***, is inspired by the account of the **Healing of the Deaf and Mute Man** in St. Mark's Gospel, Chapter 7. Jesus commands the mans ears to open up with Aramic word "Ephphatha" - open ! The Irish word *oscailt*, (from the verb *oscail*, to open), means an opening, or, metaphorically, it could mean a revelation or a beginning.

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112 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin D02 YP23, Ireland.

**Service: Sunday at 11a.m. Phone: Vestry 01-4780638**

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PodCast of the church service is available on the church website.

LOVE IS THE DOCTRINE OF THIS CHURCH  
THE QUEST OF TRUTH IS ITS SACRAMENT  
AND SERVICE IS ITS PRAYER.

TO DWELL TOGETHER IN PEACE

TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE IN FREEDOM

TO SERVE MANKIND IN FELLOWSHIP

TO THE END THAT ALL SOULS SHALL GROW IN HARMONY

WITH THE DIVINE

THIS DO WE COVENANT WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH GOD.

**UNITARIAN CHURCH** Prince's Street, Cork.

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# Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St.Stephens Green Dublin D02 YP23.

**Service 11.00a.m.**

## Sunday Rota for August 2021

### **1<sup>st</sup> August**

Service **Rev.Bridget Spain**  
Address **Rory J.Delany** *'A Labour of Love'*  
Reader Ray Naughton

### **8<sup>th</sup> August**

Service **Rev.Bridget Spain**  
Address **Shari McDade** *Why Sing Hymns*  
Reader Mary O'Brien

### **15<sup>th</sup> August**

Service **Rev.Bridget Spain** *Deep Listening*  
Reader Frank Kelly

### **22<sup>nd</sup> August**

Service **Rev.Bridget Spain** *Our Real Selves*  
Reader Andrew Connolly

### **29<sup>th</sup> August**

Service **Rev.Bridget Spain** *Pilgrim Souls*  
Reader Jennifer Buller



**Services are broadcast live from the church each Sunday at 11a.m.**

**On our WebCam, click and connect at**

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**PodCast are also available at the same website.**

# JANE'S TEDDY BEARS

*To keep herself occupied during the early days of Covid, Jane Meredith took out her knitting needles and began knitting beany hats for the Merchant's Quay Charity. Two months later, she posted off a large parcel of hats and figured that almost every merchant navy sailor in Dublin was now armed against the coming winter. Word had got out and members of her family put in a request for hats, and these she knit too. At the end of this enterprise, she was left with an assortment of different coloured wools, and as the pandemic was still raging, she decided to try her hand at knitting a teddy bear.*

*Maeve Edwards*

It all started at the end of the first wave of the pandemic when I felt that I really should be 'doing' something. My friend Brigid gave me a pattern for beany hats (very easy: cast on 111 stitches, knit in stocking stitch until the work measures 26.5 centimetres, decrease, stitch the sides together, turn up the bottom 2" and, bingo, you have a beany hat) and away I went, sending a couple of large parcels of hats off to Merchants Quay.

Eventually I felt all beany hatted out, but had lots of wool left over so again Brigid came to my aid, this time giving me a pattern for knitting teddy bears, and off I went again. Whereas my abstemious friend only knitted a few, and put them away for (hoped for) more great grandchildren, I didn't know when to stop and, in no time my sofa was crowded with teddies.

By this time I had adapted the pattern Brigid had given me, combining it with How to make Teddies - Crafty Patti on YouTube. My friend Maeve Edwards decided she'd use the YouTube pattern and knit a whole family for her Norwegian grandchildren to play with when they came to visit. That knitted family never grew and her first and only teddy lay for weeks, unstuffed, unstitched together and unloved until I took pity on it and brought it to life. I subsequently added a whole family for Maeve's grandchildren to play with – a mother (rescued from Maeve), a dad, an uncle, a granny and the two children, Sol and Áine, who all went to live in Bray with Maeve, waiting for the hoped for visit when the pandemic was over.

