

Oscailt



April 2026

IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.22 Nº 4



Please Note

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

Vestry 01 - 4780638

e-mail: revbspain@gmail.com

Childrens Programme - Sunday Club

Takes place on the 2nd Sunday of each month

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

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

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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.

Oscailt is Published by the
St.Stephen's Green Unitarian Church
112 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin D02 YP23.

Rev.Gavin Byrne *Minister*

Rev.Bridget Spain *Minister Emerita*

Rev.Bill Darlison *Minister Emeritus.*

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Rev.Gavin Byrne and his
sister Kathryn
(photo P.Spain)

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What Do These Unitarians Believe

Exploring Unitarianism Part Two.

I've titled this address "What Do These Unitarians Believe?" And I invite you to journey with me through a potential minefield — a field nonetheless of ideas, of convictions, of doubts and discoveries.

Without a creed, without a set of fixed doctrines, we are, by any measure, a curious and unique church community. But I think we can begin here:

This Unitarian community believes that when we gather, we are invited to share our wisdom and our questions about life's ultimate mysteries — and that in doing so, we grow wiser together. We are interested in what you believe.

I often introduce myself as the minister's apprentice when I am with Bridget meeting new people. And when it comes to meeting a family preparing for the funeral of someone deeply loved, Bridget suggested to me that we ask the question: what did they believe? Did they ever speak about what they believed about that ultimate question: what happens to us after we die? And we include that as we prepare for this ultimate rite of passage.

This is the second address in a two-part reflection on our shared convictions. Two weeks ago, in *Many Gods, Many Creeds*, I suggested that Christian orthodoxy limits divine inspiration — to one age, one book, one church, one creed.

A Unitarian community, by contrast, holds to an imperfect but powerful conviction: that there is no book, no institution, no priest, superior to your own conscience and intellect — your sacred capacity to think for yourself.

The questions that confront us every day cannot be confined to one set of answers. And so today's address borrows its title from Savill Hicks's 1951 pamphlet, *What Do These Unitarians Believe?* Hicks begins by saying that people often define us by what we don't believe. But he suggests to us that our affirmations greatly outweigh our denials.

He wrote, "The heresy of one generation becomes the orthodoxy of the next." He asked: "Can anyone tell me of a single truth in science, reli-

gion, or society now widely accepted that wasn't once a minority opinion — perhaps a one-man or one-woman vision — battling against the regimented forces of accepted belief?"

Think of all that has been prohibited or condemned in Irish life over the past fifty years — and then think of what has changed.

Hicks made an important point: Unitarianism is, first and foremost, a way of thought — a method of approach to the deep problems of religion and life. Declaring something as The Truth with a capital T is not our way, because Truth itself is unfinished — evolving, deepening, subject to revision as our understanding grows. In fact, many here would wonder why and how we could even begin to come to the Truth of anything.

But Science teaches us this that some things are true - if we trust it of course. Once we believed the sun revolved around the earth. Galileo suffered greatly for suggesting otherwise. Yet truth moved forward — as it always does when courage and curiosity meet.

This way of thought means progress. It means freedom. It means rejecting doctrines that insult the soul. And if we were ever to fix our beliefs in stone, those who come after us would soon be in conflict with us, because their world — their understanding — will have evolved.

Savill wondered what Unitarians of the twenty-first century might believe. Well, here we are — and yes, we have evolved. We no longer gather with just the Bible and the hymnbook as the only sources of wisdom. We look to poetry, science, philosophy, art and those who changed the world for the better; we are curious as to what other religions and faiths might teach us. And of course lived experience is a significant teacher and guide as well.

So what do Unitarians have faith in? Perhaps, above all, in freedom. Faith, when applied to religion, has too often meant throttling reason and calling it holy, mysterious, beyond our understanding. But we seek a faith that frees reason, not strangles it. Some among us affirm the existence of God, the source of life. Some do not.

