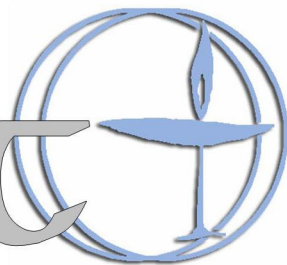


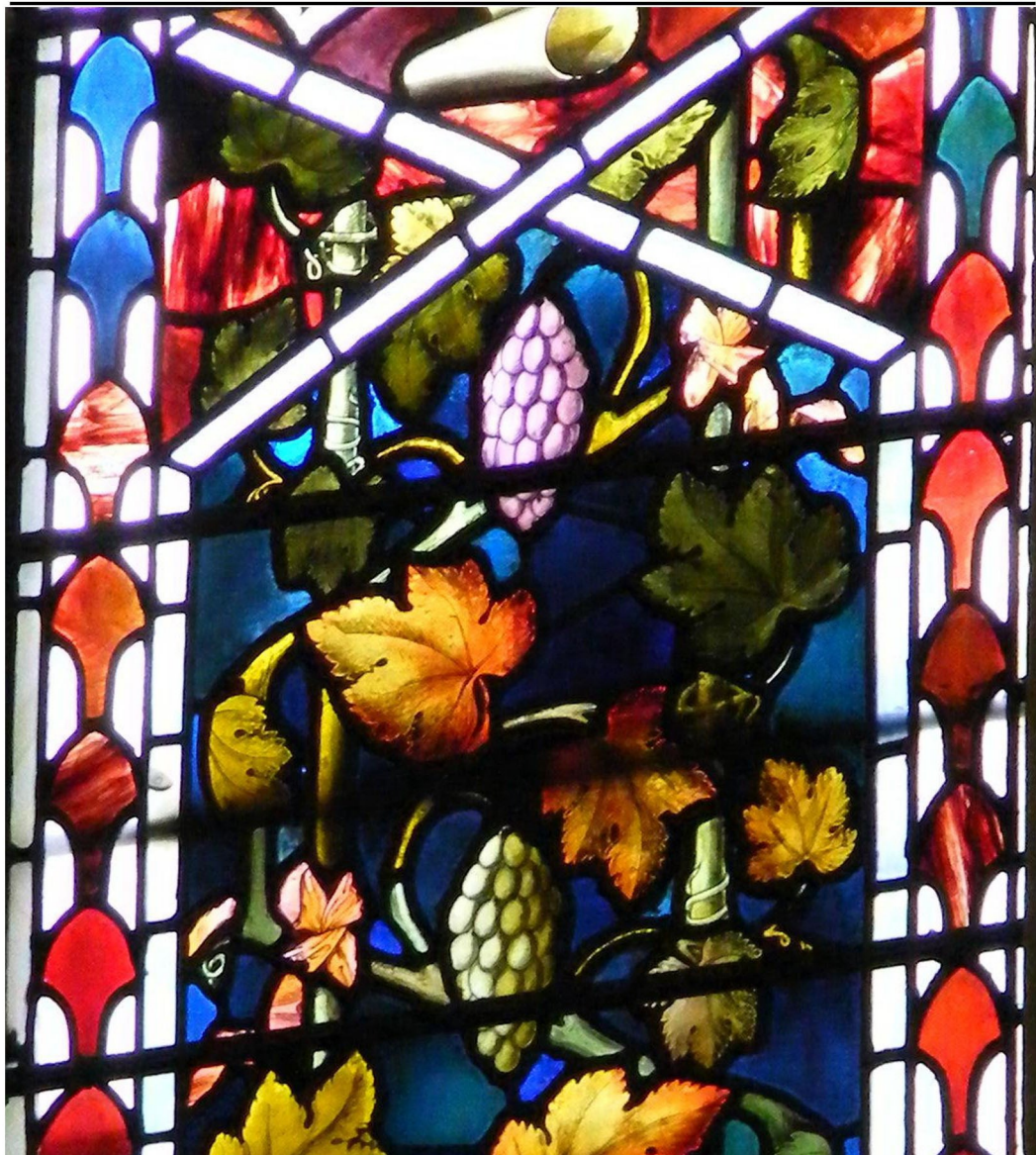
# Oscailt



June 2024

**IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE**

Vol.20 Nº 6



IT DRIES THE WASHING USING THE VERY  
LATEST TECHNOLOGY - A COMBINATION  
OF SOLAR AND WIND POWER





**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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**St.Stephen's Green Unitarian Church**  
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**Front Cover:** Detail from the Digby Window.  
(photo P.Spain)

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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.

# Song of the Summer

**Imbolc**, **Bealtaine**, **Luźnasa**, and **Saħħaħ** were the ancient Celtic festivals which were incorporated into Christianity dressed in Christian clothes. So, **Imbolc** became St. Brigid's Day, **Bealtaine** was dedicated to Mary the mother of Jesus, **Luźnasa** became Reek Sunday, and **Saħħaħ** the feasts of All Souls and All Saints.

In recent years these festivals have become more popular; their new popularity is for the original pagan forms of celebration. This change can be attributed to the fall off in adherence to traditional forms of Christianity and to the fact that the festivals – however they were celebrated in the mists of history- developed from observing the natural world. Nature is intimately connected to our lived experience and so these festivals touch the soul.

**Imbolc** is enjoying a revival since the introduction of the New February Bank Holiday. **Saħħaħ** is almost as popular as Christmas, **Luźnasa** is more for hardy individuals who want to show off their fitness. Last Wed. was May Day or **Bealtaine** the first day of Summer, it is the least celebrated of the four festivals. How the festivals are celebrated is interesting. My childhood memory of May Day is of Church Processions. A generation earlier, an elderly aunt recalled "Dancing around the maypole". Maypole dancing had disappeared by my day. How festivals are celebrated changes over even relatively short spans of time. We only make an educated guess at exactly how the pre-Christian Celts celebrated any of these festivals; so when we create our celebrations we are tailoring them to our needs.

