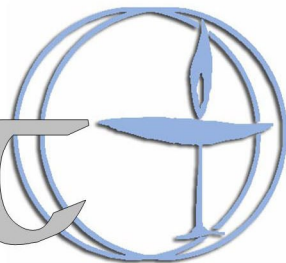


Oscailt



November 2025

IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.21 Nº 11



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.

Contact : - e-mail: revbspain@gmail.com Vestry 01 - 4780638

Sunday Club - Childrens Programme **Take place on the 2nd Sunday of each month**

For any queries about Sunday Club, or to volunteer as a leader, please email
Denise at sundayclub@dublinunitarianchurch.org

Childrens Educational Trust Funds **The Damer and Singleton Trusts**

Our congregation has two funds dedicated to supporting the educational needs of our voting members' children.

For further information please contact any member
of the committee if you want to know more,

or

write to Dennis Aylmer c/o aylmerd@gmail.com

Each week an e-mail is circulated 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 complete the
Weekly e-mail form available at

[https://dublinunitarianchurch.us9.list-manage.com/subscribe?
u=520442759bc8abadb1b0b3818&id=295c346bce](https://dublinunitarianchurch.us9.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=520442759bc8abadb1b0b3818&id=295c346bce)

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and follow the link at the top of the screen
– Sign up to Weekly e-mail – to complete your details.

DUBLIN UNITARIAN CHURCH

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



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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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.

Front Cover: (photo P.Spain) The five memorial plaques that are in the church, over pictures of the Irish National War Memorial Gardens Islandbridge. In the open space is circular with a catafalque or War Stone like a large granite altar at its heart. The intention of the War Stone was to be a non-denominational monument for people of all creeds, and it is here (rather than at the base of the imposing cross that leads into the Gardens) where Remembrance wreaths are laid. Flanking the War Stone on either side are two fountains. Elaine Sisson refers too in her article 'The Garden' on page 6.

UNBINDING THE SELF: AN ODE TO EMERSONIUM

It seems there's a missing element in your Table, Mr Mendeleev,
I think it should sit right there beside Au,
In that radiant block of gold,
Or perhaps among the vibrant hues of the elemental spectrum.

Could you explore its electronegativity,
Ionization energy, and atomic radius,
And uncover the nature of its elusive electron orbitals?

If I may suggest:
You might discover a golden opportunity,
An ironclad solution to this enigma,
By first seeking the silver lining in all things,
Trusting in providence and nature as your guiding light.

Self-reliance will yield copper-bottomed tools,
Leading inevitably to its precise replica.
Yet, I sense the journey will test your resolve,
For this element exists in all that matters,
Yet is not the matter.

It bonds and reacts but never enslaves,
Catalysing without consuming,
Dissolving only what is too burdensome to bear,
Conducting yet never dictating a single path.

Thus, you'll find its atomic number mystic,
Its electron shells ephemeral,
Its atomic radius fleeting,
And its electron orbitals forever evanescent.

So, when you've unveiled this elusive gem, Mr Mendeleev,
I implore you, honor its essence with a name worthy of its
all-transcending presence.... Emersonium.....

Daria J. Ostrowski

St Stephen's Green Unitarian Church, Dublin,

FOR THE LOVE OF EMERSON

I have always held a profound admiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson, an affection that words can scarcely capture. The discovery of his philosophy felt almost supernatural to me, as his teachings offered existential comfort amidst tumultuous waves of life. When I inquired, Emerson provided the responses.

Last October the Fourth Universalist Society of New York offered a Zoom course on Emerson, I immediately made the decision to participate. Starting in October of last year,(2024) every Thursday from 12.00a.m. to 1:30a.m. (due to the time difference), for a duration of three months, I participated alongside a small group of American Universalist Unitarians, guided by Zachary Zach, the Director of Lifespan Religious Education of the Society, in explorations of the beauty and complexities of Emerson's teachings. And it truly was a remarkable journey.

Our discussions centered around the book by Barry M.Andrews presents "American Sage: The Spiritual Teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson" (Andrews, Barry M. American Sage: The Spiritual Teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2021). This work stands out as one of the finest on Emerson I have encountered. The thoughtful exploration delves into the profound spiritual insights of Emerson, highlighting his relevance in contemporary discussions about self-reliance and individualism. Andrews' analysis not only sheds light on Emerson's teachings but also invites readers to reflect on their own spiritual journeys, rooted in empathy and understanding.

