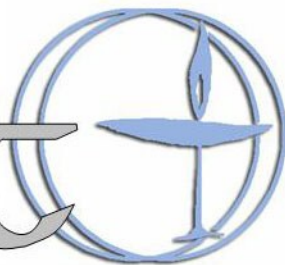


# Oscailt



January 2026

IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.22 Nº 1

**The very future  
of life on earth  
depends on the  
actions of each  
one of us**



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*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

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

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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.

# ARE YOU A DISSENTING THOMAS?

Two articles in *The Irish Times* last month (September 15/September 19) raised an issue, Do you Suffer from FOCO, the fear of causing offence? (Joe Humphreys) and Why I Have Finally Had Enough of Other People's Rudeness (Justine McCarthy). While on different topics, they relate to the interactions between people, either their ill-mannered behaviour and/or indeed public timidity in challenging belligerence and boorishness, and fear about causing offence.

In a small way these articles pinpoint how we are still learning how to deal with each other and how to challenge bad or insensitive behaviours (loud phones in buses, selfish car parking in Dundrum etc.). These are the small hurdles maybe in an ever-faster and impersonal life of mobile phones, and media. But they can lead to considerable discomfort, even mental upset.

And these scenarios are just a microcosm of the confrontations in the political, philosophical and religious arenas where courage beyond the ordinary can be needed if we are to remain as true to our principles as possible.

According to Jonathan Freedland (*The Traitors Circle: The Rebels Against the Nazis and the Spy who Betrayed Them*) it is estimated that, in the 12 years of national socialism, about three million Germans, or 5% of the population, were in or out of prisons for crimes of dissent. Most of us, says Freedland, think that we would have been brave. But the statistics show that almost all of us would have been silent. (He then goes on to outline the courage of three Germans who defied the Nazis until they were betrayed).

See, how in the United States, media, universities and the technological industries have succumbed to White House bullying, how indeed many Americans have embraced an ugly, domineering and money driven philosophy despite a core of dissenters (such as the comedian Jimmy Kimmel) and to the horror of much of the Western world.

It's worth recalling the famous phrase, "when good men do nothing". In Marcus Aurelius's words, "often injustice lies in what you aren't doing, not only in what you are doing." As Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman say in *The Daily Stoic*, "history abounds with evidence that humanity is capable of doing evil, not only actively but passively".

They say that in some of our most shameful moments, from slavery to the Holocaust, guilt wasn't only limited to the perpetrators but to ordinary citizens, who for a multitude of reasons, declined to oppose murderous behaviours. We could, indeed, look to our national failure in allowing the continuation for so long of the Magdelane Laundries, and the Letterfrack, Artane and other reformatories.....we didn't know it is said, but there is knowing and knowing. And the collective unknowing is a stain on the nation.

Leaving aside the exquisite writing, acting and directing, the success of Claire Keegan's *Small Things Like These*, and the resulting film, indicate how official and religious secrecy and cruelty, and society's "whatever you say, say nothing" mode resonates among today's public, particularly among older people. As one prosperous old woman said to me, "we sent all our laundry there as we thought we were helping the girls".

The hero in the Keegan novella is, of course, Bill Furlong, a coal merchant, who finds an undernourished and freezing girl in the cellar of a Magdalene Laundry. He then confronts the convent nuns and also later has to face the effect his championing of the girl might have on his family's expectations.

And there is a long list of people in our modern history who have challenged church or political establishment views (views which incidentally were widely held by the general population). Of course, stances on what is right and wrong do change. Indeed, there is a long philosophical title in a recent book by Omar El Akkad which highlights that.....*One day, when it's safe, when there is no personal downside to calling a thing what it is, when it's too late to hold anyone accounta-*

*ble, everyone will have always been against this.*(Which is maybe why so many of our public inquiries are held many years after the events being investigated).

The big challenge, and perhaps one some of us may feel strongly about, is the cancelling, derision and nastiness encountered by writers, politicians and others in the public eye who put forward views which run contrary to what is labelled “progressive” thought. Diarmaid Ferriter, the UCD Modern Irish History Professor, recounts (*Irish Times*, 19/09/2025) how the L&H recently rescinded its decision to award the author John Boyne the prestigious Ulysses Medal “because of what many regard as his offensive views on transgender issues, which are trenchantly and provocatively expressed”.