The Irish translation of **Bealtaine** gives us a strong hint of the form of this festival. **Bealtaine** comes from **Beal na Cēne** means the 'mouth of the fire'. **Bealtaine** marked the end of winter and welcomed summer.

In many parts of the country there is still a tradition of driving the cattle between two smoking bonfires, as the cattle were moved into summer pastures. Another tradition was that hearth fires were



extinguished and relit from a communal fire. This was a visual representation of the Irish proverb. “**ÁR SCACH A cheile A mharann na daoine**” Which roughly means that together we survive and thrive. Usually celebrations involved bonfires, drinking, sports competitions, singing, dancing and making offerings to the gods.

Celtic spirituality is popular in modern times. This may be explained by the fact that the religious traditions that survive in Ireland are very ancient. Irish Christianity was different from the religion of the Roman church. The Irish Christian Church was independent of Rome until the 12th Century more than five centuries after Britain submitted to Rome (council of Whitby 677). It was this independent Christianity that Irish monks brought to Europe. This religion was not power based. It was rooted in the Gospels and its was rooted in the world of nature. Irish Christianity was not centered around bishops and cathedrals but in monasteries which were built in places of natural beauty. The Book of Kells is a copy of the four Gospels. It is decorated with animals and flowers. It was this nature rooted, authentic Christianity that made Ireland the “land of saints and scholars”.

When the old festivals were Christianised ancient customs were incorporated into the new order. Old traditions are more likely to survive in rural communities. I listened to an account of how in the early years of the last century, At **Bealcune** around Wexford Friars visited farms to bless water; the water was sprinkled on the ground to “protect the soil from the trans”, “The trans” seems to have been a parasite that attacked corn.