However, at this time, my study of the book has sparked a particular interest in clarifying and solidifying my understanding of the relationship between Emersonian Transcendentalist thought and Unitarianism.

Ralph Waldo Emerson is such a quintessential figure in American and world literature and philosophy. He played an indelible role in developing Transcendentalism, and his philosophical insights and writings having significantly shaped Transcendentalist thought, which

in turn deeply resonate within Unitarianism. The unmistakable connection between these two movements underscores Emerson's lasting influence on religious and philosophical landscapes. Acknowledging this relationship is essential, as it illustrates a wider movement towards personal spiritual exploration, a significant principle of Unitarianism.

To begin with, Emerson's founding principles of Transcendentalism emphasize the importance of the individual and the divine connection each person has with the universe. His essay "Self-Reliance" argues for the necessity of trusting one's own intuition and understanding, a concept that directly inspires Unitarian ideals of personal interpretation of spiritual truth. This notion encourages believers to explore their own understanding of divinity, moving away from rigid doctrines and towards a more personal, experiential faith. Such a shift towards individualism reflects the core tenets of Unitarianism, which champions the freedom to seek truth as it resonates with one's own heart and mind.

Moreover, Emerson's belief in the inherent goodness of both people and nature aligns seamlessly with the Unitarian commitment to social justice and humanitarian values. In his essay "Nature," Emerson articulates the idea that nature is a divine manifestation that can guide individuals toward a greater understanding of their place in the world. This perspective not only encourages a profound respect for the environment but also fosters a commitment to creating a just society based on an understanding of interconnectedness. Transcendentalism energizes Unitarianism and vice versa, as both philosophies are grounded in humanism, encouraging their followers to engage in spiritual and social initiatives that reflect their values.

Furthermore, Emerson's literary contributions and his role as a public intellectual helped to solidify Transcendentalism as a contextual framework for understanding spiritual matters within Unitarianism. His works fostered conversations about spirituality that were accessible to the common person, breaking down barriers that often separate religious teachings from daily life. As Emerson inspired individuals to reflect on their spiritual journeys, he enabled Unitarianism to evolve from a largely theological tradition into a broader humanistic framework. Broadening this scope en-

couraged a diverse range of thought, attracting a community of thinkers who considered social justice as integral part of their spiritual missions.

Critics may argue that the relationship between Emersonian Transcendentalism and Unitarianism is tenuous at best, suggesting that the former is a more philosophical endeavor while the latter remains a theological practice. However, one must recognize that Emerson's philosophies transcended mere academic discourse; they became pastoral tools that touched the hearts of many. His ability to articulate ideas that were deeply spiritual yet grounded in the human experience ensured that his contributions would ripple through the practice of Unitarianism. By understanding spirituality through the lens of personal experience and moral responsibility, Transcendentalism provided a rich tapestry for Unitarian beliefs to expand into modernity.

In conclusion, Ralph Waldo Emerson's contribution to Transcendentalism and its foundational role in shaping Unitarianism cannot be overstated. His insistence on individual thought, moral action, and a reverence for nature aligns seamlessly with Unitarianism's core values, creating a legacy that continues to inspire spiritual seekers today. The interplay between these movements is more than a historical footnote; it signifies a fundamental shift in how individuals approach faith and philosophy in an ever-changing world. Acknowledging Emerson's impact invites us all to engage with our own beliefs actively, fostering a spiritual landscape that champions growth, awareness, and the interconnectedness of all beings. Thus, his influence remains a guiding force in both Transcendentalism and Unitarianism, demonstrating that the quest for spiritual understanding is not merely an internal journey but a shared path towards a more enlightened society.

Daria J. Ostrowski

St Stephen's Green Unitarian Church, Dublin,

The Garden

The title of my address this morning is ‘The Garden’. A few years ago, I was asked to write the introduction to a book of photographs, poems and essays about the Irish National War Memorial Gardens. The Gardens are nestled beside the Liffey, the main entrance tucked behind Gael Scoil Inse Chór and the St. John of God School in Islandbridge, Dublin 8. Officially they are part of the Phoenix Park even though they are on the opposite side of the river but there are now plans in place to connect them by a footbridge.

Commemorations of the First World war remain contested in Ireland although less than they used to be. In other jurisdictions, the architecture and social infrastructure of commemoration and the legacy of war is woven into everyday life: Armistice days services, local village monuments to the dead, family military histories and genealogies, parades of veterans and medals. I have never been comfortable with the valorization of military campaigns despite having grandfathers and great grandfathers who fought in wars. This tension in remembering was also found in the attitudes of some local people towards the War Memorial Gardens, calling it ‘Legion Park’, in the decades after it was built, associating it with imperialism and unable, or unwilling, to see beyond given political or cultural frames.

