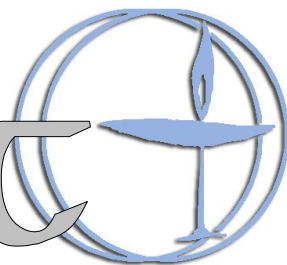


Oscailt



May 2021

IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.17 Nº 5



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.

Oscailt is Published by the
Dublin Unitarian Church
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Princes Street, Cork.
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To Subscribe

Annual subscription 12 monthly issues.
€35 Posted for Ireland
£35 Posted for England & Scotland
Cheques and PO should be made payable to: *Dublin Unitarian Church*.

Deadline

The deadline for articles to be included is the 21st day of the month.

Unsolicited articles, news items, letters, poems, etc are always welcome, however there can be no guarantee of publication. Copy should be sent by e-mail or at least typed, photographs should be 300dpi.

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Front Cover: Detail from the Digby memorial window.
(photo P.Spain)

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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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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.

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Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St.Stephens Green Dublin D02 YP23.

Service 11.00a.m.

Sunday Rota for May 2021

2nd May

Service
Reader

Rev.Bridget Spain *Original Sin*
Anthony Roche

9th May

Service
Reader

Rev.Bridget Spain *Confucius & Lau Tzu*
Aidan O'Driscoll

16th May

Service
Reader

Pamela McCarthy *Lessons Learned.*
Paul Murray

23rd May

Service
Reader

Rev.Bridget Spain *"Begin" - Brendan Kennelly*
Monica Cremins

30th May

Service
Reader

Andy Pollak *The Triumph of the Human Spirit*
Denise Dunne

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

**On our WebCam, click and connect at
www.dublinunitarianchurch.org**

PodCast are also available at the same website.

The Old Religions

The 1st February, is the first day of spring, in ancient times it was the Festival of **Imbolc** or **Imbolg**. **Imbolc** is one of the four cross quarter days that marked the passing of time – pre Christianity. Set between the Solstices and Equinoxes the cross quarter days of **Imbolc**, **Bealtaine**, **Luznas** and **Samhain** were subsumed into the Christian tradition as Brigid's Day, May Day, Reek Sunday and the feast of All Souls.

As mainstream Christianity becomes a less controlling influence over its membership these ancient festivals are experiencing a resurgence in popularity. More and more people are celebrating not just Brigid's day but the other festivals as well. There is no record that describes how these festivals were celebrated; so people are creating their own ceremonies. They take inspiration from oral traditions that have survived two millennia of Christianisation and they use imagination to create a ritual that resonates with their soul.

This is how religion should be. Religion is not about something that happened in history. Religion is not about upholding points of theology. Religion belongs in life here and now; it must be life enhancing and of the present.

These ancient festivals are aligned to the unfolding seasons; they reflect what is happening around us in the world of nature. They are associated with the elements of earth, fire, air and water – the very stuff of life. What is happening in the world of nature affects the human soul.

In mythology Brigid is known as the Goddess of Fire, she was patroness of among other things Blacksmiths and Childbirth. The festival of **Imbolg** celebrates light and the coming of new life. **Imbolg** means in the stomach, put another way **Imbolc** is the festival of re-awakening. The words of this morning's prayer sum this up.

“The earth awakens to an urgent call to grow. In the hidden recesses of my wintered spirit I, hear your voice, calling me, wooing my **deadness back to life**”.

It has been a long, difficult winter; the virus has denied us the pleasures and experiences that help to carry us through the darkness and cold of winter. We party at Christmas because in the darkest

days we need the company of others.

This year in the face of so much deprivation it is natural that our spirits feel withered; isolation from one another has withered us. We need to “woo our deadness back to life”. The good news is that Covid has not even paused the return of daylight, it has not stopped the days becoming warmer, spring is almost here. Spring will restore our spirits and the vaccine will make us giddy with life renewed. It is these perennial circles of life, nature and experiences that the Old Religions honour so very well.

The festival of **Belcaine** marks the coming of summer. The time when cattle were brought to summer pastures. In some parts of Ireland the tradition was that two fires were lit and the cattle driven through the smoke from the fires.

Luznasá is still celebrated through climbing Croagh Patrick. Today people climb as a penance for sin. In ancient times **Luznasá** was a festival of thanksgiving for the first crops.

Samain of course marked the end of the old year and it was the time to honour the ancestors.