So far that day has not come but, in the meantime, Maeve's resident doll, Annie Rose, reads '*We're going on a Bear Hunt*' to her new friends. Maeve has knitted an apron, with pockets, for the granny, and skirts for the mother and two little girls.

To my surprise, I soon found that my bears were much in demand and began flying out of the house. As my obsession for creating bears has not abated and, in a less virulent form, the pandemic continues, I decided to put it to good use by raising funds for the Alice Leahy Trust. I have since suggested a donation of 5 euro a bear and have already raised 140 euro. I'm very lucky, and feel rather guilty that, rather housebound as I am, what with bears, books (audio, if I'm knitting), music, radio, telly, Zooms, Facetime and watching the world go by from my sitting room window (mainly bikes, runners, men in shorts) the pandemic, for me, has been a time of quiet enjoyment.

*Jane Meredith*  
Dublin Unitarian Church

July 2021

# The Grace of Forgiveness

Kim had every reason to hate. She had every excuse not to forgive. Her photograph appeared on newspapers across the world. Because Kim was one of the children seen running down a street in Vietnam after her village was bombed with Napalm. Anyone who has seen this photograph will never forget it. It is one of the awful defining images of the Vietnam war

We ask ourselves “How could the innocent victim of such an atrocity ever forgive?” But forgive she did. Kim has forgiven the man who planned the attack that killed many of her friends and family. Not only that but she has established the KIM Foundation International. Her foundation is devoted to “Healing the Children of War”.

Kim is an example of the Grace of Forgiveness. And that is the theme of our service today

Robbie Parker lost his six year old daughter in the Sandyhook Elementary School shooting on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012 in Connecticut. Just hours later, with tears still running down his face he stood in front of the cameras and he said this: *"We'd like to offer our deepest condolences to all the families who are directly affected by this shooting. It's a horrific tragedy and we want everybody to know that our hearts and our prayers go out to them. This includes the family of the shooter and I can't imagine how hard this experience must be for you and I want you to know that our family and our love and our support goes out to you as well."*

How could Robbie Parker manage to find words like this at such a time?, his 6 year old daughter dead. He went on *"As we move on from what happened here, what happened to so many people, let it not turn into something that defines us, but something that inspires us to be better, to be more compassionate and more humble people."* Robbie is another example of the Grace of Forgiveness

And there are so many more, so very many more. People who somehow faced tragedy, loss and suffering and still found it possible to forgive. Some of these people have become famous. Others are less well-known. But each of them gives us a lesson for life

Nelson Mandela is among the famous forgivers. He spent 27

years in prison in South Africa. He had every reason to hate those who had deprived him of his freedom for such a part of his life. When he was released from prison in 1990 he helped negotiate an end to apartheid. He became president of the country that had imprisoned him. He promoted forgiveness by creating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate past human rights abuses. Forgiveness was offered and former enemies became reconciled.

Nelson Mandela left us with these memorable words *“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.”*

We all know that if we have been hurt by someone it can be very difficult to forgive that person. And the greater the hurt the more difficult it can be to forgive. Maybe even now some of us here can remember unhappy circumstances. Something in the past where we have suffered some hurt and where even now we are finding it difficult to forgive.

I have come across situations where people have carried resentment with them for years, in some cases even to the grave. Some people have been unable to forgive even during their final illness and knowing that the grave awaited them

I'm sure we have all come across people who are imprisoned by bitterness. Bitterness about something that happened way back in the past. As you listen to the complaining you ask yourself what could possibly have been done to cause such ongoing resentment?

Now from time to time all of us will feel hurt by something said or done intentionally or otherwise. But we cannot afford to allow these hurts to change our personalities, to turn us into bitter people. to turn us into people who go about carrying and displaying a burden of resentment.

Holding resentment like this is such a waste of a life. There's so much more we can do with our lives rather than dwelling on hurts from the past. We owe it to ourselves to try to move on. We owe it to ourselves to forgive.