The irony was the medal was to be given to a writer who was said to be “one of Ireland’s most celebrated and courageous literary voices”, who has “consistently tackled the themes that matter—identity, morality, power, shame and the search for truth with searing honesty and compassion.” This is the society, as Ferriter recalls, where James Joyce had the courage to challenge the UCD president, Fr William Delaney, who had said “Drama and Life”, a paper Joyce was to give to the society, was not suitable.

Joyce, the ultimate dissenter, confronted Delaney who then decided not to press his objections to the paper being read. And as with Joyce there are many other Irish examples of moral and responsible dissent in either the religious, political or secular arenas. First, we might have a look at biblical dissent. In an intriguing chapter titled Audacity, in *The Story of Virtue, Universal Lessons on How to Live*, Joe Humphreys highlights incidents in Judaism, Islam and Christianity where even God, the Lord, has faced dissent from his subjects.

Abraham challenges the Lord by asking him whether He is really going to destroy the innocent with the guilty in Sodom and Gomorrah. “If there are 50 innocent people in the city will you destroy the whole city,” he asks. And God says He will spare the whole city if there are 50 innocent people.

But Abraham persists, asking Him if there are 45 innocent people etc., The message here, according to Humphreys, is that audacity, or dissent and faith need not be in conflict.

Abraham showed that the virtue that Jews call *chutzpah* is “not the enemy of faith but a supporting friend”. It is not a licence to mock sacred belief but a healthy ability to challenge it. Humphreys says that in the major religions there is a trade-off between virtues, and certain virtues should yield to others depending on the situation.

Such reasoning, he says, not only acts as a check on unquestioning devotion but it helps to consolidate faith on the basis that beliefs are contested. But compared to Judaism, other faiths, except Hinduism, have a strained relationship with audacity or dissent. For traditional Muslims it is one of the three crimes for which capital punishment is justified.

However, while Muslims believe the Qur’an to be the literal word of God tradition decreed for hundreds of years that senior Muslims were entitled to interpret the holy book. There was then a backlash against this but now there are reformist Muslims who have argued that each adherent should apply the disciplined use of independent reasoning to best appreciate the meaning of his or her faith.

And for Hindus, scepticism can be a positive disposition, paving the way for philosophic thought. Without the audacity to question sacred beliefs, or challenge God’s authority, faith will be nothing more than a dry recitation of doctrine. Ownership of faith requires a testing of belief, challenging and adaption to it.

So where does this leave Christians. While Pope John Paul II said that faith and independent reasoning were both to be embraced,” as they offer each other a purifying critique”, Humphreys believes this has created a Catholic church somewhat sceptical of the benefits of independent thought. Although various popes down the centuries have rubbished papal infallibility, including John XXIII who described it as the “father of all lies”, the Vatican, says Humphreys, clings to the doctrine as a means of keeping its clergy in line.

But without independent thought in that church there would have been no Reformation which in turn led to the spawning of many different versions of Protestantism. And throughout the decades there have been many Catholics and other Christians who dissented courageously in the secular and religious world. Let's highlight a few, particularly people who took on church and state to campaign against the common practice of teachers beating school children. Perhaps the most extraordinary campaigners were doctors Mary and Paddy Randles who in the early 1960s in Navan protested against the beatings meted out by the De La Salle brothers and the recruitment practices of religious orders taking children as young as 12 from their families. Paddy went to the *News of the World* which ran a series on "Children of the Lash" but the papers were taken off the shop shelves before Mass-goers had a chance to leave the church. In those days if you spoke against the way Catholic education was run you were assumed to be anti-clerical.

One particular incident is shocking. A boy called Norman broke his arm falling from a tree and his mother wanted Dr Paddy to write a note asking the priest teacher to beat him on his good arm rather than the injured one. Norman started writing with his left hand and this enraged the teacher who then attacked him with a rubber hose.

Paddy went to the headmaster to complain that one of his teachers was beating the boy on his broken arm with a rubber hose. The headmaster then threw a piece of leather on the table and said "that's what I use". It had metal inserts.

