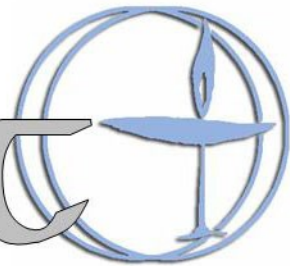


Oscailt



June 2023

IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.19 Nº 6



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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
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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 15th 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: The choir from Estonia. (photo Gavin Byrne)

CONTENTS

Huik

Gavin Byrne 2

WHY I AM A UNITARIAN?

Andy Pollak 3

Theodore Parker

Rev. Bridget Spain 8

Book Review

Alison Claffey 12

During COVID

Rev. Bridget Spain 15



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.

Huik

On the 1st of May, Huik, a choir from Estonia performed in our church. They had just come from Cork where they competed at the Cork Choral Festival. They won first prize in their category. Two other Estonian choirs also won first place in their respective categories. So, needless to say, Estonia is a choral masterpiece.

The concert was supported by the Estonian embassy in Dublin and was attended by a number of ambassadors from Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

The programme was entirely Estonian, (with the exception of one piece by Monteverdi), and was made up of both folk and religious music. At one stage, the choir of about 30 voices surrounded the audience with a piece that completely enveloped the hearers. The sound moved in what appeared to be the full 360s degree around. You might have heard of spatial audio: a form of digital surround sound wherein the origin points of different sounds can appear to envelop you from all directions. Well this choir achieved that and it was a truly warm and embracing experience.

Before the concert got underway, a member of the choir approached me and stated that she was not entirely up to date on Unitarian theology, but is it OK for them to sing a piece entitled, *Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos*, a hymn to the mother of Jesus. I said, of course!

I invited them to return soon - and I invite you to come along when they do. Until then, they have an album, *Lembit Veevo*. (See picture Front cover)

Gavin Byrne
Dublin Unitarian Church

WHY I AM A UNITARIAN?

I'm going to talk today about why I am a Unitarian. But I am going to start with something about my family background, which is a bit unusual for a Dublin resident. My background on my father's side is full of ambiguity. My father, whom I loved and admired greatly, although he was often an unhappy person and for periods of his life something of a lost soul, was born a German-speaking Jew (of Polish extraction) in that part of the old Austro-Hungarian empire which was soon to become the independent republic of Czechoslovakia. As a young man, like so many idealistic young Central Europeans of his background, he became a Communist and fought and was badly wounded in the Spanish Civil War. He then lived a wandering existence – complete with false names, false papers, constant danger and finally imprisonment – in France, the Balkans and India. He returned to Czechoslovakia after the Second World War, worked as a journalist – met and married my mother, an adventurous young Presbyterian woman from County Antrim, who was teaching in Prague – before falling foul of his erstwhile comrades soon after the Communists took over the country in 1948. His sin was his continuing and passionate belief in freedom of expression as a cornerstone of any civilised and humane society. He was forced to flee with my mother, and me inside her, back to Northern Ireland.

My father died relatively young in the late 1970s, after spending large parts of the rest of his life suffering from physical and psychiatric illness. He has left me with an enduring belief in democratic socialism as the most humane – if not, up to now, the most economically effective – means of governing human society; an empathy with victims of injustice; and a huge admiration for the courage of those who take difficult and dangerous moral stands.

If my father was born to insecurity and rootlessness, I had the great privilege to be born into a family of solid, God-fearing, fair-minded Northern Presbyterians. I sometimes say, only half-jokingly, that the best and luckiest thing that ever happened to me was the near-accident of my birth in Ireland. Or when I'm not feeling so kind about my Ballymena birthplace, I put it differently. I say I was con-

ceived in Prague and born in Ballymena – a journey from the sublime to the ridiculous.

But actually that is not true. The privilege of my Irish birthplace – you'll notice that privilege is a word that crops up a lot in this talk – has given me a deep security, rooted in a lifelong love of a place and its people that was never allowed to my father. It has put me in what I believe is the privileged position of being both an insider and an outsider in this country: an insider because of my birth, my residence, my family, my choice to try to live as an active and committed citizen of this Republic; an outsider because of my name, my accent, my religion, and my role as a journalist for the first part of my working career, and a practitioner of cross-border cooperation between the Republic and Northern Ireland for the second part.