It is right that the rituals are reinvented; this ensures that they are relevant. Making changes to religious ritual is not showing disrespect to those rituals it is ensuring that they remain relevant.

Story of Moses.... This is how Judaism has survived.

A tradition associated with Brigid is the making of St. Brigid's Cross using rushes. The Christian myth of the St. Brigid Cross is that St. Brigid was explaining Christianity to a pagan. Brigid didn't have a cross handy so she used rushes to create a version of a cross.

I have a different interpretation of the cross. I believe that the St. Brigid's Cross is a very ancient symbol - as was the swastika. I believe the cross can represent the human condition. The central square of the cross represents a person. The arms of the cross reach backwards to the past and forward to the future. The cross represents the individual at a point in time. The individual is influenced by the past and with the future waiting.

The lower section represents that which roots and sustains us it also represents the dark hidden parts of the personality. When we are rooted we can reach upwards towards the things of the imagina-

tion and spirit.

It is traditional that the crosses are made within a group. For me signifies the importance of community; how no man is an island. We influence and are influenced by the people around us; by the past by what roots us and the dark parts we all have and wish to hide. If we acknowledge that we all have our dark parts; this liberates us from having to pretend.

Another tradition associated with St. Brigid's day is making a pilgrimage to a sacred Well. We moderns understand the geology of the earth this knowledge diminishes our appreciation of the miracle of fresh water springing from within the earth. The source of the river Shannon is a fairly insignificant spring in county Cavan.

Spring water has a clarity and freshness that is not found in river water or in rain water. We take this wonder for granted ancient peoples saw it as sacred. We still love to drink spring water. We buy "spring" water that comes bottled in plastic, refrigerated and transported over many miles. Ancient people went to the spring, rejoiced in the miracle and drank freely.

A familiar feature beside these sacred wells is a rag tree. It is an almost unbroken tradition that pilgrims leave a piece of cloth tied to the branches of a nearby tree. Humans are thinking machines. Our minds become stuck in patterns of thoughts that are difficult to break. Leaving something tangible behind is a useful way to help reset the mind. The rag symbolises the burdens and unresolved issues we carry.

Also the sight of other pieces of cloth on the tree is a reminder that everyone carries some burden.

Gathering to make a Brigid's cross, walking to a well, tying a piece of cloth to a tree these are ways to re awaken the soul. This is not just praying to God for renewal. There is the intention for reawakening. Spring is coming it is time to wake up. The intention is reinforced by action – make a cross, go on pilgrimage, tie something to a tree. Then there is interaction with the world of nature. They have been used and found useful for thousands of years.

In these days of Covid we can't make a pilgrimage to a sacred well, we can't gather to make a St. Brigid's cross but we can go outside and notice the heralding of spring. It is particularly useful to notice snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils. These flowers grew from bulbs buried several inches under the soil. Growth began in

total darkness at the coldest time of the year it has taken many months for the flowers to blossom. But blossoms will come. The certainty of flowers, of birdsong, of warmth and sunshine lifts the heart.

Finally a reminder that as was suggested by **Doireann Ní Bhríain**, the 1st of February is a better time to make resolutions. If we make a resolution now we know that we are working with the flow of life nature itself will encourage us.

Rev. Bridget Spain
Minister Dublin Unitarian Church

Dublin 31st January 2021

Reading 21st March 2021

The reason that I chose this reading is that we're surrounded by the signs of Spring. The sun is shining, the temperature has risen, daffodils and spring blossoms are everywhere. It's been a strange year when many of our usual activities have been put on hold and we too are coming out of hibernation. And maybe this is a good time to reflect on this.

The reading is from Eileen Caddy's 365 Daily Meditations from Findhorn. In establishing the wonderful spiritual community in Findhorn, Eileen faced challenges, dilemmas and personal heartbreak and worked through them with a deep belief in a higher Power and the voice within that guided her in making choices and decisions.

Mary O'Brian

Reading

Spring is a truly glorious time, all that has been lying dormant during the winter months is now beginning to stir and wake up after a rest and burst forth. Changes come so quickly you have to be on the alert all the time. If this can happen all around you, it can also happen deep within you. This is a time of deep spiritual growth. All those seeds of truth, which have been planted and have been lying dormant, are now beginning to germinate and spring forth. I tell you changes will come thick and fast, so wake up and behold all that is happening. See the New all around you and within you. Those strange stirrings within have a meaning. When you feel full of joy and walking on air, express it, enjoy it, be ever grateful for it, grow and expand with it all. It's Spring, it's New, it's wonderful.