Today there are no Friars to bless the land. We may smile at the idea of using blessed water to control pests or even sneer at their superstition. Older, simpler, more superstitious methods had some positive side effects. They encouraged a reverence for nature, the land was blessed therefore the land was sacred. They promoted gratitude, and they bonded people to the natural world in an holistic way. They bonded people together in community.

Modern insecticides are much more effective in controlling pests. But chemical sprays don't differentiate between harmful pests and useful ones. They upset the balance in nature that developed

over thousands of years. A consequence of this is that nature has become depleted of its biodiversity.

Humans are the most adaptable and creative creatures on the planet. Our great failing is that we live in a state of hubris. We believe that we control the natural world - we do not. Our mistaken sense of control means that we no longer look to one another for support. So many live isolated from other people and from the natural world. Loneliness is the great epidemic of our time. A stark statistic 52% of Americans feel lonely and 57% of Americans eat all their meals alone. As farmers put their trust in pesticides and artificial fertilisers, we put our trust in pharmaceuticals to heal the spirit.

Francis of Assisi is one of the most loved saints in the Catholic Church; he is renowned for his love of nature, of every living creature and his joyful nature. Francis was not a miserable soul. The ancient faiths knew that there are many paths to enlightenment. Francis found his path to enlightenment in immersing himself in the world of nature. He observed it, he respected it he found joy in nature. He didn't try to mould it to his control.

We regard nature as a resource to exploit and we are destroying the natural world. We are foolish enough that we believe we don't depend on nature. The destruction of nature ultimately will mean our own destruction. When scientists first began to warn us of the risk of global warming this was something that would happen in a hundred years; it would affect future generations. So we ignored their words.

We are experiencing the effects of global warming. We know the weather has changed. The prolonged rain and windy weather has flooded the land, it has badly affected insect numbers. In the past few years there has been efforts to plant flowers for pollinators and last year I did notice an increase in hover flies, bees, wasps and so on. We had made a start on reversing the damage.

For years Paul has kept bees and last summer he was working ten hives in four locations. Some of these bees were special as they were taken from a feral colony that had existed in the wild for over forty years. These were native Irish bees, the bees evolved to survive Irish winters.

In May last year (2023) the hives were filled with honey. Then came the rain in June, July then August and September. Our total harvest was 31 jars of honey, it was 234 jars the previous year. (2022) We made sure to leave enough honey for the bees over winter, there was four to five frames of stores in each brood box.

Of the ten hives, only two, have survived to 2024. In the autumn 2023 all the hives were fed with syrup, just to top up their supplies, and again in January 2024 fondant was put on to ensure the bees survival. In mid January all the hives had bees flying, on a warm fine day. Each abandoned hive has left full frames of honey behind, it could be due to prolonged periods of not being able to fly left them weakened and prone to disease. That is a loss of 80%. During the past few weeks our apple tree has been in bloom. The blossoms are lasting longer than usual. When the blossom is fertilised the flowers fall away. There are very few pollinators in our garden and so the blossom waits for pollination to take place.

Usually at this time of the year one of loveliest things in a garden is to just listen to the buzz of insects. This for me is the song of summer. But there are no insects. I am deprived of one of my favorite sounds but what of crop pollination, what about food for birds such as swallows?

This is climate change in action. It is the result of human activity. It is time for us to live by the mantras reduce, reuse, recycle. Be stingy in the amount of carbon you use. Don't put on the heat, wrap in a blanket. Don't light your garden at night - insects need their sleep. Tread lightly on the earth. Avoid plastic. Don't leave electrical goods on standby. Leave the car behind.

Nurture the world of nature even if it is only a few plants on a balcony. Spend time in nature, it still has the power to restore the soul.