Paddy wrote letters to the newspapers, which were generally ignored. His tyres were slashed, practice windows smashed, half his patients left and the delivery van with the newspapers was hijacked and the papers thrown into the River Boyne

As recalled in the film, "Pray for Our Sinners" when Mary came to Navan women were having 12 to 14 babies. Some women came to say they had to take contraceptives, and they wanted a letter to bring to confession on Saturday to show to the priest. Mary told them they'd be better asking the bus driver or anyone else before they'd go to the priest.



And linking in with the Randles was Cork man Dr Cyril Daly, who a convinced Catholic, took on Church and State, and to whom Irish children owe a huge debt for campaigning against teacher violence. Daly, who heard from one of his son's about a boy being beaten in St Paul's Raheny, took his son out, and educated him at home until he got into Sandford Park school.

He found it very hard to reconcile such beatings with the religious calling of priests, nuns and lay brothers.

The campaign, which attracted vociferous attacks from the INTO rumbled on for seven years, and in 1968 Daly joined by Frank Crummey, a multi-careered campaigner on social issues, on the Late Late Show. Both men were scorned by fellow panelists and shouted down by hecklers. And it is not clear whether it was at this Late Late Show, or another one on corporal punishment, that when Crummey said: "As I sit here tonight the Irish Christian Brothers are abusing our children", someone from the audience ran up and threw a punch at him.

It is to these brave, wonderful dissidents, that we owe gratitude for campaigning, often at great cost, on a wide number of issues for the betterment of Irish society, from family planning to corporal punishment, to censorship and the Irish Language Freedom Movement. And it would be wrong not to mention the persistent crusading by the late Tom Woulfe who for many decades fought to have the GAA ban on "foreign" games removed, often facing much vilification, and Tom Flannery the Redemptorist priest who, at great cost, publicly questioned the Catholic Church's doctrines on women priests, contraception and homosexuality.

All the above are in the proud tradition of Peter Gonesius (1525-15730) who first spoke out against the doctrine of the Trinity. His agitation sparked a nine-year debate culminating in the Polish Brethren who left Poland and dispersed to Transylvania and Holland, before their Unitarian ideas spread to this part of the world and the United States. (*1001 ideas*

*that Change the Way We Think*). The Irish people mentioned above are in that proud dissenting tradition.

And, as Unitarians, maybe we have to ask ourselves whether we should be more willing individually to embrace similar dissenting attitudes, even about less momentous issues---and there are many of them---whether we should be more probing, resistant to, some commonly accepted practices. (I can think of a few: excessively low taxes on inheritance, monster cars, extreme public noise, undue self-censorship).

Do we fail to make our voices heard on, for example, whether we are church or a movement (as often described elsewhere), whether we should actively seek new members, or indeed the structures of our services.

The dissenting tradition should be a continuous process, and we should be moving further and further away from (*Romans 13*) which says: *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.* ”

We should be Dissenters, and if needs must be, even practicing *Dissent into Treason (Unitarians, King-killers and the Society of United Irishmen)*, the title of Fergus Whelan’s interesting book. That could be our aspiration as our church moves in the future decades.

*Paul Murray,*

October 26, 2025

# The Woman's Bible

I want to start the address today in a slightly different way from the usual. I'm going to read a few quotations from a compilation made by an American sociologist Meg Bowman: the compilation is entitled, *Why we Burn: what did famous men throughout history really think of women?*

One hundred women are not worth a single testicle. (*Confucius*)

A proper wife should be as obedient as a slave. (*Aristotle*)

In childhood a woman must be subject to her father; in youth to her husband; when her husband is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be free of subjugation. (*The Hindu Code of Manu, c100 CE*)

Men are superior to women. (*The Koran*)

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God and King of the Universe, that thou didst not create me a woman. (*Orthodox Jewish prayer, still in use today.*)

Among all savage beasts, none is found so harmful as woman. (*St. John Chrysostom, 4<sup>th</sup> Century*)

You are the gate of hell, you are the temptress of the forbidden tree; you are the first deserter of the divine law. (*Tertullian, 2<sup>nd</sup> century*)