And then there is my Unitarian aspect. I am no theologian, so maybe the rather diffuse and often ill-defined theology of Unitarianism suits me. I am a Unitarian and a Christian for the simple reason that these two sets of belief help me, a child of the latter half of the 20th century and a slightly bewildered citizen of the first half of the 21st, in my search for some deeper spiritual meaning amid the increasing complexity, superficiality and injustice of so much of contemporary life. That deeper spiritual meaning has been personified and taught by holy and heroic people since the beginning of time through the concept of a God who creates all things. I believe in that great, beautiful although incomprehensible coherence in the universe – therefore I think I must believe in God.

Like most Unitarians, I believe in Christ as one of those inspirational, God-given figures in human history – by far the greatest one in my culture – rather than as the 'son of God'. Therefore like most Unitarians I hold to the belief in Christ as a great and godly man whose teachings are to be followed, rather than one element in the trinitarian Godhead to be worshipped. Christ is a divinely inspired exemplar and inspiration. Had I been born in another culture it might have been Mohammed or the Buddha. From this comes the Unitarian emphasis on tolerance – all systems of belief in a God who preaches love and justice as the highest goods on this earth are worthy of equal respect and reverence.

I am conscious that I haven't taken Kierkegaard's 'leap of

faith' and am therefore in danger of becoming trapped in the temptation of my time, the perpetual search. To quote the Irish Catholic theologian Micheal Paul Gallagher: "In this century [he means the 20th century], we seem to know so much that we can decide with confidence about so little – hence our frequent vagueness and about concrete truth and concrete commitments. It can seem more honest to remain in a threshold stance, wondering but waiting."

One thing I do know, however. Whatever the form of the search, I believe this search for some more unselfish, loving, Christian – in its broadest sense – way of life on this earth is essential to human identity and sanity. Tim Winton, the brilliant Australian – and Christian – novelist puts it like this: "At the end of the day the only definition of any importance for me is love and justice. If it doesn't fit into that, I'm not interested. People are capable of amazing things. I don't see people as irredeemably corrupt or doomed to viciousness. Not even the great 20th century cul-de-sac of Marxism could make me think that there isn't any point in people trying to share wealth and power and demand justice in personal and legislative ways."

When I look around at the contemporary world – the huge inequalities, the unending suffering of poor people in war-torn countries in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, the refusal to face up to potentially catastrophic climate change, the deep dishonesty and megalomania of so many political leaders - I am often tempted to give up on any belief in a benevolent deity. During the pandemic I re-read the great French existentialist novelist Albert Camus's classic *The Plague*. One of his themes is the nobility of "common decency" that doctors, nurses, health, sanitary, retail and other workers show in terrible times like those. It's a kind of 'common person's heroism' although Camus (who was himself a hero of the French resistance during the Second World War) did not believe in heroism. The 'heroes' of this classic novel are ordinary people, full of doubt, trying to do their best against overwhelming odds: Rambert, a journalist who gives up his plan to escape the plague-locked-down town to rejoin his wife in order to join one of the sanitary teams; Grand, an awkward, low-level but big-hearted municipal clerk who is secretly trying – and failing – to finish a novel; and Doc-

tor Rieux, utterly exhausted and near despairing, who tells his priest friend Paneloux after they both witness the horrific death of a small child (Paneloux has urged him to “love what we cannot understand”, i.e. God): “No, Father. I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture.”

Camus, who witnessed all sorts of horrors, continued to believe that deep down most people were good. He believed that to single out heroism for particular praise implied that “such actions stand out as rare exceptions, while callousness and apathy are the general rule”. The narrator in *The Plague* [i.e. Camus] does not share that view. “The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding [I think he is talking about Communism here]. On the whole men are more good than bad; that, however, isn't the real point. But they are more or less ignorant, and it is this we call vice or virtue; the most incorrigible vice being that of an ignorance which fancies it knows everything and therefore claims for itself the right to kill. The soul of the murderer is blind; and there can be no true goodness nor true love without the utmost clear-sightedness.” I'm not quite sure what he's saying in this last sentence. It may be something to do with Camus's ‘existentialism’ – his belief that no religious or political dogma can be allowed to stand in the way of the requirement for all human beings clear-sightedly to make their own moral decisions in a turbulent and godless world.