In the Christian tradition in the Lord's prayer we have these words: *“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”* Sometimes in reciting this prayer people place a

pause that sounds like this:-

*give us this day or daily bread and forgive us our trespasses*  
Then a pause - to take a breath – followed by  
*as we forgive those who trespass against us*

But we really must look at this as one sentence unbroken by a comma or a pause “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us” When people say this prayer they are not asking God to forgive them unconditionally. They are asking God to forgive them in the very same way that they forgive those who have caused them upset

Millions of people say this prayer every day. But it can be recited parrot-like without an understanding of its implication. I am asking God to forgive me in the same way as I forgive others. So if I don’t forgive others then what?

Writers and advisors from all traditions talk about the importance of forgiveness, how forgiveness is essential to our own happiness

*“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”* — Mahatma Gandhi,

*“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”* - C.S. Lewis

*“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”* ~Lewis B. Smedes

History gives us more inspiring examples of forgiveness:

Gordon Wilson was a draper in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. Gordon became known as a peace campaigner during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1987 a bomb planted by the Provisional IRA exploded at a Remembrance Day Ceremony in Enniskillen. Gordon Wilson himself was injured but the bomb fatally injured his daughter Marie, who was a nurse. Only a few hours after the bombing Gordon Wilson was interviewed by the BBC. He describes his final conversation with his daughter as they both lay buried in rubble.

“She held my hand tightly, and gripped me as hard as she could. She said, *‘Daddy, I love you very much’*” He said “those were her exact words to me, and those were the last words I ever heard her say.” And astonishingly he added these words “But I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge”. and he went on “I will pray for these

men tonight and every night.”

Jonathan Bardon the historian says, "No words in more than twenty-five years of violence in Northern Ireland had such a powerful, emotional impact." *"But I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge"* Gordon Wilson, our example of forgiveness died eight years later on the 27 of June 1995 (aged 67)

Now there is another aspect to forgiveness that we can overlook. Yes, we need to forgive others for the mistakes of their past.

But we need to forgive ourselves too for the mistakes of our past. Every one of us has made mistakes. We have all at some time done and said things, things that we later come to regret.

And there are the undone things. When action was called for we have left things undone and we have left words unsaid. We have failed to stand up for what is right.

But if we fail to forgive ourselves for these mistakes we wind up carrying a burden possibly for years. And that burden prevents us from being the best we can be. It's an example of the old saying give dog a bad name. We give ourselves a bad name. By failing to forgive ourselves we fail to believe in ourselves. We fail to believe that we can be better. And therefore we fail to be our best selves. We leave ourselves burdened with a ball and chain tied around our ankles

We go about our days carrying a weight that should have been laid down long ago. This burden slows us down. It prematurely ages us. It causes harm to our physical and mental health. It prevents us from being the good decent people that we would really wish to be

In the case of self-forgiveness we have this advice from Steve Maraboli: *"The truth is, unless you let go, unless you forgive yourself, unless you forgive the situation, unless you realize that the situation is over, you cannot move forward."*

Now when we talk of forgiving other people this does not mean reconciliation – they are two separate things. We don't have to become best friends with someone who has wronged us. Forgiveness doesn't excuse the wrong that has been done to us. But we must try to forgive, and having forgiven it makes a lot of sense to try to forget as well. If we don't forget then it is like cut-

ting down a weed from above ground without getting at the roots. In time the weed will come up again. The same could happen with our resentment. So “forgive and forget” is best

Even though we should try to make sure that we will not put ourselves in the same position again. Remember the advice “once bitten twice shy”

And forgiveness doesn't depend upon the other person asking for forgiveness - although it might help if they do ask - because this is our deliberate act of forgiving. It doesn't depend upon the other person at all. Forgiveness lifts a burden from ourselves. When we forgive someone else we are the beneficiaries. We are the sufferers when we fail to forgive

And the other person does not have to say they are sorry. Their sorrow or lack of it does not affect the forgiveness question at all. First of all they may not be sorry. Or they may not even be aware that they have caused us any upset. And even if they were aware at one point the other person may have long forgotten they have caused us upset.