Here Comes The Sun

Sunday 21st March 2021

Yesterday marked the arrival of the Vernal Equinox. That day when the Sun aligns with the Equator bringing equal night and day across the world. It is the astrological first day of Spring. Some celebrate it as a day of renewal, of hope, transformation and of finding balance within ourselves. The equinoxes and solstices have, of course, been revered throughout time and across the globe by modern and ancient civilisations. Like solar and lunar eclipses, meteors and comets, our wonderment and awe at these celestial phenomena connects us with our oldest ancestors.

I've always been very interested in the equinoxes (and solstices) and at times I've questioned whether they have more bearing on our lives than we, in the modern world, would give them credit for. For example, a couple of times a year, I lose my sleep in a debilitating few days of insomnia. These periods of sleep deprivation often seem to coincide with solstices or equinoxes.

I was taught that the Spring Equinox fell on March 21st but actually, for most of my lifetime, that has not been true. So far this century, a March 21st Spring equinox has happened only twice (in 2003 and 2007) and the next time that the Spring Equinox will fall on March 21st will be in the year 2102; just two March 21st equinoxes in the 21st century. So why were some of us taught that it was on March 21st? Well, it's understandable given that for our parents' and grandparents' generations it was true. In the last century, the majority of Spring Equinoxes did indeed fall on the 21st of March.

With the passing of the Vernal Equinox, we now have the promise that our days will be filled with more brightness. That is a certainty, no matter how many vaccines are administered in the next three to six months, whether the numbers of Covid-19 cases fall or rise, the days will get brighter and warmer and that will make the challenges of lockdown more bearable.

It has been a long cold lonely winter.

It's just over a year since our doors were first shut and we moved services online. The last full service in this church took place on March 8th 2020, a memorial service for our friend John Ward. The following week, the doors of the church were closed to the pub-

lic and they remained so until the start of July when restrictions were eased and lower numbers were allowed back into the building with '**no singing allowed**'. I'm not sure John Ward would see the point of coming to church if no singing is allowed!

We had eleven consecutive Sundays before we were forced to close the doors once again in September, actually on the Autumn Equinox; and they remained closed until the third week in December, when they were opened for just one more service. Since the Winter Solstice of 2020, the wooden doors have remained closed to the public.

We live in a new world now.

Do you remember those vivid dreams you had in the early days of lockdown? For many people it's been a living nightmare – but a nightmare that we have mostly learned to endure. In the words of Beckett, '*You must go on. I can't go on. I'll go on.*' Patrick Freyne, in an article published in yesterday's *Irish Times* reported asking a member of the public whether they were optimistic about our current predicament. 'Yes,' was the reply, "I have no choice!"

As much as I can despair about the new reality that we are forced to endure, I must admit that had I not been alive for this pandemic, I know I would probably have said, "That sounds fascinating! I wish I had experienced that!" I can think of plenty of experiences in my life that I really didn't enjoy but then when I look back on them I say to myself, "oh it really wasn't that bad. Perhaps I should have appreciated it more at the time."

Should I be appreciating what's happening right now a little more? What are the best bits? As in Hillary Fannin's op-ed, which I read earlier (*The Irish Times*, published February 19th 2021), I have little hesitation in answering. The best bit for me has been having the time to look after my dog when he became ill. Over the last few months and in his final days, I was able to give him all my attention and put him at the centre of my concerns – and what a gift it was for me not having myself to think about during that time!

Having to stay home and isolate plays into the very worst aspects of my character. I am not good with nothing to do. Busy suits me. Even the most mundane of tasks I can get a thrill from completing; the achievement of a job done. But don't give me time to think! And my concentration vanished this year. I couldn't read for any great length of time; I lost interest in things which previously held my attention; I didn't want to watch TV; Those *Netflix* se-

ries, why is someone always murdered in the woods and why would *anyone* want to watch that!?! Theatre on my computer? No thanks.

I spent a year thinking. Pondering. Ruminating. Beating myself with my mind. It's been a year of waiting – and the difficult sort of waiting – it's much, much easier to wait when you know how long you'll have to wait for. Not knowing how long the wait is going to last can be a form of torture. Looking after my dog had been an antidote to the waiting and the thinking and since he's gone I'm just not getting out as much for my walks.