I have also found Unitarianism's idea of ‘progressive revelation’ a helpful one in my personal search for the strength to make these moral and spiritual decisions. To quote the long-serving early 20th century minister of this church, Ernest Savell Hicks: “Liberal thinkers in religion are not self-conceited enough to believe that they have arrived at final and ultimate truth in any department of life. They believe in a continuous and progressive revelation, and in a continuous and progressive aptitude – a sharpening of our spiritual wits, if one may be allowed the expression – whereby the soul and mind gradually become more delicately adjusted to receive the messages of God.”

I like that. I hope my spiritual wits are still sharp enough to receive messages both from my fellow human beings and

from God, if he or she exists. If they're not, then I'm not much use either as a journalistic observer of society – which I still am in many ways – or as a human being.

Andy Pollak

Dublin Unitarian Church

30 April 2023

Theodore Parker

The Transcendental club was a group of authors, philosophers, socialists, and intellectuals; it was formed in the early part of the 19th Century. Members gathered to discuss religion, philosophy, politics, education and other topics. It's founders and many of it's members were Unitarian Ministers based in the Boston area. Theodore Parker was a founding member of the Transcendental Club.

Parker was a Minister, a social activist, author, abolitionist, he supported votes for women. At a time when education was reserved for the privileged wealthy he advocated for universal education. The 163rd anniversary of his death was last Wednesday; he died on the 10th May 1860. He is esteemed by Unitarians and I find it interesting that the religious questions he grappled with, still resonate within Unitarian communities today.

Parker was the son of one of the founding fathers of America. His father John was the leader of the Lexington Militia; he fought at the battle of Lexington. Despite his illustrious ancestry Theodore's childhood was one of poverty; tuberculosis ravaged the family. His mother died when he was just 12 and by the age of 27 both of his parents and seven of his siblings had died from TB. The death of so many close family members gave Parker an unshakable belief in the immortality of the soul.

Aged 19 Parker walked ten miles to apply to study at Harvard College. He was accepted as a student but as he was unable to pay the tuition fee he couldn't attend college. So while working on the family farm, he studied at home he only attended Harvard to sit his exams. He completed the three- year course in a single year. He went on to become fluent in Latin, Greek, Hebrew and German and he had a good understanding of Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, Coptic and Ethiopic. He considered a career at law, but his religious faith drew him to ministry.

When Martin Luther King Jnr said, "We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." King was quoting Parker. When the freed slave Freder-



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UNITARIAN CHURCH

Prince's Street, Cork.

Registered Charity Number 0000246

Service: Sundays at 11a.m.

Minister: -Rev. Mike O'Sullivan Telephone: 023-8842800

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Further information from 087-9539998

Treasurer : Brian Cluer e-mail: bmcleur@gmail.com

Secretary : Colm Noonan : e-mail : colm.noonan@gmail.com

www.unitarianchurchcork.com

Jazz Vespers, first Friday of the month @ 6pm.

An ecumenical service with the Methodist church.

Please Note

If you are aware of any member of our community who is unwell, or who has suffered a bereavement, and who would welcome contact from others in the church, please e-mail Rev.Bridget Spain.

Vestry 01 - 4780638

e-mail: revbspain@gmail.com

Childrens Programme - Sunday Club

Takes place on the 2nd Sunday of each month

For any queries about Sunday Club, or to volunteer as a leader, please email Denise at sundayclubunitarianchurch@gmail.com

DUBLIN UNITARIAN CHURCH

Lunch-time service every Wednesday from 1.10 to 1.40 p.m.

Each week Eileen Delaney sends an e-mail circular as to what is happening in the church and the other activities associated with the church.

If you would like to receive this information you should send your details requesting your name be added to the list to:-
eileendelaney76@gmail.com



Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St.Stephens Green Dublin 2.

Service 11.00a.m.

Sunday Rota for June 2023

4 th June	<i>God Loves you ?</i>
Service	Rev.Bridget Spain
Reader	Elaine Harris
Flowers	Paula Mills
Welcomers	Shari McDaid, Janet Mulroy
Coffee	Lorraine Doyle, Paula Mills, Lorenzo Casella

11 th June	<i>Blame it on the Vicar</i>
Service	Rory Delany
Reader	Trish Webb Duffy
Flowers	Trish Webb Duffy
Welcomers	Andrew Connolly Crangle, Colette Douglas
Coffee	Trish Webb Duffy, Doireann Ní Bhriain, Andy Pollak

18 th June	<i>Faith Journey</i>
Service	Rev.Bridget Spain
Reader	Becky Stout
Flowers	Denise Dunne
Welcomers	Denise Dunne, Tony Shine
Coffee	Colette Douglas, Karen O'Connor, Michael Robinson

25 th June	<i>Celebrating Diversity</i>
Service	Rev.Bridget Spain
Reader	Diarmuid O'Murchu
Flowers	Paul Murray
Welcomers	Colette Douglas, Michael Robinson
Coffee	Maeve Edwards, Grainne Carty, Paula Mills

Services are broadcast live from the church each Sunday at 11a.m.
On our WebCam, click and connect at www.dublinunitarianchurch.org

Recordings of previous services are also available on the 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.