In the year 584, in Lyons, France, 43 Catholic bishops and twenty men representing other bishops, held a most peculiar debate. Are women human? After many lengthy arguments a vote was taken. The results were: 32 yes; 31 no. Women were declared human by one vote. (*The Council of Macon*)

In 1847, a scandal resulted when a British obstetrician, Dr. Simpson, used chloroform as an anaesthetic in delivering a baby. The holy men of the Church of England prohibited the use of anaesthetics in childbirth, quoting from Genesis 3:16: *'To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.'*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose pioneering work in feminism is the subject of our address today, would certainly have been aware of this ruling by the Anglican divines in 1848. Elizabeth herself was born at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, probably in 1815, and so she would have been in her thirties at the time. The incident would have reinforced what she had suspected from being very young: that men made rules and laws to suit themselves, and used the Bible as a way of adding divine sanction to what was little more than the male desire to keep control.

Elizabeth was born into what was very much a man's world. When she was just eleven years old, her only brother came back to the family home to die, and she and her four sisters had to face the distressing fact that the son was more important to their father than the five sisters put together. When she tried to comfort her father, all he would do was express regret that Elizabeth was not a boy.

So Elizabeth tried to take her brother's place. He had been an accomplished horseman and Greek scholar, and Elizabeth devoted all her time and attention to these pursuits, becoming superb with horses and winning prizes for Greek. But the harder she tried, and the more she excelled, the more her father regretted that she was not male.

Why, she asked, were women not valued as much as men? What were the reasons for the double-standard, which valued strength and independence in a man, but not in a woman, and which considered gentleness a virtue in a woman, but not in a man? Her questions led her to the laws of the land and to the Bible. In both, she said, women were held in contempt, and there would be no progress for women until both were changed. To change the law, she campaigned for female suffrage and female property rights, but it is for her work on the Bible that she is best remembered, and it is this that is my principal concern this morning.

'When those who are opposed to all reforms can find no other

argument,' she wrote, 'their last resort is the Bible. It has been interpreted to favour intemperance, slavery, capital punishment, and the subjection of women.' And, of course, it is still being used in this fashion today. I remember hearing a professor of Moral Theology in Rome justifying capital punishment with a quotation from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans – and this, I think now, was one of the reasons why I left the seminary. How rational, intelligent and compassionate people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century could seriously consider that a stray comment written in haste twenty centuries ago should inform their attitude to a moral question of any magnitude became very perplexing to me. Apartheid, South Africa's inhuman system of racial segregation, found biblical support, its upholders said, in those passages in Genesis which describe Noah's son Ham, the supposed ancestor of the dark skinned peoples, being cursed by God to stay in perpetual servitude to his lighter skinned brothers.

When you run out of arguments, use the Bible. Cranks, crackpots and bigots have done so in the past, and are doing so still. Why don't we have women priests in the Roman Catholic Church? Did you watch Gay Byrne on the Late Late Show on Friday? He was interviewing a woman called Celine Vatinel, who said she felt called to the priesthood, but was getting nowhere in her pursuit of ordination. At the end of the interview, Gay Byrne said something very interesting: 'We've covered this topic on a number of occasions in the past, and every time the women have won the argument hands down.' But the argument is not the issue. Logic and reason are not issues. Fear is the issue. The perpetuation of male power is an issue. And, when arguments fail, it's back to the Bible – and a very literal and narrow interpretation of the Bible – that we go. Back to St. Paul. Back even further to the Book of Leviticus.

If we get this today – on gay issues, on women's issues – imagine how much more of it Elizabeth Cady Stanton got in the 19<sup>th</sup> century!

Elizabeth wasn't an irreligious woman. Nor was she anti-Bible. She tells the story of how she shuddered with horror when she saw a woman take a family Bible to make a high seat for a child at table. 'It seemed such a desecration,' she wrote, 'and I was tempted to protest against its use for such a purpose.' And this happened, she said, after her reason had repudiated the Bible's divine authority! Elizabeth was well aware that in a battle between reason and sentiment, reason is not always victorious, but it was to reason that she made her appeal, rejecting the notion that God had inspired the Bible. The Bible, she said, cannot be accepted or rejected as a whole. Its teachings varied, and its les-

sons differ widely from each other, and while we might acknowledge that there are in the Bible, as in all the religious books of the world, many grand and beautiful passages that teach love, charity, justice, and equality for the whole human family, these must be set against, and separated from, the false sentiments and the vicious characters bound up in the same volume. 'The canon law, the Scriptures, the creeds, and codes of church discipline of the leading religions bear the impress of fallible man and not of our ideal first cause, 'the Spirit of Good', that set the universe and matter and mind in motion.'