We do not impose theological terror — nor do we fear it. We use the minds we've been given, freely and fearlessly, and we aspire — however imperfectly — to tolerance.

Tolerance, as I said in my previous address, is not merely “putting up with” difference; it is learning to live with the reality of disagreement — with grace.

Each generation faces its own shifting sands. New orthodoxies rise and fall. Yeats saw this when he wrote:
*Turning and turning in the widening gyre,
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

Cultural wars rage still. Certainty is sought. Dogma rises again to promise order. But these attempts have never brought peace. They have too often led to cruelty, division, and war.

Our ancestors — those who broke from authority, who refused to declare any one truth final — suffered for their liberal spirit. We now honour them as prophets of freedom, saints of dissent. And perhaps, I'd dare say, Jesus himself was the first of those prophets.

Colm Keena wrote recently that “words are among the consolations available to us... They express something essential about human existence.”

Indeed they do. And Unitarianism, at its heart, is a community of words — of reasoned words, poetic words, questioning words — not dogmas recited by rote.

We are a non-subscribing church. That means we sign no creed. We split from Protestantism when others demanded a “confession of faith.”

You've heard the phrase “a come-to-Jesus moment.” But I wonder — have you had your come-to-Unitarian moment? For me, it wasn't a conversion or a rejection. It was a realisation — that I am free to think, to choose what I believe and what I cannot. I was invited, silently but powerfully, to reject what offends my soul and to embrace what nourishes it.

Our affirmations, I've learned, are far greater than our denials. Savill Hicks said it well: Unitarianism is a method of approach, not a catalogue of conclusions.

He wrote, “We consider the capacity of thinking and reasoning God's greatest gift to humanity — bestowed that we may use it freely and fearlessly, especially in matters of religion.”

Whether or not you believe that freedom comes from God is beside the point. The progress of human life — in science, in medicine, in compassion — depends on people who take that freedom

seriously. We will not be theologically terrorised. No clerical pronouncement can override human conscience.

Scripture, too, we see as a human record — four thousand years of humanity searching for meaning. It contains beauty and brutality, contradictions and wise parables alike. And as Hicks noted, “We gain nothing by refusing to admit this.” The Bible tells the story of humanity’s evolving moral and spiritual life. It is not the final word, the only container of the Truth.

And we Unitarians hold a heretical conviction: that God did not require Jesus to die to atone for sin. That teaching, radical in its time, still startles some today. For Jesus himself never spoke of original sin, nor claimed that his mission was to undo it. When asked how to inherit eternal life, he simply said: “Ease the plight of the poor.”

If the Bible is the Word of God, why does God not speak plainly? Perhaps because it is, as we see it, the word of humans seeking God — and that search, by nature, is ambiguous, unfolding, and profound.

Can we define God? No more than we can define ourselves. We live amid mystery. Yet in our deepest moments, we turn toward something greater — call it God, or conscience, or love. Hicks wrote, “Even as the earth revolves around the sun, our lives revolve around God, held fast by a spiritual gravity that will not let us go.” I might be bold enough to replace the word God there with ‘each other’.

We are dissenters. We are non-subscribers. But we are also affirmers — affirmers of the right of every person to believe according to conscience.

Those early Unitarians were exiled for their refusal to conform. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 expelled them from their pulpits. Congregations followed them into what is best described as the open air. James Martineau, who served here in Dublin in the early part of the 19th century and went on to influence the development of the Unitarian movement wrote:

“The gates were closed behind us and we went into the open place where cathedral bells and doctrines are heard no more. And newer voices of the spirit floated to us on the silence. And we grew into larger apprehension.” That, to me, is our inheritance — spiritual freedom, wide open as the sky.

We do not seek converts or to fill pews for their own sake. We simply wish to be free to pursue enlightenment, to ponder life's ultimate questions, and to keep our doors open to all who wish the same.

The Christian teaching that God can only be known through Jesus limits God — confines the Infinite to one person, one moment, one story. Martineau again reminds us:

“The Incarnation is true not of Christ exclusively, but of humanity universally, and of God everlastingly.”