*Rev. Bridget Spain*

Minister St. Stephen's Green Unitarian Church

Dublin 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024

# Reading by Emer O'Reilly

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024

I don't know about you but I find I don't really focus when we say the Lord's prayer: It just sort of rattles out – too familiar to really appreciate it - like so much else in our lives. We need to keep in mind that Jesus spoke Aramaic, and his words were translated to Greek then Latin and later English.... we may be missing a lot of the original meaning and spirit . And there are 2 versions in the Gospels – one in Matthew, the other in Luke

So I thought I would read a translation by an Aramaic scholar and expert on middle eastern spirituality Dr Neil Douglas Klotz,

I will read the words we usually use first

Our Father who art in heaven   Hallowed be thy name

*O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos/ you create all that moves in light. Focus your light within us—make it useful: as the rays of a beacon show the way.*

Thy Kingdom come   Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven

*Create your reign of unity now—through our fiery hearts and willing hands. Your one desire then acts with ours, as in all light, so in all forms.*

Give us this day our daily bread

*Grant what we need each day in bread and insight: subsistence for the call of growing life.*



And forgive us our trespasses as we  
forgive those who trespass against us

*Loose the cords of mistakes binding us,  
as we release the strands we hold of others' guilt.*

And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil

*Don't let us enter forgetfulness  
But free us from unripeness*

For thine is the kingdom the power and the glory for ever  
and ever  
Amen

*From you is born all ruling will, the power and the life to do,  
the song that beautifies all, from age to age it renews.  
Ameyn.*

*Neil Douglas Klotz .*

SOURCE: <https://www.schoolofchristianmysticism.co.uk/practic>

# Views on Aging

Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get old is when we're kids? If you're less than 10 years old, you're so excited about aging that you think in fractions.

'How old are you?' 'I'm four and a half!' You're never thirty-six and a half. You're four and a half, going on five! That's the key.

You get into your teens, now they can't hold you back. You jump to the next number, or even a few ahead.

'How old are you?' 'I'm gonna be 16!' You could be 13, but hey, you're gonna be 16! And then the greatest day of your life! You become 21. Even the words sound like a ceremony. YOU BECOME 21. YESSSS!!!

But then you turn 30. Oooohh, what happened there? Makes you sound like bad milk! He TURNED; we had to throw him out. There's no fun now, you're Just a sour-dumpling. What's wrong? What's changed? .

You BECOME 21, you TURN 30, then you're PUSHING 40. Whoa! Put on the brakes, it's all slipping away. Before you know it, you REACH 50 and your dreams are gone.

But wait!!! You MAKE it to 60. You didn't think you would! So you BECOME 21, TURN 30, PUSH 40, REACH 50 and MAKE it to 60.

You've built up so much speed that you HIT 70! After that it's a day-by-day thing; you HIT Wednesday!

You get into your 80s and every day is a complete cycle; you HIT lunch; you TURN 4:30; you REACH bedtime. And it doesn't end there. Into the 90s, you start going backwards; 'I Was JUST 92.'

Then a strange thing happens. If you make it over 100, you become a little kid again. 'I'm 100 and a quarter !'

May you all make it to a healthy 100 and a half ! !

*George Carlin*



A place of worship since 1717

## **UNITARIAN CHURCH CORK**

Registered Charity Number 0000246

**Due to the fire in the church in January 2024**

**The service will be broadcast on  
Facebook until further notice.**

**Service: Sundays at 11a.m.**

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

e-mail:- osullmike@gmail.com Mobile 087-9539998

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](http://www.unitarianchurchcork.com)**

## **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 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month

For any queries about Sunday Club, or to volunteer as a leader, please email  
Denise at [sundayclubunitarianchurch@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:eileendelaney76@gmail.com)



# Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St. Stephens Green Dublin 2.