So we need to take a step back for a moment. If we pause and think about it objectively we will likely find that we are the only people troubled about the situation. The wrongdoer has moved on and maybe long ago and so should we

The Forgiveness Project is a secular organisation collecting and sharing stories from victims, survivors and perpetrators of crime and conflict. These stories are from people who have rebuilt their lives. This is following hurt and trauma which has been caused to them or which they have caused to others. The project was founded in 2004 by a journalist, Marina Cantacuzino. The Project provides resources to help people to overcome their unresolved grievances. The testimonies they collect are inspiring. These stories bear witness to the resilience of the human spirit in awful circumstances. They offer alternatives to conflict, alternatives to suffering and injustice. On their website you find stories of forgiveness shared by people of all faiths and none.

One account is given by Richard McCann. Richard's mother was the first victim of Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper. He says that some people, who knew his mother, are still seeking revenge but that is not how he feels. In 2010 Richard was invited to a lecture on Forgiveness given by Desmond Tutu and this lecture turned out to be a life-changing experience. Richard says he always knew he could

never turn back the clock. But when he heard Desmond Tutu's words he discovered that he had the capacity to change the situation. He could do this by changing how he felt about what had occurred. He says he is no longer carrying around remorse or bitterness; Desmond Tutu's words about forgiveness helped him forgive the person who killed his mother. Now of course he admits that his forgiveness fluctuates. He says that it needs to be renewed continually. But he has managed to practice forgiveness in a bad situation.

On the same website there is a story told by Stacey Bannerman. In 2009 Stacy's husband, Lorin, returned from the Iraq war is suffering from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. She tells us that his bizarre and violent behaviour eventually destroyed their marriage. But Stacey also found comfort in the idea of forgiveness. Her quote: "*Forgiveness won't change the past, but it can change the present, which is where the future starts.*"

And we need forgiveness when it comes to overcoming political and religious differences.

President Michael D. Higgins speaking in Belfast to mark the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday agreement says: "*Forgiveness plays a central and necessary part in reconciliation*" and he goes on: "*I acknowledge that it is very easy to say that. Some are asked to pay a very high price when they are called to forgive a great hurt that cannot be expelled from their memory, but their achievement is all the greater.*"

So the message from all sides is that we really must try to move on and practice forgiveness. If we hold onto bitterness we can will ourselves wishing pain and harm on the other person. We wallow in negative thoughts. We replay the injury (or the perceived injury). We re-experience the hurt, over and over and over again. And while all this going on in our heads the offender is going about his or her business scot free, unaware of our ongoing suffering. We are the ones burdened with the ill will. This feeling of ill will causes us still further harm. How can we feel good if we go about our lives wishing harm on someone else? We start to see everything through a fog of negativity. We become bitter and we expect the worst. And expecting the worst what happens? We treat other people negatively and the negativity comes right back to meet us. And so it goes on and on and the downward spiral continues. Our relationships are affected. Who would want to spend time with someone who is full of resent-

ment and bitterness? *“Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies”* – says Nelson Mandela.

So to the question “ the answer is a clear *“YES”*. And how often should we forgive? For an answer to that we can look to the words of Jesus as quoted in St. Matthew’s Gospel. Peter put this question to Jesus, *“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”* Jesus said to him, *“I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven”*

Now I think we can safely say that Jesus did not ask us to keep count of our acts of forgiveness. (Keeping count from number 1 to number 490). I think we can assume he means leave the numbers to the accountants. Just forgive. And allow ourselves to benefit from the Grace of Forgiveness.