We live in different times now, where the role and sacrifice of Irish soldiers in World War I and World II is acknowledged and properly commemorated. The Good Friday agreement ushered in a new climate of respect that has been truly transformational in our country. While the War Memorial Gardens host annual solemn services to remember the past, they are no longer just a site to honour the dead, but on sunny days are filled with families and dog walkers, people sitting by the riverside watching the rowers from the boat clubs work their way to and from Chapelizod. Today, the Irish National War Memorial Gardens are variously referred to as the Memorial Park, the Rose Gardens, as well as the War Memorial Gardens or just the Gardens.

Designed by the English architect Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), the idea for a commemorative World War memorial for Irishmen had first been proposed in 1919. A memorial committee was

established to raise funds for a suitable commemoration. They commissioned the very best of Irish graphic artists, Harry Clarke, to illustrate manuscripts recording the names of every known Irish soldier who had been lost in the war. These War Books, running to eight volumes, include just under 50,000 names and were completed between 1919 and 1923. Harry Clarke created border designs in black ink delicately mixing military scenes within Celtic revivalist iconography. The books needed a permanent home and so the idea of a commemorative garden began to take root. It was not until 1929 that the present site, Longmeadows, was granted to the project, and the architecture of the Memorial Gardens that we see today was built in the 1930s. Yet Longmeadows has an older history: it is also the site of a Viking settlement and burial ground over a thousand years old, so the symbolic significance of the Gardens is complex.

Edwin Lutyens was an experienced architect in the design of both cemeteries and of war memorials. He designed Lambay Castle, on Lambay Island and Howth Castle in the 1910s which may explain his Irish connections to the Memorial project, but he had also just finished a commission for a War Memorial in New Delhi for which he received a knighthood. His imperial credentials did not appear to be a problem for the Free State government; in fact, they were pleased to have the benefit of Lutyens' experience and expertise. Work on the Gardens began in 1931.

If you have never been there, let me try and paint a picture for you. The best way to enter the Gardens is from a side-gate on Con Colbert Road. In the original plans this was intended to be the main entrance. As you enter the park you are taken down steps through a dark passage of yew trees until you emerge at the top of the Gardens where you step down into an open grass arena. This generous open space is circular with a catafalque or War Stone like a large granite altar at its heart. The intention of the War Stone was to be a non-denominational monument for people of all creeds, and it is here (rather than at the base of the imposing cross that leads into the Gardens) where Remembrance wreaths are laid. Flanking the War Stone on either side are two fountains with obelisks and to each side of them are curved pergolas connecting the Book Rooms – which contain the illustrated manu-

scripts of the War Names. Behind the pergolas on both sides are two sunken circular and terraced rose gardens each with steps leading down to a central lily pond.

The intended and achieved effect is of a vast external cathedral whose vaulted ceiling is the sky, and whose side chapels are rose gardens. Yet that is not all. Leaving the broad grass arena, and moving away from the War Stone, four giant bay trees mark a set of stone steps leading towards the river. These trees represent Generals, and as you descend into the next level there are rows of Cherry blossom trees (glorious in April) in neat diagonal lines to represent soldiers. Walking through the soldiers brings you to a Folly, a little temple perfectly sized for children to run through and around. If you exit the Gardens by a different route, your way is flanked by lime trees, soldiers on guard duty. As the year turns, their leaves move through shades of light green to russet, until all their beauty falls to the ground and makes the path a golden river. In winter the Gardens appear ghostly and dreamlike, centurion trees skeletal and bare, in Theodore Roethke's words 'light making its own silence' They herald the landscape at the cusp of becoming, framed at the turn of day or the turn of season.

The Memorial Gardens are slowly revealed as you walk into them, from whichever gate or entrance point, you cannot see them all at once, and this gradual revelation is part of the design, and planned to create a particular experience. Standing in the open flat heart of Lutyens' grass arena, where the War Stone occupies centre stage, you become aware of standing between earth and sky, and the encircling architecture, the book rooms, the pergolas, and the symmetry of the rose gardens, invites the expansion not only of your vista but also of your feelings.