**Service 11.00a.m.**

## **Sunday Rota for June 2024**

2 <sup>nd</sup> June	<i>Have You Breached your Boundaries?</i>
Service	<b>Paul Murray</b>
Reader	<b>Colette Douglas</b>
Flowers	<b>Daniela Cooney</b>
Welcomer	<b>Alison Claffey, Janet Mulroy</b>
Coffee	<b>Daniela Cooney, Maeve Edwards</b>
<hr/>	
9 <sup>th</sup> June	<i>A Little Bit of Buddhism is Good for Me.</i>
Service	<b>Andy Pollak</b>
Reader	<b>Robin Ward</b>
Flowers	<b>Janet Mulroy</b>
Welcomer	<b>Gráinne Carty</b>
Coffee	<b>Janet Mulroy, Peter Fontana, Therese Fontana</b>
<hr/>	
16 <sup>th</sup> June	<i>Anniversary service</i>
Service	<b>Rory Delany, Gavin Byrne.</b>
Reader	<b>Andrew Connolly-Crangle</b>
Flowers	<b>Emer O'Reilly</b>
Welcomer	<b>Peter White</b>
Coffee	<b>Maire Bacon, Peter White</b>
<hr/>	
23 <sup>rd</sup> June	<i>Eve and the Snake.</i>
Service	<b>Pamela McCarthy</b>
Reader	<b>T B A</b>
Flowers	<b>Trish Webb-Duffy</b>
Welcomer	<b>Peter Fontana</b>
Coffee	<b>Andrew C-Crangle, Madeline Stringer, Trish Webb-Duffy</b>
<hr/>	
30 <sup>th</sup> June	<i>Pride Service</i>
Service	<b>Gavin Byrne</b>
Reader	<b>Sean Fontana</b>
Flowers	<b>Andrew Connolly-Crangle</b>
Welcomer	<b>Michael Robinson, Mary O'Brien</b>
Coffee	<b>Gráinne Carty</b>

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

[www.dublinunitarianchurch.org](http://www.dublinunitarianchurch.org)

e-mail: [hellounitarianchurch@gmail.com](mailto:hellounitarianchurch@gmail.com)

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Vestry 01 - 4780638 e-mail: [revbspain@gmail.com](mailto:revbspain@gmail.com)

Rev. Bill Darlison (*Minister Emeritus*)

Chairperson: Denise Dunne:- Tel: 087-2450660

Secretary: Trish Webb-Duffy:- Tel: 087-9346720

e-mail: [secretaryunitarianchurch@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryunitarianchurch@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Rory Delany: 087-2217414,

e-mail: [treasurerunitarianchurch@gmail.com](mailto: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.



## HOW TO STAY YOUNG

1. Throw out nonessential numbers. This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctors worry about them. That is why you pay 'them.'

2. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down.

3. Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever. Never let the brain idle. 'An idle mind is the devil's workshop.' And the devil's name is Alzheimer's.

4. Enjoy the simple things.

5. Laugh often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.

6. The tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person, who is with us our entire life, is ourselves. Be ALIVE while you are alive.

7. Surround yourself with what you love, whether it's family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.

8. Cherish your health: If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.

9. Don't take guilt trips. Take a trip to the mall, even to the next county; to a foreign country but NOT to where the guilt is.

10. Tell the people you love that you love them, at every opportunity.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

*George Carlin, (1937-2008), American comedian*

# Frederick Douglass Mural

On Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April at a service organised by Cork City Council a large crowd gathered in the courtyard of the church for the unveiling of the Frederick Douglass mural to commemorate his visit to the city in the summer of 1845. The event was hosted by the Lord Mayor, Cllr. Kieran McCarthy. The guest of honour for the event was Kenneth B. Morris the great-great-grandson of former slave. Mr Morris continues the work of his family's anti-slavery legacy as the co-founder and president of the Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives, a non-profit organisation based in Rochester, New York.

In his speech Mr Morris said that he believes the spirit of Douglass "lives in all of us" adding; "I have seen the way his life and legacy impacts on people".

The work, praised by Kenneth Morris as the most amazing likeness of Douglass he has ever seen was the work of the French artist Zabou, who sadly due to another commission in Cyprus was unable to attend.