*Tony Brady*  
Dublin Unitarian Church

Sunday 27 June 2021

# Northern Lights 1

*The roots of Unitarianism in Dublin can be traced back to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and to some of the English Presbyterian and Independent congregations that put down religious foundations in the city. However, much of the subsequent building and maintenance of Unitarianism in the city (particularly through the Wood Street / Strand Street congregations) can be attributed to the prominent and vital role that men and women from Ulster have played in the history of our church since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The compilation of the list of 'Notable Unitarians' for our revamped website once again illustrated for me the depth and length of our connections with the Non-Subscribing Presbyterianism of counties Antrim and Down. Of the thirty-five people who make up our website list of 'Notable Unitarians' because of their connections with one or more of the Dublin congregations, more than half were either born in Ulster or were from families who came from there. Over the next few editions of the Oscailt I hope to provide more information about some of these 'Northern Lights' who illuminated Unitarianism in Dublin in so many different ways.*

## **Sir Andrew Marshall Porter 1837 -1919**

With the possible exception of the Wilson window under which it is situated, the panel of plaques containing the Beatitudes is the most familiar internal feature of our church building. It was presented as a gift to the church in 1910 by Belfast man Sir Andrew Marshall Porter. Andrew Marshall Porter came from an Ulster family that was immersed in the history of the Unitarian / Non-Subscribing strand of Presbyterianism. His father, his grandfather, and his uncle were all Presbyterian Ministers. His father, Rev John Scott Porter, spent a period of his ministry in London before he returned to Ireland in response to the call from the 1st Presbyterian Church (Rosemary Street) Belfast. (*A large portrait of Rev John Scott Porter was presented to our congregation in 1910 by Mr.J.Murray of Belfast. It is currently in storage downstairs in the church vestry awaiting repair to the frame before being re-hung*). His ministry at Rosemary Street coincided with the ministry of his cousin Rev. John Porter at 2<sup>nd</sup> Presbyterian Church Belfast (now All Souls in Elmwood Avenue, the

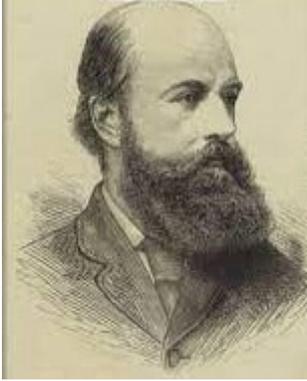


church where the Rev. Chris Hudson, a former Chairman of the St Stephen's Green congregation, is currently the minister).

Andrew Marshall Porter had an illustrious family history but he is a very interesting historical figure in his own right. Porter was born in Belfast in 1837 and was educated at the Belfast Academicals Institute. He went on to study and qualify in law and was called to the Bar in 1860. By 1872 he had become a Queen's Counsel and he developed a successful legal practice that eventually brought him to reside in Dublin where he became an active member of the St. Stephen's Green congregation for many years. A Liberal Unionist, Porter was an ardent supporter of William Gladstone. In 1881 Porter was elected to Westminster as Member of Parliament for the County Londonderry constituency. Serving under Gladstone he was appointed as Solicitor-General for Ireland in 1881 and then as Attorney-General for Ireland from 1882. In his capacity as Attorney-General he was deeply involved in the trials and prosecution of the Phoenix Park assassins of Lord Cavendish. He resigned his Westminster seat in 1883 when he was raised to the bench as Master of the Rolls in Ireland, a post in which he served until his retirement in 1906.

Porter married Agnes Hosbrugh in 1869 and for much of their marriage they lived at 42 Merrion Square, Dublin. When Porter re-

ceived a baronetcy from King Edward in the 1902 coronation honours list he took the title of 1st Baronet Porter of Merrion Square. (*The baronetcy still exists and the current holder of the title, Sir Andrew Alexander Marshall Horsburgh-Porter, is the 5th Baron of Merrion Square.*)



Andrew and Agnes Porter had six children: Helen, Margaret, John Scott, Alexander, Andrew Marshall, and William Francis. The 1901 census returns for 42 Merrion Square state that five of the six children were still living. The religion of Helen is recorded as Church of Ireland, the religion of her mother, but the religion of the four other Porter children resident in the house is recorded as Unitarian. Interestingly though, only the baptisms of two of the children, Alexander (1872) and William (1878) are recorded in the Stephen's Green Baptismal Register. However, the marriage of Margaret Porter to Captain Cuthbert Vernon in 1905 is recorded as having been solemnised in the church.