The Gardens are a site of memory, to remember the war dead, but they are also a reminder of the power of forgetting. Designed and built during a time when Ireland was extricating itself from Empire, commemorating Irish soldiers' participation in the allied forces became a matter of forgetting rather than remembering. The insistence on remembering even when forgetting is easier is one of the Gardens' lasting legacies.

'A garden', observed Emily Lawless, the Irish poet and naturalist, 'is a world in miniature and, like the world, has a claim to be represented by many minds, surveying it from many sides.' Literature is dotted with references to the pleasures and delights of gardens, from Andrew Marvell's evocation of 'a green thought in a green shade' to Francis Bacon's declaration that a garden contains 'the purest of human pleasures.'

In ancient Islamic cultures, there is a particular design that has become replicated across time: it is an enclosed garden organized along strict geometric principles with a quatrefoil central pool or element of water. Historically this type of garden is most closely associated with the Persian Empire and particularly the vision of Cyrus the Great, who lived about 500 years before the birth of Christ. Over the centuries, his conception of a garden spread across the Islamic world, and in the sixteenth century extended to the first Mughal emperor in India. We can see representations of the Persian garden in miniature paintings: spaces with terraces and pavilions, a style that has come to be known as a Paradise Garden.

Our understanding of Paradise or Heaven would suggest that the gardens are temporal manifestations of a celestial place. The metaphor of the garden as a place of spiritual reflection is an ancient one as it represents renewal, cycles of life, sun, earth, death, burial and resurrection. However, in her book *The Garden Against Time*, Olivia Laing reveals that the etymology of the word Paradise shows it comes from an ancient Persian language that means ‘walled garden.’ So, this means that our conception of Paradise comes from the concept of a garden and not the other way around. As Laing says ‘It was the garden that came first, heaven trailing in its wake ... an enclosed garden, a fertile beautiful, cultivated space’ that gave rise to the concept of celestial space.

The Bible is abundant with allegories to toiling, sowing, and reaping. The Song of Solomon is replete with references to gardens, fountains, apples, figs, lilies as manifestations of earthly and divine love. The Garden of Eden, so deeply embedded within our culture, as a lost place, a place to which we will be restored, a place without pain or death, and one of eternal relaxation is a powerful image but one which does not represent the reality of a having garden at all. John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, first published in 1667, is a passionate evocation of Eden as a place of lushness, growth, vitality but also of work and the rewards of labour. *Paradise Lost* draws on the books of Genesis and Revelation and tells the story of Lucifer’s fall and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Milton’s Eden is not a garden of pretty flowers in neat beds requiring little from its inhabitants, but rather as a place of untamed and wild abundance, with groves and

glades and fields and shades, of ripe fruit and fecundity. Milton's Eden is not a cultivated domestic space but is wild and exciting. His poem was written at a time of civil and religious unrest in England and against a backdrop of plague. Perhaps now we better understand Milton's longing for wild landscapes since we too have experienced the fear of pandemic and the constraints of quarantine. Adam and Eve are not passive inhabitants of the garden but their job is 'sweet gardening labour' which they struggle to control through pruning and cultivation.

*(Eve) The work under our labour grows/luxurious by restraint
What we by day lop overgrown, or prune or prop or bind/
One night or two with wanton growth derides
Tending to wild.
Paradise Lost IX 210-213*

Eve, of course, is more closely associated with the chaotic luxuriant, wild disorder of the garden and the need to contain it, and for Milton, Eve becomes the garden she is so enmeshed and invested in. In the poem, part of Eve's lamentation in being banished is how to live without her garden:

*How shall I part and whither wander down
Into a lower world to this obscure
And wild, how shall we breathe in other air
(Paradise Lost Book XI, 1270-285)*

From Eden to Gethsemane the garden and gardening are central metaphors for growth but also grief: when Mary Magdalene sees Christ at the empty tomb, she initially mistakes him for a gardener:

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. (John 20.15.)

In the Buddhist tradition the garden is both a place of pleasure and a place of renunciation. The physical space of the garden is connected to a higher cosmos reached by transcending the materiality of place. Gardens provide sensory delight but also moral and intellectual restoration. They enable us to cultivate an understanding of the world and the nature of reality: gardeners tend, they do not grow.

Reading about gardens and their importance as both wild and cultivated spaces, as physical and transcendental spaces, has made me think about the Memorial Gardens a little differently – their perfect symmetry,

their ornamental grandeur, their cultivated beauty. Because as Olivia Laing says a 'garden exists on the threshold between artifice and nature, conscious decision and wild happenstance.' It represents in miniature a type of balancing act: the tension between the way the world is and the word as we desire it to be.'