DUBLIN UNITARIAN CHURCH

112 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin D02 YP23, Ireland.
Unitarian Church - Dublin Registered Charity Number 20000622

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

Managing committee:- Chairperson: Denise Dunne;
Vice Chairman: Dennis Aylmer; Secretary: Trish Webb-Duffy; Treasurer: Rory Delany;
Tony Shine; Andy Pollak; Peter White; Will O'Connell; Collette Douglas;
Malachy Hevehan; Paul Murray; Madeline Stringer; Gavin Byrne.

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e-mail: secretaryunitarianchurch@gmail.com

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e-mail: treasurerunitarianchurch@gmail.com

Musical Director: Josh Johnston :- 086 892 0602

Caretaker: Kevin Robinson Telephone: 4752781

Recordings of the church services are available on the church website.

ick Douglas visited Florence in Italy, he went directly from the train station to visit the grave of Theodore Parker.

In the early years of the nineteenth century many of the Christian Churches in the Boston area were of the Calvinist tradition. This Calvinism originated with Scottish and Scots Irish immigrants. Ministers such as Parker, Emerson, and Channing came to question this dour interpretation of the Christian faith. Parker said of this form of Christianity "The cry was ever duty, duty, work, work. They fail to address with equal power the soul and did not equally shout joy, joy, delight, delight".

When any aspect of an inherited faith is questioned this will inevitably call every part of that faith into question. As the Transcendental Club members shared in the academic study of the Bible and they read translations of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures. This questioning of faith led many ministers to quit their posts.

Parker came to see the Bible as an Ethical Guide. It was not a theological discourse about the nature of Divinity. Parker identified four markers to use when reading the bible, firstly use Reason. Second it should be read with awareness of its antiquity. Third remember the Bible is a library it has many authors. Fourthly the reader should have a feeling of sympathy for the nature of the work. By this he means that we remember that the writers were of their time.

Parker was accused of not being Christian. This is a question that is still relevant for us which is more important what we profess to believe- what we profess to take on faith- or our actions? This church has its roots in the Christian faith- this building is filled with Christian symbolism- but does our refusal to accept creeds exclude us from the family of Christians?

Parker and the Transcendentalist found a deep connection with God in the world of nature. Emerson said of nature "Standing on the bare ground.... the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God." Parker wrote "Nature is man's religious book, with lessons for every day". Nature is man's religious book, with lessons for every day. There is truth in that statement.

Another important question is that of religious authority. Is the bible the ultimate source of religious authority, does authority

reside with religious leaders or with individual conscience? Parker was unequivocal that the individual conscience is the ultimate source of authority in fact the use of conscience in religious discernment is a duty to God. He wrote "Never violate the sacredness of your individual self-respect. Be true to your own mind and conscience, your heart and your soul. So, only can you be true to God".

Parker was a passionate social activist. His activism and modernist - sometimes extreme views- became too liberal even for the Liberals of Boston. Parker wrote of Democracy. "Democracy does not mean "I am as good as you are" but, You are as good as I am". Democracy – the conviction that all men are created equal – was very real for Parker. He called slavery "a politically sanctioned crime". He harboured runaway slaves in his home, he ran an escape route for runaway slaves. To protect the slaves in his congregation, he carried a loaded pistol in his pulpit in case slave hunters attempted to abduct them in church.

He supported John Brown's attack at Harper's Ferry and pleaded for Brown's life. Many Bostonians were against slavery; however, when Parker said that slaves were justified in killing their owners and financed armed militias in the Free States; it was a step too far for many and most pulpits in Boston no longer welcomed Parker as a preacher.

With these pulpits closed to him his congregation arranged for him to speak in public halls. In 1846 there were one thousand attendees at this services and by 1852 this had swelled to two thousand.