The mural depicts Douglass as he would have looked around the time of his visit to Cork, a visit organised and overseen by members of the Cork church, one such man is depicted in the mural; Richard Dowden, prominent Cork businessman, mayor of Cork at the time of the visit, an ever present at Douglass' side and secretary of the Cork church.

As well as Dowden the mural also incor-



porates the colours of the Cork church logo, signifying its inclusivity as a place of sanctuary and worship.

In his speech Rev. Mike O'Sullivan told those gathered that "every generation has its heroes, but most are just that, there are however" he said, "the few whose message transcends the generations, those who like Douglass offer a message that is eternal, speaking to the truth and nobility of what it means to be human". In his concluding words Rev Mike said; "Given the ethos of our Unitarian faith, given our role in his visit, given all that he was and all he urges each of us to be, there could be no better person to adorn the wall of our courtyard, surely no better message for us as a church to be a part of.

No better message that represents that which we call God. No better message that calls us to recognise the spark of life, the uniqueness of every person; no if's and buts and no excuses".

*Rev. Mike O'Sullivan*

Minister Cork Unitarian Church



# My Luas Voice

Next stop, St. Stephen's Green; alight for Grafton Street shopping district - An chéad stad eile, Faiche Stiabhna – tuirling do cheantar sio-padoireachta Shráid Grafton.

I'm on the phone as I travel into the city centre. 'I can't hear you', says the person at the other end, 'It's very noisy'. The 'noise' is the sound of my own voice on the Luas tram system announcing our arrival at St Stephen's Green.

I travel by Luas every day to various parts of Dublin city. People often ask me how it feels to hear my own voice announcing the stations and telling me to stand back from the door (people don't pay much attention to that one, I find). I'm so used to it now, it doesn't bother me at all. For a while when I first recorded those announcements many years ago, I was nervous that I'd got something wrong, and that I'd be mortified. Indeed I did get one thing wrong with the name of a particular tram stop. To be fair, it was an unusual pronunciation used only by locals, but once it was pointed out to me it niggled at me for a long time, and eventually I got to change it.

And then there are the Irish language names – oh what a minefield that is. People often moan to me when they think something is wrong. I have been a thorn in the side of the Luas people on occasion when I complain that a version they have asked me to record might not be accurate, or not commonly used. I've won some of these arguments and I've lost some. There is rarely a definitive answer anyway when it comes to place names.

As a person whose first career was as a broadcaster, and whose experience in that world straddles decades, I find it odd that there's now a whole new generation of people who only know me as 'the voice of the Luas'. All that slaving to produce and present memorable radio and TV programmes over the years might never have happened. But it was my Luas notoriety that led the talented young musician Rachael Lavelle to ask me to lend my voice to a track on her recent album, which was a great pleasure to work on. And I've been asked by complete strangers to record birthday greetings in my 'Luas' voice!

Unless you use your voice professionally, you might not realise the importance it has in making an impression on other people. Most people take their voices for granted, and rarely take any steps to im-

prove their quality, to use them more effectively, or to ask trusted friends for an opinion on how they use them. With so much communication now depending on the human voice rather than on the written word, the careful nurturing of the voice from an early age can make a big difference to how people get on in life. I'm not talking about teaching young children vocal exercises, but about adults speaking clearly and slowly to them when they're babies – even before they can talk. Children will replicate what they hear from parents, and if the parent or guardian is a mutterer or a gabbler, the child has a good chance of turning out the same. The days of school elocution lessons are long gone, so parents and guardians, school and media are what influence speech habits now.

Accents are another minefield, and they too are influenced by the same factors. Whether we admit it or not, we all have prejudices related to accent, so that a person's accent can not only be a barrier to understanding, but also used as an unfair and unjustified indicator of social status and even employability – though I think that's changing. I love the variety of accents we have in Ireland, and it saddens me to hear young people from different parts of the country beginning to sound all the same, because of the strong influence of both social and traditional media.