Being a gardener is about being initiated into a different understanding of time; we plant for a future we may not see. 'Garden time is not like ordinary time' Laing says, 'it moves in unpredictable ways, sometimes stopping altogether [yet] proceeding always cyclically, in a long unwinding spiral of rot and fertility.'

Gardens work against the fantasy of perpetual abundance.

So many of our most destructive behaviours are predicated on denying 'impermanence and decay, insisting on summer all the time. Permanent growth, constant fertility, perpetual yield, instant pleasure, maximum profit, outsourc[ing] the labour ... to accept the presence of death in the garden ... is to refuse an illusion of perpetual productivity, without rest or repair; an illusion purchased at a heavy, soon unpayable cost.' The words of Olivia Laing.

To accept the presence of death in the garden is not only appropriate to us as gardeners, but also for an understanding of the garden as repositories of loss and remembrance. Gardens require continual attention, cultivation, and labour to thrive, as do we. The ancient Greeks had a word for it: eudaimonic - meaning flourishing, or living in accordance with the best of human principles and endeavours - which also means accepting impermanence and mutability.

The idea of the garden as a space that brings out the best in us, is particularly apposite when we think about the Memorial Gardens, built to remember the price of our inhumanity, our capacity for conflict and brutality. The Memorial Gardens are a testament to the deeply scarring trauma of war at the same time as they mark our capacity for forgiveness, reconciliation, regeneration, poetry and love.

Elaine Sisson

St Stephen's Green Unitarian Church, Dublin,

Lament for a Wavering Viewpoint

I want to be a Tory, and with the Tories stand,
Elect and bound for glory with a proud, congenial band.
Or in the Leftist hallways, I gladly would abide,
But from my youth I always could see the Other Side.

How comfortable to rest with the safe and armored folk
Congenially blest with opinions stout as oak!
Assured that every question one single answer hath,
They keep a good digestion and they whistle in their bath.

But all my views are plastic, with neither form nor pride,
They stretch, like new elastic, around the Other Side,
And I grow lean and haggard with searching out the taint
Of hero in the blackguard or of villain in the saint.

Ah, snug lie those that slumber beneath conviction's roof.
Their floors are sturdy lumber, their windows weatherproof.
But I sleep cold forever, and cold sleep all my kind,
For I was born to shiver in the draft from an open mind.
Born nakedly to shiver in the draft of an open mind.

*This poem is by the late American poet,
Phyllis McGinley. March 2005*

Business and Religion

Our community is engaged in the process of selecting a new Minister. Over the past few months, we listened to and questioned applicants for the position. Almost the first question put to each candidate was “what would you do to attract more people to this church?”. The common response was to “use or make greater use of “Facebook”, “Instagram” and other “Social Media” platforms”.

I recently watched a Ted Talk about successful businesses. The speaker studied many types of business and identified the common traits shared by the most successful companies. He believed that this information can be usefully applied to all types of organisations outside the world of commerce.

Despite having a degree in Commerce, business never really interested me so you will be glad to know I will keep the business part short! There are three elements to every business enterprise. These are What, How and Why. Every company knows the What and the How of its business. Every company knows **what** they produce, they know **how** they produce it. They know what they make, they know how the item is made. To sell their product they tell prospective customers about the advantages of their product. So far, they are all equal, what differentiates the successful enterprises is the Why.

The speaker believed that exceptional success comes down to the Why. Why does a company or an organisation do what it does? In business every company needs to make profit; but to be really successful, profit must be **only** part of what motivates the organisation. When profit is the driving force in an organisation sooner or later it will fail, or at least hit very choppy waters.

The story of Boeing Aircraft is an example. Founded in 1916 the company was the world leader in Aircraft Manufacturing constantly bringing innovation into its work. It produced the first pressurised plane allowing planes to fly at height. It led the world in safety standards.

This was achieved by the management style at the company. All employees were valued and actively encouraged to bring their ideas for improvement to the table. Safety was everyone’s responsibility. The rewards for the success were shared with the staff.

A change in Management style was introduced. Production was outsourced to different centres and shortcuts were taken when checking the safety of their new plane. The consequences led to two plane crashes costing the lives of 346 passengers.

The financial cost to date for Boeing is estimated at €60Bn in legal fees, fines and compensation. Plus another €60 from 1200 cancelled order. It is impossible to put a figure on the loss of Boeing’s loss of its position as world leader in aircraft safety and manufacture.