But yesterday I woke up early and went to the sea to watch the Sun rise due East as it does all over the world on the morning of the Spring Equinox. I expected it to be quite busy with crowds on the beach all with the same idea as me. I arrived there about ten minutes before sunrise and the beach was deserted. Nobody. Having the whole beach to myself in the half-light took my breath away. The sound of the ebb and flow of the waves, the sight of a flock of cormorants flying inches from the surface of the sea, the squawk of gulls, the crunch of pebbles underfoot; “Did any of these rocks come from other planets?” I wonder.

I stand in awed anticipation as I await the golden globe to rise.

There's no line on the horizon, the sea merges imperceptibly with the sky and it's cloudy. I realise that the chances of seeing the rising sun are probably not that good.

Still, I'll see the glow won't I? The clouds will glow with pretty colours. My mind wanders to the people gathered this morning at Cairn T, the passage grave at Loughcrew, Co. Meath where for thousands of years, the rising sun on the Spring Equinox has illuminated the chamber (on a clear day.) Today's pilgrims will be much more disappointed than me if the Sun doesn't break through the clouds. I went there with my Mum many years ago. It was a dull day like today, colder though. My lasting memory is that you had to walk a very long distance from the car park and we were disappointed that there was nowhere open to get coffee.

You can't plan to have a spiritual experience, can you? It doesn't work that way, does it?

Where does **inspiration** come from?

Is inspiration something we can cultivate, develop?

Or is it something over which we have no real control?

We talk about inspiration striking us. Is it like that? A bolt of lightening? Can we stand in a place more likely for lightening to strike? Does it strike? Or does it emerge or reveal itself gently, like a rising sun?

To borrow from the Seneca quotation, ‘*Luck... is when preparation meets with opportunity*,’ inspiration comes to me when **Struggle** meets with **Surrender**. When I let go.

(The main stained glass panel of our beautiful Wilson Memorial Window 1918 has the word **Inspiration** below the central image of Jesus Christ;. **Discovery**, **Truth**, **Love** and **Work** are the four other panels left and right)

I have been forcing myself to be inspired – to try and say something inspiring. I had committed some time ago to leading a service on this day (on themes of hope and optimism) but it’s very difficult to speak about hope and optimism when you’re feeling anything but hopeful and optimistic. So, in the hope of kick-starting some inspiration (and in the words of the first hymn we heard today, *I Took My Spirit to the Sea*. I waited for the Sun to rise... and then I realised that it had probably already risen. I have an app on my phone for these kinds of occasions so I was able to point my phone camera’s lens at the horizon and see that yes, I was indeed looking in the right direction, due East and yes, the edge of the Sun had indeed broken through the line of the horizon, not that I could see it, it being blocked by clouds. It’s bright now and what is before me seems like nothing more than any other ordinary day.

The glorious ordinary.

I make a small arrangement of stones, my own monument (though mine won’t last beyond high tide.) I write in the sand, “Happy Equinox” and I prepare to take a short video for my friend Nancy who lives in Florida. Almost daily, she sends me a photograph or a video of the rising sun with a quotation written in the sand. I think about how unimpressed she will be by my pale imitation. Her photos are resplendent and glorious. The Florida sunrise is far from ordinary.

Before I get a chance to finish my photography, my solitude is interrupted by a friendly woman saying hello. “What a stunning morning!” she says. I don’t really know what to say at first but I agree – I mean it’s only polite. “My goodness,” she continues, “it’s all one...” she struggles for the words, “...it’s just white and blended together, the sea and the sky. Wow!” “That’s why I love the sea”, she says. “You

never know what you're going to get. I mean I love the mountains too but you don't notice the changes there as much. At the sea, every day is something new." She wandered off, taking a few photographs herself. Maybe she has a friend in Florida too?

Yesterday morning's sunrise was... *blank*; a blank canvas on which you could see whatever you wanted to see. Seen from my eyes, with my expectations, it wasn't spectacular.

I've been a bit glass half empty recently. And I've just met a woman whose glass is half full. And every day she chooses to see something new.

We are living through extraordinary times. If our glasses are half empty, that would be entirely understandable. In these challenging days, if we are just, to use the phrase, 'middling', then maybe we are actually doing really well.