Abolitionism was only part of Parker's social activism. Reliance on the use of conscience in religion requires that the conscience is informed. Parker believed that education should not be reserved for the privileged rich, but it should be available for everyone. He advocated for free education for every person.

He protested the Mexican war. He attacked urban poverty and argued for a penal system that was aimed at reforming the offender. He railed against the rich who lived in luxury while claiming to be Christian.

He advocated not only for votes for women but for equality between men and women. He wrote "To make one half of the human race consume its energies in the function of housekeeper, wife and mother is a monstrous waste of the most precious material God ever

made”. Three cheers for Theodore Parker I couldn’t agree more.

There is another point on which Parker disagreed with Liberal Unitarian ministers; one that is still relevant. Parker felt that Liberal Ministers did not put enough emphasis on what he called “simple religious feeling”. Despite being a passionate activist, Parker knew that “the soul” must also be tended to. He believed that the Liberals’ emphasis only on Reason and activism did not attend to the soul.

This congregation has an association with the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. However, many members of the UK churches now shorten that title to “the movement”. They have changed from being a church to a movement. This change is reflected in the content of Inquirer Magazine and in other social media platforms. We have a duty to contribute to the betterment of society but if we forget the soul we are just activists. I believe that in the United Kingdom the balance has swung too far in favour of activism at the expense of caring for the soul.

It is right that we work for charities, for inclusion, that we march for the rights of minorities but our first duty must be care of the soul. When I speak of care of the soul I do not mean the worship of some remote deity or the discussion of points of theology. By care of the soul I mean that we set aside time to return to the best that is in our human nature or to find the divinity within. If we nourish the soul the rest of our lives will fall into place.

And as a church we too remember that religion is not duty, duty, work when we care for the soul we will find ourselves feeling joy, joy, delight delight.

Rev. Bridget Spain

Dublin Unitarian Church

14th May 2023

**Dublin Unitarian Book Club's
choice for April 2023.**

MY NAME IS LEON

by
KIT DE WAAL

Set in London in 1981 this is the heart rending story of 9 year old Leon, his mother Carol and his new born baby brother Jake.

Leon's father is of West Indian origins but has been long gone from their lives, presumably on the run or in prison. Jake's father is white but has rejected and abandoned them saying he never wanted Jake in the first place.

And so Carol is now in her council flat with baby Jake and Leon, who for nearly a decade has learnt to survive and fend for himself, but now has to take care of Jake too. Leon loves Jake to distraction and there are some touching descriptions of how he cares for him by changing his nappies, making his bottles, carrying him safely downstairs. Carol is clinically depressed and addicted to prescription drugs and she withdraws into her room cocooning herself against a world that she cannot cope with. Things come to crisis point when Leon has no money to buy nappies or baby formula and he reluctantly asks Tina, Carol's neighbour and friend for help. Tina realises what is happening and contacts social services who take the children into care and place them with a foster mother.

De Waal's description of this neglect on the part of Carol ,her downward spiral into depression and Leon's trying to keep it all together is told with great compassion and empathy and no judgement, leaving it up to the reader to make their own mind up about this heartbreaking situation.

The boys are put into foster care with Maureen who is in her fifties, has wild red hair, massive arms like a boxer and a belly like Father Christmas. Her own children are grown and gone but over the years she has fostered over twenty children. She has great experience and it shows in her handling of Leon, she is the essence of kindness even if it sometimes takes the form of a Curly Wurly chocolate bar

and allowing Leon look at TV, his favourite programme is The Dukes of Hazard.

De Waal's background is in criminal and family law ,her own mother is of Irish descent and was a foster carer and her father was of Caribbean heritage. She knows the system she is writing about, it's flaws and problems with overstretched social workers trying to do their best in a very different world to today. It is decided to split up the boys as there is a family willing to adopt Jake, but not Leon. Shocking for us to imagine in 2023 and even Maureen is disgusted and she swears under her breath that it is wrong. Leon takes this really hard as no-one can mind Jake like he can and the whole situation is handled badly as Leon is given no information about where Jake's new family live or if Carol knows and how will they all get back together again?

At this point Maureen becomes very ill and is hospitalised. Social Services agree to let Maureen's sister Sylvia take Leon until Maureen gets out of hospital. Leon has met Sylvia on a visit to her house once on the other side of town. She is a larger than life character, smokes like a trooper, tells inappropriate jokes, is helping to organise the street party for the Lady Di Royal Wedding but is also like Maureen the essence of kindness. She also takes no messing from Leon and knows how to handle some very bad behaviours that occur.