Really Successful organisations are clear about why they do what they do; they believe in the value of their work. Every person in the organisation invests energy in the success. Profit /numbers should not be the primary motivator.

Where does religion fit with all of this this?

It took six years for the Buddha to attain enlightenment. He travelled many different spiritual paths before he found his truth. Having found it he wanted to share this with others. Like Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, the evil one tempted Buddha. The evil very nearly succeeded in dissuading Buddha, when he one pointed out how difficult the Buddha's teaching is; The Buddha almost turned away but then thought "If only one person reaches enlightenment it is worth it" Buddha was willing to share the gift of awakening even if just one person benefited. Two and a half thousand years later people continue to follow the Buddha's teaching.

More recently people followed Dr.Martin Luther King **not** because of social media. They followed him when he shared his dream of a society based on justice and equality. They shared his dream and joined the cause.

If social media is the way to fill the church, should we employ an advertising agency? Why do we do what we do? Why have people come to this church for hundreds of years? Why do we come here each Sunday? Some people may not even be aware that on our outside wall we have a plaque that states "We welcome all who wish to worship in a spirit of Freedom, Reason and Tolerance". Do any of us come here to worship?

This morning's opening words listed reasons why we may gather. To face ideals, to remember absent loved ones, make confession, or offer forgiveness to be enlightened_ Yes, maybe sometimes and it may be for different reasons it may be for the music, to see friends for a chat and enjoy a coffee.

Over the past few weeks, I came up with the following reasons why I come to Church. Connection is the word that came to mind. I come for connection. I want to reconnect with this open-minded, inclusive community that does not demand uniformity of belief.

I want to reconnect with unchanging truths that all religions teach, and I want to connect with the deeper spirit within me and in every person what we often refer to as God. Some people may say that my list should be in reverse order- that it should be God, Religious truth seeking and then community. I excuse myself because **being human** I begin with what chimes with my life experience. The community, then how to live this life – trying to ensure that I live this life as well as I can. **I know** that with time the soul within me will call me to reflect and practice soul care.

While mainstream religion has lost its appeal this need for connection that draws me to this place is more needed in our world than ever. Connection to

community. Loneliness and isolation are at epidemic levels. In Ireland in 2024 20% of people admitted feeling lonely most of the time. “Ar scath a cheile a mhaireann na daoine”. We are stronger together, we need community to thrive.

Re-connection with the perennial truths held by all religions is equally important. We live in a world that values wealth, position, physical appearance and worldly success. We live in a world that tells us that happiness is found in consuming things. We are constantly told to put our needs first.

We know that the baubles of wealth, position and physical beauty provide only fleeting happiness. But as the child is attracted to a colourful rattle; baubles of wealth and power attract us. We have to constantly bring ourselves back to the truth that lasting happiness or to use the language of Christianity “the kingdom of heaven” is not found in wealth or worldly success. The Kingdom of God or enlightenment is experienced when love or compassion is at the centre of our actions.

What part does the minister play in this? In the early 1800s writing about religious education William Ellery Channing said the aim is not to “impose religion but to awaken the conscience and moral discernment. It is to waken the soul”

The Buddha said “don’t believe anything I tell you until you know it to be true”. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that Religion cannot be learned from books, it must come from personal experience. A Minister can only inspire or provoke a congregation. According to Emerson he or she does this by sharing with the congregation “Life passed through the Fire of Truth” He said revelation did not stop two thousand years ago it is a continuing process.

The Minister can inspire and provoke, what is expected of the congregation? As with every successful organisation, success is more likely if **everyone** in the organisation plays their part. At our membership service we ask prospective members “ to make to this community a very precious gift: the gift of your individual ideas and your sensitive ideals. “.....Share with us your creative thoughts, your vital experiences of life, your questions, your doubts and your discoveries of all the ways in which life affects you”.....

Facebook, Instagram and media platforms may play a small part in the future success of our community. But if this church is to attract people we each have our part to play.

Rev. Bridget Spain

Minister Emerita
St Stephen’s Green Unitarian Church, Dublin,

Dublin 17th August 2025

‘Sundays at 2’

Classical Musicians Network Concert

on
Sunday 23rd November at 14:00

Liudmyla Hlazieva. *piano* Daire O’Shea. *Piano*

Jasmine Sadrieh. *guitar* Shari McDaid. *Flute*

Music by Bach. Schubert. Chopin. Poulenc. Hahn and others

This concert is part of the ‘Sundays at 2’ partnership between
the church and the Classical Musicians Network.