Would the world be a better place if we stopped championing the best. If we celebrated middling a bit more? Imagine watching a race where the first prize went to the person who crossed the line in the middle? What would happen? What about if we started boycotting the companies who were the market leaders? Would that promote better ethics in industry? Would the workers be paid a fairer wage? That's a debate for another day but whatever about this thought experiment, we would definitely do better by ourselves if we celebrated what was **middling** in us. If we smiled and gave ourselves a pat on the back for being just average.

We have survived more than a year of this uncertainty, this waiting and our survival in these circumstances is something to be celebrated. This time last year, things were very uncertain. They remain uncertain but perhaps... less uncertain? We are further now from the beginning and maybe not as near the end as we would like or would have expected. We are in the middle. Is there something to be appreciated about still being **in the middle**?

If you were to wake up from the bad dream tomorrow and the pandemic was over, just like that, what would be the first thing you would do? If there were no restrictions, no danger or fear anymore? Hug your loved ones tight? Would you go on holiday? Would you throw a party and invite everyone you know? Would you book your favourite restaurant and dine out with your closest friends? Or would you step out into the garden and have a good cry?

It's been so hard not having things to look forward to. Maybe we should now all make a plan to have at least one thing each day that we can look forward to; even the most simple of things; A cup of tea

and a biscuit at 4 o'clock? A walk by the sea or on the hills with a friend?

Let's start imagining some of the wonderful things that we are going to do when this is all over, and *it will be over*. Now that we are in (or around) the middle, can we start looking forward to the end?

When I practised this exercise I imagined being squished tightly in the London Underground or New York Subway or Paris Metro (I will never complain again about being squashed on a train) on my way to see a show in the West End, or on Broadway or maybe in the Théâtre du Soleil in Paris. The thoughts of this give me an instant hit of the happy hormones.

To **imagine** the **wonderful** things that I **will** do...

is just the **Sun** I need...

to melt the **Ice**...

that adds a little **Water**...

to my half empty glass.

Will O'Connell

Dublin Unitarian Church

Hans Kung

*The following article is the text of a sermon preached on the
11th of April 2021 to mark the passing
of Prof. Hans Kung on Tuesday 6th April.*

One of the things about preaching is sometimes you've just got to go with the flow. Plans for what would have been this morning's sermon were hastily shelved last Wednesday morning when a ping on my phone informed me of the death of Hans Kung. With his passing the world lost one of the great and courageous theological thinkers of the last 100 years, a man, that many Unitarians may have been drawn to and would have admired. In his lifetime he asked questions many Unitarians would have asked and expressed views that we broadly speaking would have agreed with.

Hans Kung was born in Switzerland in 1928 and from the age of 11 wanted to be a catholic priest he would be ordained in 1954. Within a short time, it was evident that the life of a country pastor was not his destiny, by 1960 he was teaching at the university of Tübingen, where he would stay until his retirement. It was perhaps ironic that the motto of the university is; "I dare!". In 1979, Kung would be forbidden from teaching in any catholic institute, he kept his job at the university because they simply moved him to a secular department.

Kung hit the headlines when he questioned the catholic churches teaching that the pope under certain conditions is infallible, that in matters of faith and morals, he is never wrong. His main argument was that such a teaching led to an absolutist attitude and an absolutist papacy. In 1978 he would write; "dogmas must be transferred into the mental climate of our time". Faith is ever moving, ever progressing as our understanding of both the world and the human condition expands. Simply put, the world was a very different place 2,000 years ago. Kung got this, for me he understood both the nature of church and the human condition. Combining an understanding of the two was his gift.

He would question the divinity of Jesus, saying that the

traditional teaching stripped Jesus of his humanity. God, he said; “was present, at work, speaking, acting and definitively revealing himself in Jesus.” Of the Virgin birth; “it cannot be understood as an historical biological event” he maintained, adding “it can be regarded as a meaningful symbol for that time”.

In his thinking he was echoing the thoughts of many liberal protestant thinkers and he was accused by his church of spreading dangerous information. The revoking of his license to teach didn’t dampen his spirits. He would be an advocate for a married priesthood, later embracing the belief that women should be ordained. He challenged, openly his churches position toward gay people and although very ill, one can only imagine his response to the Vatican’s statement two weeks ago. He was an outspoken critic of his churches ban on artificial birth control, something he maintained could have been dealt with, with the stroke of a pen at Vatican II, which by the way Kung took part in. He was baffled by the teaching on condoms especially in the fight against AIDS. He questioned the teaching on hell, it was not a concept he believed in. On hell he would say; “men make their own hell for example in wars and unscrupulous capitalism”. Asked if he thought he would get into heaven; “I hope so”.