Such ideas are very much a part of the Unitarian tradition, but whether Elizabeth Cady Stanton was formally affiliated to a Unitarian church, I don't know. But she most certainly worked very closely with Unitarians, and her work was defended very ably by Susan B. Anthony, one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's most prominent Unitarians, who was a member of the Rochester congregation in New York State, and for whom a commemorative dollar piece was struck.

But Elizabeth was not only concerned the Bible contained passages that were less than edifying; she also believed that much of the traditional translation of the Bible was faulty and biased, favouring certain doctrinal positions. For example, in the first chapter of Genesis we are told that God created human beings 'in his own image, male and female he created them'. The word used for God in this passage is, in the Hebrew, Elohim, which is not a singular word – God – but a plural word – Gods – and it is a feminine word with a masculine plural ending. Elizabeth said that this indicates a feminine element in the Godhead equal in power and majesty to the masculine. However, translators, wishing to keep a masculine, monotheistic concept of deity manipulate the text to their own end.

In 1870 Elizabeth was pleased to learn that a committee was being formed to revise the 1611 translation of the Bible. Now we have a chance, she thought. But it wasn't to be. The committee was to be made up entirely of men. This prompted her to begin a project which was to dominate the rest of her life. She gathered together her own committee of female scholars to produce their own version of the Bible. They didn't tackle the whole Bible, just the parts of it which dealt with women, and they didn't provide an actual translation of the text; they printed the traditional text with extensive commentary on its meaning and implications. Volume 1, which covers the first five books of the Bible, The Pentateuch, was published in 1895. Volume 2, from Joshua to Revelation, was published in 1898, just one hundred years ago. Both volumes are contained in a recently published reprint, 'The Woman's Bible: The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible'. The subtitle is probably a bit strong; it wasn't an attack so much as a reappraisal, but then, words like 'reappraisal' don't sell books.

I'll give you just one example of the kind of reappraisal it contains. Our reading today was from Mark's Gospel, chapter 12, the story of the woman who casts her mite into the Temple treasury. We are all familiar with the style of commentary that this usually elicits: a criticism of the rich for their parsimony, for giving only from their abundance; and a commendation of the woman who gave everything she had. This is what Elizabeth says about this passage:

This woman belonging to an impoverished class, was trained to self-abnegation; but when women learn the higher duty of self-development, they will not so readily expend all their forces in serving others. Paul says that a husband who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel. So a woman, who spends all her time in churches, with priests, in charities, neglects to cultivate her own natural gifts, to make the most of herself as an individual in the scale of being, a responsible soul whose place no other can fill, is worse than an infidel. 'Self development is a higher duty than self-sacrifice', should be every woman's motto henceforth.

This is strong stuff even today, but it was even stronger when it was written. It was so strong, in fact, that the publication of the book proved something of an embarrassment to many of Elizabeth's feminist colleagues, who were trying to establish their 'respectability' in an attempt to allay the fears of men and so obtain the vote. There was much hostility and anger expressed against the book and Elizabeth was called an irreligious woman, and a worker of the devil. She was 83 at the time, and had spent fifty years of her life on this project.

Dorothy Parker said of the dancer Isadora Duncan: 'There was never a place for her in the terribly slow army of the cautious. She ran ahead where there were no paths.' Elizabeth Cady Stanton ran ahead too. So did Olympia Brown. And now, a century on, the rest of the world is beginning to catch up with them.

*Rev. Bill Darlison*

**Dublin Unitarian Book Club's choice for November 2025.**

## **The Library of Heartbeats**

by

*Laura Imai Messima*

On the Japanese Island of Tashima there is a library of heartbeats, a place where thousands of visitors from Japan and around the world can record their heartbeats which in turn can be listened to in the very dark Heart Room.