A friend of a friend, a voiceover artist abroad, was once asked by a car company to record in-car announcements for a new model they were launching. It coincided with her divorce being finalised, and not long afterwards, her ex-husband decided to celebrate his newfound freedom by buying himself a new car – an expensive one he planned to hang onto for some years. Imagine his dismay when he sat in, turned the ignition and heard the voice of his former wife telling him what to do! For my own part, I was very touched when my husband, like me, a regular Luas user, remarked that he hoped he would die before me, as he couldn't bear to hear my disembodied voice telling him where he was – and what to do

First broadcast on Sunday Miscellany, RTÉ Radio 1, 5 May 2024.

*Doireann Ní Bhriain*

# Unitarian Walking Group

## Avondale Riverwalk Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May

Our little group has not been very active during 2023 because leader's suspension system was not the best for various reasons. However, 2024 has seen a gradual improvement in said suspension. This resulted in more frequent activity and slightly more demanding outings.

Now that my suspension system has improved, I increased the length of our outing and choose Avondale Riverwalk.

Avondale Riverwalk has been a favourite of our group over the years, and it was exciting to revisit this location, given the major reported investment and improvements on this site.

The story of Avondale House, where Irish forestry began and where one of Ireland's greatest statesmen, Charles Stewart Parnell, was born is well known to Irish people. Stories of the political life of Charles Stewart Parnell abound together with title tattle about himself and the bould Kitty O'Shea.

In the Forest Park surrounding the house are several walks from as little as 1.4km to the 5.2 kms of the river walk.

This walk takes in the very best Avondale has to offer - Avonmore River, a diverse and wide range of trees and fantastic views.

Our group on this Saturday was a party of 6 and we met up in the Seed Café which is part of the new Avondale House offering. We proceeded from there back toward the large car park to the start of the ramble. I was accompanied by Grainne, Janet, Therese, Peter and Paul and we were blessed by good weather.



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Dublin Unitarian Book Club's  
choice for April 2024.

**Prophet Song**  
by Paul Lynch

Synopsis taken from Wikipedia

*In the near future, the far-right National Alliance Party seizes control of the Republic of Ireland, putting into place emergency powers that suspend the Irish constitution, giving the Garda Síochána far-reaching powers and establishing a new secret police force, the Garda National Services Bureau (GNSB). Larry Stack, a teacher and trade union leader living in Dublin, is arrested and held without charge while attending a protest against the new regime. Soon after, he loses all contact with his family: Eilish, his wife, Mark, their eldest son, their only daughter, Molly, thirteen-year-old Bailey, and their infant son, Ben. Eilish initially tries to petition to have her husband freed, but it soon becomes apparent that Larry has disappeared.*

*Eilish, however, refuses to believe this, insists that the regime will not hold power for long, and will be removed through international outrage and economic sanctions, as revealed in foreign news. Eilish is forced to care for her father, Simon, who has dementia, with occasional episodes of lucidity in which he pleads with her to leave the country. She refuses, insisting that the situation will improve and Larry will return. Simon eventually leaves for Canada to live with Eilish's sister, Áine.*

*Mark is called up for military service. He refuses, going into hiding, before deciding he will join a rapidly growing rebel force comprising defected soldiers and civilian volunteers. He soon loses touch with his mother. The fighting advances, and the rebels capture Dublin, but shortly after, the regime government begins bombing the city to flush the rebels out.*

*In one such attack, Bailey is injured with shrapnel in his skull. Eilish takes him to a hospital with much difficulty, but is forced to leave him overnight. When she returns the next day, she finds her son is not there, and is told he has been sent to a military hospital. She travels to the military hospital, but after several attempts to locate her son, is eventually told by a cleaner to check the morgue. There she finds her young son's corpse, disfigured and showing signs of torture.*

*Wracked with grief, Eilish and her remaining two children join an exodus of people trying to escape the fighting into Northern Ireland, using money given to them by Áine. The novel ends ambiguously, with Eilish standing on the beach with her two children, about to climb into a refugee boat, telling her daughter "To the sea, we must go to the sea, the*

*sea is life”.*

*The author Paul Lynch stated that one of the main inspirations for the book was the Syrian Civil War, the ensuing refugee crisis, and the West’s indifference to the plight of refugees.*

This is not an easy read as the subject matter would indicate. The Booker Prize winner of 2023 is “propulsive and unsparing, and it flinches away from nothing”.