He always denied that he was a heretic out to attack his church, he maintained that medieval canon law and medieval dogma should never replace the message of the gospels. Hans Kung in the 70’s and 80’s cut quite the figure athletic and good looking, he captivated audiences around the world when he ap-



Hans Kung
1928 - 2021

peared on T.V., a catholic priest dressed in a crisp stylish business suit and sporting a shirt and tie. He drove a sports car, he was bright, intelligent, well-spoken and seemed to ask the questions that others in his church would never dare to ask.

Such was his popularity that in 1985 he was invited to Ireland, amid much opposition, he spoke at Trinity College and many it seems were upset when he was a guest on the "Late Late Show". Remember this was Ireland of the 1980's, we were still basking in the 1979 papal visit and the country was caught up in Ballinaspittle and statutes of the virgin Mary moving all over the place. By the way, Kung did not believe in the apparitions of Fatima, Lourdes or Knock.

For his views he was vilified within his own church and held up as a hero outside of it. He was called, a heretic, an errant, a Bette noir and best of all, he was called a protestant. He was described by bishops as being the greatest threat to the Roman catholic church since Martin Luther. He was hurt it seems by his treatment but even more, so it seems by those he considered friends, who kept silent. Although not able to teach and write as a catholic, Kung was never removed from the priesthood and remained a priest until his death. It is believed that he used to occasionally say mass for a small convent of nuns near his home.

It is all too easy just to label Kung a critic of his church, he was for me an inspiring man, a towering intellect who sought to expand the meaning of God, church and faith to go beyond dry and dusty tomes of dogma and canon law.

He sought to embrace within faith, the fullness of the human condition. That faith in what we call God must embrace our humanity, must celebrate it, not make us ashamed of it. Hans Kung never used his clerical titles of Rev or Father, he didn't like them. If he had to be addressed formally, he preferred professor or doctor but most of all, he liked it best it seems when people just called him Hans. Kung had been suffering from a form of Parkinson's disease and 8 years ago he came out in support of euthanasia and assisted dying in certain cases. Aged 85 he said; "people should have the right to voluntarily surrender to God if life becomes unbearable through pain or illness". In a 2005 interview Kung was asked; What do you think Jesus would approve of? His answer- "he certainly would not be interested in church

dogmas and medieval canon law, but he would be interested to see where his spirit is alive”.

Like I said, a man many Unitarians would be drawn to, perhaps a man many of us would admire. Professor Hans Kung passed away in his sleep on Tuesday night 6th April 2021 at his home in Germany. He was 93.

Rev. Mike O’Sullivan.

Minister Unitarian Church Cork

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



Labyrinth

by
Kate Mosse



I first read this book when on holidays in France 15years ago. It was a good choice for that holiday as the story is set in the South of France in the Languedoc region. On the second read I would still categorise it as a holiday read.

There are two stories in this novel running parallel to each other and the stories and characters intertwine along the way.

The first story is set in the 1200's against the backdrop of the Catholic Church Crusade into the Languedoc to root out heretics and more specifically the Cathars of Carcassonne and the Pays d'Oc. Our heroine in this era is called Alais, a young herbalist whose father, Pelletier, is the steward of Carcassonne and has sworn with other 'Bon Hommes' to protect three ancient sacred books that are said, when read together with the proper interpretation to have the power to reveal the Holy Grail. This task becomes even more immanent as the Crusaders get closer and war beckons.

The second story is in modern times, 2005, and our heroine is Dr. Alice Turner, who is on an Archaeological dig in the Languedoc near Carcassonne when she discovers a cave with two skeletons in it and a ring with a labyrinth engraved on it. There are also Labyrinth engravings on the walls.

There are the usual suspects of goodies and baddies in the stories and the correlation between them in the two time

zones is very obvious. Some of our readers found the stories a bit unbelievable as there are hints of ancestral ties, reincarnation and even an 800 year old 'survivor'. Most agreed that it was overly long by about 200 pages. However, credit was given to the author for her historical research and depiction of the Crusade against the Cathars in the region. Some of us would have liked more of this historical aspect as it was very interesting and would inspire you to visit the area to find out more about the Cathars, so for that alone the book succeeds.

Alison Claffey

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the Doctrine of
this Church

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