Another key character is one of Leon's social workers whom he nicknames the Zebra as she sports white stripes in her black hair. He likes her because she looks at him when she talks to him. She also gave him a second hand BMX bike which he immediately took hold of and started to explore the area.

He discovers the local allotments where he meets Tufty a man in his thirties and of Caribbean descent, they become friends and Tufty teaches him about reggae music and also how to plant seeds. He also encounters Mr. Devlin, a grumpy old man who is on the 'committee' and sees that the allotment rules are kept. Mr. Devlin and Tufty do not get on and the racial overtones of this friction sits with the narrative of the time as there are race riots, police brutality and discrimination against people of colour happening in the background.

Throughout these months Leon is hatching a plan to kidnap Jake (he sees an address on a file) and to go to Bristol where Carol is

living in a hostel for women with mental health problems. On the night of the rescue he gets caught up in the race riots only to be rescued himself by Tufty and Mr. Devlin who had followed him from the allotment where he had his escape bag stashed. They are enemies but they are joined together in their concern for Leon so they drop their animosity and prejudices. They both get injured in the attempt but they do get Leon and themselves away and bring Leon back to Maureen and Silvia.

Leon doesn't reunite his family and after a visit with Carol who tells him she's not capable of looking after him and Jake, but she'll always love them, he agrees to live with Maureen who has started up the proceedings to adopt him. Tufty, Sylvia and Mr. Devlin are his new family, he has his BMX bike and his own plot on the allotment where he can plant his Scarlet Emperor beans.

Everyone in the book club loved this book despite it's very difficult themes of childhood neglect, racial discrimination, violence and police brutality to name but a few. The author captures the time really well with her wonderful descriptions and dialogue and as it is told through Leon's voice it is all the more touching and believable. The reader is left with a feeling of hope as all is not lost even in the most dire of situations because there were good people (even if flawed) along the way looking out for one little boy.

A 10/10 recommendation from the book club.

Alison Claffey

Dublin Unitarian Church

Reason is important but keep room for the intangible.

Opening Words

We come together in faith and hope
To find the meaning life has for us
To unite in spirit
To soothe the loss of community
To encourage one another to grow in love.

Chalice Lighting

We light our chalice
To illuminate the world we seek
May we always act with justice
May we put love at the centre of life
May we work for peace
Let us pray

As we journey through a new landscape.
We gather in hope and to nurture hope.

That life can begin anew;
That our differences can be bridged
That the beloved community can arise at last.

We gather in faith,
That the light shines in the darkness,
And the darkness does not overcome it.

We gather in wonder
Of the beauty we can see;
And of the mystery of all we can never know.

Here amid the lilies,
Amid the warm glow of friends and families come home:
We pray for faith and strength
To stand for what is good; Amen

During isolation the days tend to fall into a repetitive pattern. There is a risk that we fall into the habit of not choosing to live each day as best we possible can; that we let days drift by rather than choosing to

live the day. It is more important than ever that we maintain our well-being we must take care of the soul as well and the body. Unitarians are always a little wary when it comes to the things of the soul. Reason is our guiding principle; but reason should not blind us to the reality of intangible things. We must remember that we do not have all the answers.

If we see only the material scientific world then how do we explain something like fire walking. How do we explain how some people can walk across hot coals in their bare feet without even getting one blister? Perhaps it is self hypnosis that protects the person walking but we can't say for certain.

We know that Buddhist meditation can altar mental awareness. This is not trickery it is just what may happen in a meditative state. A young monk went to the Buddha very excited to report that his meditation allowed him to fly. The Buddha replied '*so also can a gnat!*'

It is important that we rationalists remember that we do not have all the answers and that intangible matters of the soul are a part of our humanity that needs to be nurture.

Blessing

With faith to face our challenges
With love that casts our fear
And hope to trust tomorrow,
We accept this day as the gift it is
A reason for rejoicing.

Rev. Bridget Spain

Dublin Unitarian Church

May 2020

From a series of daily reflections that were
broadcast during the COVID lock-down.



Sunday 21st May, Rev. Bridget Spain took the service in First church at Rosemary Street, Belfast.



The choir of about 30 voices surrounded the audience with a piece that completely enveloped them. (see Page 2, photos Gavin Byrne)