Admission free

RSVP’s via [Eventbrite.ie](https://www.eventbrite.ie)

All donations received will go towards the church’s Restoration Fund.

Supporting Charities

Christian Aid

We held our 2nd annual Harvest Lunch on Sunday 5th October. A wonderful selection of salads and cakes was provided by Church Members, and we enjoyed lunch as a community. Diners were invited to make a donation to Christian Aid. In addition Alison Claffey and Paul Spain provided a selection of homemade jams, chutneys and Irish honey for sale. The event raised €1,200 for Christian Aid.

Christian Aid use these funds to support farmers in poorer countries to learn ways to adapt farming methods to meet the challenges of Climate Change.

Christmas is Coming

For the past number of years the Church has supported Bro Kevin's Capuchin centre at Christmastime. This year again the centre will host a Christmas Party for callers to the centre. Children will each receive a pair of pajamas, gloves and a hat together with a voucher for €40 for SMITHS TOYSTORE. This year the party will be held on 14th December so it would be really helpful to the centre if gifts can be brought in on Sunday 7th December so they are available for distribution on the 14th.

Donations of pajamas, gloves, hat and vouchers is welcome. The centre needs 600 vouchers to ensure each child receives a voucher. We can amalgamate vouchers of less than €40 to make €40

THANK YOU

I am constantly amazed at the generosity of the members of this church. I am also aware of how often we, or rather I, ask for your help. A heartfelt **Thank You** to each and every person who so generously responds to these calls for support. Míle, Míle Buíochas.

Bridget

St. Stephen's Green Unitarian Church

Interested In Becoming A Member?

As set out in our congregational rules, membership of our congregation is open to those over the age of 16 who have made themselves familiar with the religious outlook and ethos of our church and who wish to make a commitment to participate in the life of the congregation, and to support where possible the financial costs of running the congregation and the upkeep of the church premises.

If you have been attending church services for a year or so it is open to you to apply for membership of the congregation. Applications for membership may be submitted at any time during the year.

Membership Application Forms are available in the church. You just need to fill out your contact details and have your application proposed by a Voting Member of the congregation. The completed form should be returned to the Membership Secretary

(membershipunitarianchurch@gmail.com)

Your application will be considered at a meeting of the church Managing Committee and, on the approval of your application, you will be allocated a membership number. Your membership of the congregation will commence from the approval date and will be yours for your lifetime or for as long as you wish to retain it.

An annual membership ceremony at which new members are welcomed into the congregation is held towards the end of each year (usually in October or November). *Participation in this ceremony is not obligatory and non-participation will not affect your membership.*

Twelve months after the commencement of your membership it will be open to you to register as a Voting Member.

Managing Committee Notice

Annual Registration of Voting Members (2026)

For the Attention of All Members

If you are a Member of the congregation (*that is, if your name was entered into the Membership Book during any year up to and including 2024*) and you wish to have your name included as a **Voting Member** on the **Register of Voting Members** for **2026**, you should complete and return a **Voting Registration Form** by not later than **31st December 2025**.

Members who made an *identifiable financial donation to the church during 2025 have already been automatically registered as Voting Members for 2026 and **do not** need to complete a registration form. An email to this effect will be circulated to the relevant members in late October.

*An *identifiable donation is one that can be associated with a member's name, for example a cheque or a standing order - or any other method by which the donation can be recorded as coming from a particular member.*

If you are uncertain as to whether you have already been automatically registered as a Voting Member you should contact the treasurer, Rory Delany (treasurerunitarianchurch@gmail.com)

Please note that it is the responsibility of the Member to ensure that his / her name is included on the Register of Voting Members.

Voting Registration Forms are now available for collection in the church. If you are a Member who can't attend church often, or who usually listens in online, a form can be sent to you on request by post or email.

Requests for **Voting Registration Forms** should be sent to;

(by post)

The Membership Secretary
Unitarian Church
112 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin D02 YP23

(by email) membershipunitarianchurch@gmail.com

Two Penny Blacks

A while ago, a number of members of the Congregation travelled to Cork to meet with various tradesmen to organise necessary work in the Cork church. During the visit Gavin noticed two very old letters in the office both were addressed to Rev. William Whitelegge in Manchester. I was aware that Rev. William Whitelegge had served as Minister in Cork, I took the letters home and did some research which was very interesting.

Both letters were addressed to Rev. William Whitelegge, Portico, Manchester. The letters were dated 25th June 1840 and 17th May 1841 respectively. One was sent from Coseley, Staffordshire and the other from Bolton. One hundred and eighty five years later the letters were in Cork.