In this novel the main character , Shuichi, was born with a heart defect and throughout his life he must be careful not to over exert himself physically or emotionally, this has prevented him from taking risks or fully embracing life in many ways. His mother tried to protect him from life's hardships by lying to him about events that had happened thus lessening their tragedy but this just distorts Shuichi's memory and sometimes he doesn't know what was real or imaginary. He is a cartoon illustrator and writer and loses himself in this fictional world. We get a very real sense of sadness and tragedy being in his life.

When Shuichi's mother dies he returns to his hometown of Kamarakaka to make funeral arrangements and to settle up Mrs. Ono's estate. He is full of grief not just for his mother but also his young son, Shengo, who had died tragically in an accident. Shengo was very close to his grandmother and visited her often. He became great friends with a local boy, Kenta, who in turn became great friends with Mrs. Ono after Shengo's death. She would talk much about her son Shuichi and as a retired teacher would help Kenta to write the complicated Kanji writing symbols.

As Shuichi attempts to empty his mother's house , Kenta breaks in and removes some items that remind him of Mrs. Ono. After this discovery Shuichi meets Kenta and they also become friends. Shuichi delays the house disposal and also discovers that Kenta knew his son Shengo but Kenta feels terrible guilt about his death.(no spoilers). Grief and guilt are major themes in this book as are loving friendships. The grown man Shuichi learns to grow up emotionally through his endearing friendship with the young boy Kenta. He learns that we cannot hide away from life and all it's hurts. You have to risk the loving even if it means enduring loss. You have to trust your heart.

After some time has elapsed Shuichi also becomes involved with



Sayaka , the funeral director for his mother's funeral. Again he has to learn to trust his own feelings. He has remained friends with his former wife, Aya, and they continue to meet on Shengo's anniversary. Our relationships and connections are explored in depth in this story.

Shuichi, Sayaka and Kenta make the trip to the Library of Heartbeats where another discovery is made. His mother had brought her grandson Shengo there and they recorded their heartbeats. Shuichi listens to his dead son's and mother's heartbeats, but instead of feeling immense sadness he leaves the island with a new sense of lightness and acceptance.

The book club readers enjoyed this book even though it had a slow start and was a bit confusing at times as it skipped back and forth in their relationships. The characters are very deep and well formed. The passages about the Kanji writing symbols were fascinating and inciteful about Japanese culture. It is a book worth reading but be patient and let the rich story unfold .

*Alison Claffey*

## **Heart and Soul Contemplative Spiritual Gatherings**

Heart and Soul is a contemplative Unitarian spiritual gathering in which you can take time to reflect on life in the company of others. Sessions follow an established, regular structure, with readings and music from a range of sources, time for guided prayers of gratitude and compassion for others, self-reflection, and silent meditation. Each session closes with refreshments, conversation and an opportunity to get to know others at a deeper level.

Heart and Soul will take place in person at the church for one Monday evening per month from January to June, starting on 19<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30pm, facilitated by Shari McDaid. Shari is a member of the congregation and has been participating in Heart and Soul regularly over the past five years. There is no requirement to attend all sessions – come as and whenever you wish but please book in advance. For further information or to book a place, please contact Shari at [shari\\_hello@yahoo.ie](mailto:shari_hello@yahoo.ie).

# The Drummond Bible

When an invitation was extended to the Clerk of General Synod, Revd. Lynda Kane, to conduct our Sunday Service on 23<sup>rd</sup> November it was intended that a few words of welcome would be addressed to her that would reference our congregational connections with her native Co. Antrim. Hanging in our vestry is a large portrait of Rev. William Hamilton Drummond DD who hailed from Larne Co Antrim and came to Dublin in 1815 to minister to the Strand Street congregation. (A short bio of Rev Drummond appeared in the October 2021 edition of the Oseault and there is a paragraph about him in the 'Notable Unitarians' section of our website) The congregation presented him with the portrait in January 1846 and reports of the occasion were carried in the Freeman's Journal and in the Bible Christian. Rev. Drummond seems to have been held in great affection by the congregation of Strand Street and his portrait was given the most prominent position in the vestry of the St. Stephen's Green church when the congregation relocated to its new home in 1863. It recently transpired that the Strand Street congregation had made an earlier presentation to Rev Drummond as a token of their affections for him.