The child of Andrew and Agnes who was no longer living in 1901 was Andrew Marshall Porter (1874 -1900) who had died the previous year. On 21<sup>st</sup> June 1900 The Irish Times reported that a meeting of the (Trinity) College Historical Society held on the previous night had resolved that; "the memory of the late Andrew Marshall Porter, who fell at Lindley, South Africa, on 31st of May last, should be perpetuated, the Auditor to be invited to form a Committee to take the necessary steps to carry this desire into effect, and to decide what form such memorial should take".

Like his father, Marshall Porter had also studied for law but he came to public prominence because of his sporting achievements. He represented Ireland in Cricket and in Hockey but a promising sporting and legal career were cut short when he joined the British Army to fight in the Boer War. He was killed during the fighting in South Africa in 1900. The resolution of the Historical Society was acted upon and when the new Graduates Memorial Building opened in Trinity College in 1902 it contained a stained-glass window dedicated to the memory of Andrew Marshall Porter. He is also remembered in Trinity College through the Marshall Porter Memorial Prize for students of the classics.

By the time of the 1911 Census Sir Andrew Marshall Porter had moved to Malahide Road in Clontarf. All the other surviving members of the family provided the same information for religion as they had for the 1901 census but, at a time when he was still active in unitarian church affairs and just a year after making his gift of ‘The Beatitudes’ to the church, Sir Andrew declared his religion as Non- Subscribing Presbyterian. There was really nothing contradictory or unusual in this declaration. It is just one more example of how so many of our predecessors in both parts of Ireland seemed to have viewed both labels as complementary and interchangeable.

Rev.Savell Hicks officiated at Porters funeral at Dean’s Grange cemetery in January 1919. The funeral was well attended by the leading legal figures in the city but it says quite a lot for the reputation of Porter that the Rev.Dr.William Walsh, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, was in attendance to pay his respects to a Presbyterian/ Unitarian and one time Unionist M.P.

*Rory Delany*  
Dublin Unitarian Church

August 2021



**Dublin Unitarian Book Club's  
choice for June 2021.**



# The Gift of Rain

by

*Tan Twan Eng*

At the heart of this novel which is set in Penang, Malaya in 1939 is the story of a complicated friendship between two people, Philip Hutton and Hayito Endo.

Philip Hutton is the fourth child of the very successful businessman, Noel Hutton whose family have been trading in Malaya since the eighteenth century. Philip's mother Yulian was Noel's second wife. She was the daughter of a Chinese emigrant who did not approve of the marriage and so disowned her, she died when Philip was a young child. In 1939 Philip was a sixteen year old boy who was lost between his two identities, English and Chinese. While his father and siblings are away in Europe he meets Hayito Endo who is a Japanese diplomat. Philip had remained in Penang under the watchful eyes of the Chinese servants in order to prepare for school.

Hayito is renting a small island from Noel Hutton which is close to their plantation home called Istana. He befriends Philip and introduces him to the martial art of Aikido. As their friendship grows Philip agrees to become Hayito's student of Aikido, a commitment not taken lightly as the discipline is hard mentally and physically and demands great loyalty and trust between teacher 'Sensai' and student. Hayito helps Philip discover who he is, he arranges for him to meet his Chinese grandfather, Khoo Wu An, who is now full of remorse and tells Philip of his story as a Chinese emigrant. Philip becomes more aware of his Chinese heritage and the Chinese community who are now reeling as they hear of the horrors and cruelties from home of the Japanese invasion of their country. The Huttons return from Europe just as war breaks out. They see a great change in Philip physically and in

attitude but do not know it is due to the tutelage of Endo San. Tensions are running high in Malaya as there are fears of a Japanese invasion. Tensions are also running high in the Hutton household as neither Philip's father and family or new found Chinese 'family' approve of his friendship with Endo San. This conflict of loyalties for Philip becomes all too real when the Japanese do invade and Endo San's true identity is revealed as being a spy sent to pave the way for the successful invasion of Penang.