The author does not go into the politics that caused this societal collapse as the focus is on one ordinary family’s experience of living in an unrecognisable world of nightmares. We are caught up in Eilish’s life as she tries desperately to keep her family together. The reader is at times frustrated with her as she clings on to the false hope that Larry will return, her naïve belief that the outside world will intervene in her war torn country, and her procrastination as she cannot decide whether to leave when given help by her sister Aine in Toronto who says “history is a silent record of people who did not know when to leave”.

The reader is reminded that history has a habit of repeating itself as we have seen in the last 100 years in countries throughout the world such as Germany, Russia, China, Cambodia, Chile, Argentina, Uganda, the list goes on. And so it is not just a warning that this could happen anywhere so why not here in Ireland, but that it **is** happening now in 2024 and that we too could be that refugee facing exodus and embarking on a perilous journey across the sea.

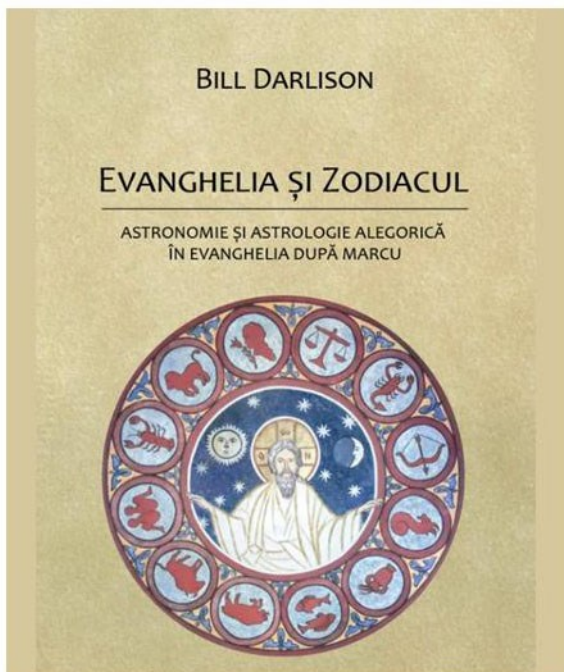
This sentence towards the end of the novel seizes the truth “the end of the world is always a local event, it comes to your country and visits your town and knocks on the door of your house and becomes to others but some distant warning, a brief report on the news, an echo of events that has passed into folklore”.

The book club readers would recommend reading this book but with a health warning as it describes a place that has descended into chaos and violence and ordinary people face their worst nightmares.

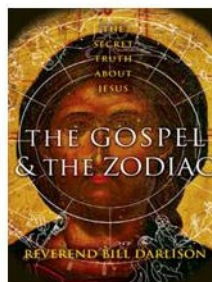
*Alison Claffey*

# Bill Darlison

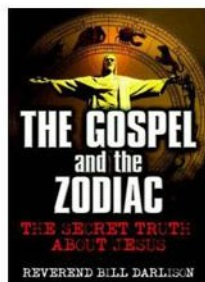
The translation of my book '**The Gospel and the Zodiac**' into Romanian is complete. The book is now available in Czech, German, and Romanian; and also, of course, in English! It's in hardback, paperback, and Kindle. (The Kindle edition is very good indeed and very cheap!)



Below L-R Professor Tatomir who translated Bills book 'The Gospel and the Zodiac' into Romanian and Dan-George Uza who is the publisher.



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