Established dogma, in its rigidity, is always at odds with personal experience. Freedom and conscience will always outgrow the walls built to contain them.

And so what does all this mean in practice? It means we live our beliefs rather than argue them. We act on our conviction that every human being has dignity, that the world belongs to all, that cruelty and compassion dwell side by side in us, and that freedom — deep, inner freedom — is both our calling and our responsibility.

As John O'Donohue wrote:

“You were created to be free. Within you there is deep freedom. It will not intrude; it will not hammer at the door of your life. You have to claim your own freedom before it becomes yours. To be free is nothing; to become free is everything.”

In conclusion; We believe what we can and what we must. I don't rest with delight at the freedom I enjoy. There is a clear Unitarian tradition for social action. Freedoms, both religious and social are always at risk. I believe we are called not to step away from the great problems in our society. We step up to the great questions - particularly in the presence of hatred, far right or otherwise. We are free to form convictions about such issues as climate change, voluntary dying, lgbtiq+ issues, misogyny, equality, war and peace. Some believe that this Unitarian institution should take a stand on many issues, others do not. But what is within our tradition is that we are free to take a stand on those issues that we care deeply about. As our children's story tries to assert, we are not interested in all being the same.

And that, friends, is what this Unitarian believes.

Perhaps you share some of my convictions ?

Perhaps not ?

Gavin Byrne

Minister St. Stephen's Green Unitarian Church.

16 November 2025

In the everyday task at hand, happiness lurks

My address this morning offers some thoughts on happiness and its pursuit. It does so in a sceptical tone and wonders if our expectations and anxieties about happiness are by times excessive, inappropriate, and ‘over the top’.

Happiness may be elusive but engagement with the idea is perpetual. To quote Roger Cohen’s NYT article entitled *Mow the Lawn*: ‘It is a self-evident truth that people, whether in creating a new nation or simply beginning a new relationship, seek happiness. That they often go about it in the wrong way does not detract from the sincerity of their quest.’

First, a little history... The US Declaration of Independence, adopted in 1774 by the so-called founding fathers, explains why the then Thirteen Colonies regarded themselves as independent sovereign states no longer subject to British Colonial and monarchical rule. The Declaration’s second sentence reads: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.’

The idea that a new nation would set down the pursuit of happiness as an aspiring ideal has long fascinated me. My curiosity led me to use AI and ChatGPT to analyse the letters, documents and exchanges of the committee of the five founding fathers who drafted the Declaration, including John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. A sense of the arguments and intentions become apparent.

The pursuit of happiness was not a first choice. Rather the pursuit of property was an early runner. The problem here was that, at the time of writing, the US was a colony of Great Britain and did not actually own any property. The pursuit of abundance was another proposal, but it was felt that it sounded a bit too greedy. The suggestion of a pursuit of a national lottery was met with the response that there were many Puritans in the country. So, the pursuit of happiness

seems to have emerged as a kind of catch-all, one-for-everyone-in-the-audience, solution.

The founding fathers were wise and savvy individuals who knew that governance of a new republic would face many challenges. This is deftly shown during the drafting of the US Constitution, some 10 years later, in 1786 in a famous exchange between Benjamin Franklin and Elizabeth Powel, a prominent member of the Philadelphia upper class and a celebrated socialite. This is Franklin's prescient response to Elizabeth Powel's question: 'Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?' 'A republic,' Franklin replied, 'if you can keep it.'

So how has the pursuit of happiness served the Great American Project and its citizens? Certainly, the project has produced great abundance and riches but are its citizens all happy. One wonders. One wonders particularly about the word 'pursuit'. There is strong evidence that the more directly we pursue happiness, the more elusive it becomes. Indeed, research shows that thinking too much about how to be happy actually backfires and undermines well-being. This is in part because all that thinking consumes a fair amount of time and is not itself enjoyable.