As in all stories of war there are no winners. Philip tries to save his family and friends by becoming a collaborator with the Japanese and Endo San thus further alienating himself from his family. He is at the same time acting as a double agent, passing information on to the resistance movement but this does not become apparent until much later.

There is Eastern mystical elements woven into this story. Fortune tellers and Chinese superstition feature as determining factors to decisions that are made regarding their lives, such as the Grandfather's rejection of his daughter's marriage. Endo San tells Philip that they had known each other over many lifetimes. "How did our lives end" asks Philip. "In pain and unfulfilled...we are forced to live again and again, to meet, to resolve our lives". This prepares the reader for a fateful end to their story.

This reader found this fatalistic element of the story a bit unpalatable as it suggests that Endo San had no choice and felt justified as the fates had already decided that he would meet and befriend Philip, become his Sensai of Aikido, and teach him Japanese language and culture so he would be prepared for the cruelties of war and the hard decisions he would have to make.

Some of our book club readers found this reincarnation element gave more depth to the story of their relationship whereas I felt it glossed over the very human and awful thing that Endo San, a reluctant spy and good guy under normal circumstances had to do by cultivating this friendship in order to carry out his duty to his country in a time of war.

The author does not shy away from describing the cruelties of war where villages are destroyed and people are murdered and tortured. There are plenty of twists and turns to the many character's stories. Some of us enjoyed these segways of stories within the story.

Most of us felt that the martial art Aikido training and fight scenes a bit too overweight but enjoyed some lovely descriptions of Penang's jungle and environment.

Despite some of my own reservations regarding some elements of the book I found it a good read, a bit lengthy, but an interesting part of history as a backdrop to describe eastern and western cultures and their differences and also similarities when it comes to family, duty, love, patriotism and loyalty.

*Alison Claffey*

Dublin Unitarian Church



# Cooking for Freedom

The sale of plants during May and June 2021 organised by our minister Bridget, made €350.00, which was donated to the support of ***Cooking for Freedom***.

We in the Unitarian church have been helping support this very small charity, ***Cooking for Freedom***, for the last 4 years .

Currently the project is supporting 15 families in the Balse-skin direct provision centre for asylum seekers who are trying to reduce their Covid exposure by cooking in their rooms, by buying small rice cookers as well as ingredients.

The Whatsapp group that the women set up, has been helping asylum seekers access information on self care, health, practical matters, offering emotional and practical support. It also links asylum seekers to other projects such as linking the children in Balse-skin refugee centre with the Science Gallery via donated laptops. The website is [Cookingforfreedom.ie](http://cookingforfreedom.ie) ( <http://cookingforfreedom.ie/>) and they are also on Facebook as cooking for freedom.

<https://www.facebook.com/cookingforfreedom/>

Donations are gratefully received. All the funds raised go directly to those in need. While we look forward to the day that the inhumane direct provision system ends we hope to be able to provide practical support to those already in this system and also to those who are exiting from the system. They have been in enforced dependency for sometimes many years and need support as they transition to living independently.

To donate look at [cookingforfreedom.ie](http://cookingforfreedom.ie) or Facebook Cooking for Freedom ( Donated laptops are also gratefully received – look at <https://twitter.com/ramsireland/status/1303311434147868673?s=03>)

*Emer O'Reilly*

Dublin Unitarian Church



"Coffee " after the service Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021. A relaxed approach  
Pictures Emer O'Reilly



Jane Meredith took out her knitting needles and began knitting beany hats for the Merchant's Quay Charity.  
photo Maeve Edwards

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