Each letter was stamped with a Penny Black. My first thought was “A miracle, Cork church can be restored!”. Well, it turns out not quite..... While Penny Blacks have some value, there are many aspects to consider in putting a value on them.

I think the reason Rev. Whitelegge brought the stamps to Cork and kept them was that these were probably the first stamped letters the recipients had ever seen. I learned that the Penny Black came into service on the 6th May 1840. The 1st letter is dated 25th June 1840. Rev. William Whitelegge Jnr is writing from Coseley to his father Rev. William Whitelegge in Portico Manchester. The letter is missing one page, the remaining page is folded over to form the envelope and the address and stamp are on the reverse.

Rev. William Jnr is explaining to his father that he is not happy in his position in Coseley. He will try to get to know the congregation better and to become more settled, but he felt he would be seeking a new position. The letter signed “Your affectionate Son William Whitelegge”

The second letter dated May 1841 is addressed to Rev. William Whitelegge Jnr at Portico and is an invitation to preach on two Sundays at Moor Lane Unitarian chapel. Obviously, efforts to better connect with the members of Coseley were not successful. He left Coseley in March 1841. The writer speculates that Rev. William will travel that morning “by the Rail Way” there would be someone to meet him.

Rev. William Jnr went instead to Cork he was installed as Minister there on 29th August 1843 and remained there until he died at his residence in Cork in 1905. Sixty two years of service in Cork!

Continued on outside backcover



Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St. Stephens Green Dublin 2.

Service 11.00a.m.

Sunday Rota for November 2025

2 nd November	<i>We Remember All Souls</i>
Service	Gavin Byrne
Reader	Gavin Byrne
Flowers	Therese Fontana
Welcomer	Alison Claffey - Peter Fontana
Coffee	Therese Fontana, Maeve Edwards, Gráinne Carty

9 th November	<i>Within the Light of Remembrance</i>
Service	Eva Kortekaas
Reader	<i>Remembrance Sunday</i>
Flowers	Janet Mulroy
Welcomer	Janet Mulroy - Isabel McGowran
Coffee	Janet Mulroy, Maeve Edwards, Gráinne Carty

16 th November	<i>What do these Unitarians Believe?</i>
Service	Gavin Byrne
Reader	Denis Conway
Flowers	Denis Conway
Welcomer	Denis Conway - Catharine Cook
Coffee	Denis Conway, Jennifer Buller, Sheila Hanley

23 rd November	<i>The Spirit of the Law</i>
Service	Rev. Lynda Kane
Reader	Máire Bacon
Flowers	Máire Bacon
Welcomer	Peter Fontana - Peter White
Coffee	Alison Claffey, Sheila Hanley, Catharine Cook

30 th November	<i>In the Everyday Task at Hand, Happiness Lurks</i>
Service	Aidan O'Driscoll
Reader	Alison Claffey
Flowers	Margaret Leeson
Welcomer	Valerie Shanley -
Coffee	Therese Fontana, Daniela Cooney, Gráinne Carty

***Communion Service, 10.15am.**

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Value of Penny Black

There were 68 million stamps printed – not very rare it is estimated about 1.3 million exist. Stamps with a “print fault” are very valuable.

Stamps were printed on sheets with 240 per sheet. They were not perforated, so had to be cut out by hand with a scissors. Each stamp has two letters which indicate its position on the printed sheet. Imagine a grid, headed A-L across the top and A-T down the side. One of “our” stamps is O L which means it was the last stamp on row O.

Factors determining value are.

Whether stamp was used, used is more valuable.

The colour of the franking.

Condition of stamp.

The density of the Print colour.

Whether there is an even margin around the stamp.

The list goes on.

One stamp dealer in Cork offered €2 each. Another dealer suggested the “low hundreds” for both.

Portico Manchester

Is a library in Manchester dating from 1806. It is a wonderful building still in use. It is so beautiful it is used as a venue for Marriages. Early members varied from “exploitative factory owners and textile traders to Radical and liberal abolitionists and anti-poverty campaigners.... Many were non conformists....The author Elizabeth Gaskell used the library her husband William was the longest serving chair” The Gaskells were Unitarians.

I contacted Portico about the stamps. They confirmed that Rev. William Whitelegg served there as librarian between 1818 – 1845. This was while serving as a Minister.

Suggestions as to what could/should be done with the letters are welcome.