We were contacted in October 2025 by Karen Vandermeulen of Winnipeg, Canada, who told us that she had been made aware of a Bible which she, through obviously considerable effort on her part, had traced to our church. The weighty book is beautifully bound and is embossed on the front page with the wording;

PRESENTED  
TO  
THE REVD WILLIAM HAMILTON DRUMMOND DD  
BY THE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION OF STRAND STREET  
DUBLIN  
ON 25 DAY OF MAY 1828  
AS A TRIBUTE OF  
CORDIAL APPROBATION  
RESPECTAND AFFECTION

Karen asked if we would be interested in receiving it and very generously offered it as a gift.

The offer seemed almost too good to be true but Karen and her husband Michel were true to their word and they packed the Bible most securely and despatched it to Dublin where it arrived within a few short days in the week of the visit of the Clerk of Synod. The book was 'welcomed home' at

*continued outside back cover*



# Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St. Stephens Green Dublin 2.

**Service 11.00a.m.**

## **Sunday Rota for January 2026**

4<sup>th</sup> January      *What's Next?*  
Service          Gavin Byrne  
Reader          Gavin O'Duffy  
Flowers          Paul Murray  
Welcomer       Paul Murray - Gavin O'Duffy  
Coffee          Paula Mills, Catharine Cook, Madeline Stringer

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11<sup>th</sup> January      *Map Making and Other Matters*  
Service          Jennifer Flegg  
Reader          Tony Roche  
Flowers          Margaret Leeson  
Welcomer       Orla Griffen - Alison Claffey  
Coffee          Shari Mc Daid, Daniela Cooney, Mary O'Brien

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18<sup>th</sup> January      *Kairos*  
Service          Gavin Byrne  
Reader          Emer O'Reilly  
Flowers          Emer O'Reilly  
Welcomer       Frank Tracy - Robin Ward  
Coffee          Jennifer Buller, Emer O'Reilly, Gráinne Carty

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25<sup>th</sup> January      *New Horizons*  
Service          Monica Cremins  
Reader          John Leeson  
Flowers          Peter Fontana  
Welcomer       Janet Mulroy - Emer O'Reilly  
Coffee          Therese Fontana, Alison Claffey, Janet Mulroy

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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.

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Rev. Lynda Kane Clerk of General Synod, and Rory Delany holding the Drummond Bible



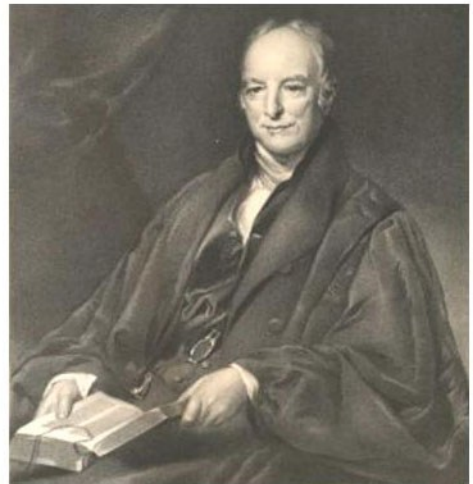
Rev. Bridget Spain *Minister emerita, Dublin.*  
Rev. Lynda Kane Clerk of General Synod,

our Service on 23<sup>rd</sup> of November and was brought back into use at our Christmas Carol Service on 14<sup>th</sup> December when Dennis Aylmer read the story of the birth of Jesus from Luke Chapter 2.

Karen and Michel were incredibly generous with their time and effort to ensure that the Drummond Bible found a new home at St. Stephen's Green Unitarian Church, the church where Revd Drummond ministered in his final years. Karen has told me that they were inspired to make the gift to us by the words from Matthew 10:8 "Freely you have received, freely give". With those words in mind and as the recipients of such a wonderful free gift from Karen and Michel, we will make a gift to an appropriate charity in the new year.

### *Rory Delany*

St. Stephen's Green Unitarian Church



Hanging in our vestry is this large portrait of Rev. William Hamilton Drummond DD who hailed from Larne Co Antrim