The author and cultural critic Ruth Whippman develops this argument in her 2016 book *America the Anxious: How Our Pursuit of Happiness Is Creating a Nation of Nervous Wrecks*. Trying too hard to be happy – downloading mindfulness apps, taking yoga classes, reading self-help books – mostly just stresses us out, she writes. In the same vein, the eminent British philosopher A. C. Grayling remarks in his 2002 book *The Meaning of Things: Applying Philosophy to Life*: 'It has been wisely said that the search for happiness is one of the main sources of unhappiness in the world.'

So, if the pursuit and direct search for happiness is of dubious worth, what should we do? Well do certain supportive things right and happiness will just happen. For example, study after study shows that good social relationships are the strongest, most consistent predictor there is of a happy life. Thus, doing certain things other than the direct pursuit of happiness seems ironically to result in that very elusive happiness being found. Viktor Frankl puts it more elegantly.

Viktor Frankl was an Austrian psychiatrist, philosopher, and Holocaust survivor, famous for his 1946 book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He explains. 'Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue. One must have a reason to "be happy". Once the reason is found, however, one becomes happy automatically.' What he means is that happiness is a by-product or the result of an interesting and meaningful life (it ensues), not the central goal of your life (the pursuit).

So, it seems there are a number of things – 'things' here meaning activities, beliefs, and routines – that act as a kind of scaffolding that allows happiness to emerge and contentment to be built. What these mysterious things? Do we know them? I will now reveal them with the help of the mnemonic EDEN. E stands for exercise. D stands for diet. E stands for engagement. N stands for Nirvana. EDEN provides the necessary scaffolding to enable happiness to ensue.

If I sound like I am being a little preachy for the next minute or two, well I am. Exercise – get those 7000 steps done each day. Diet – the best advice is in the title of Michael Pollan's book *Eat food*. Not too much. Mostly plants. Engagement – join your local tennis or bowls club. Do some volunteering. Start talking and build that social capital. Nirvana is a Buddhist word for a transcendent paradisaal state of being. I take Nirvana as a proxy for the search for meaning, for the spiritual, for the divine, and for the self-reflection necessary to avoid what Socrates called the 'unexamined life'. Go there!

But there is no need for me to preach. I am addressing a congregation that fully, well nearly fully, embraces my EDEN recommendations. This church is, in its many parts, a happy space in St Stephen's Green and let us be grateful for this.

But what about this everyday task at hand? There is another issue with this happiness lark. We tend to ennoble it and set it high on a pedestal. It is something extraordinary, heroic, and remarkable. It's about great marriages, successful careers, world tours, enviable wealth and so on. Thus, it is no wonder that we, mere work-a-day mortals, perceive difficulty in mastering the happiness business. But what if happiness could happen in a more lowly, mundane and everyday setting? Could contentment somehow be interwoven with ordi-

nary daily activities?

Roger Cohen sees the seeds of happiness in humdrum tasks like mowing the lawn, collecting the dead leaves, painting a room, doing the dishes, working until fatigue is in your very bones, and persisting day after day. He concludes: In the everyday task for man and women, happiness lurks.

Lydia Sohn, a United Methodist minister and writer living in the US, would surely agree. Last year she published a heartfelt essay entitled *The Household Chores, You're Avoiding, Are Key to a Deeper Life*. Busy with the work of ministry, and with a young family, she resented any time spent on daily household tasks such as washing, cleaning, food preparation and so on. These were all outsourced to paid home help. Such work could not be productive to her.

However, the opportunity if not the necessity to stay at home during Covid led her to a kind of epiphany. The everyday chores and routines began to provide her with a mindful and fruitful space. She came to view this previously tedious work as enriching of both her family life and her ministry. At a retreat at a nearby Benedictine monastery where the monks would do all their own domestic and farm work, she was impressed by the response of a monk who said that their physical labour was a form of their bodies praying, in that way strengthening their spirituality.

I quote the closing paragraph of her essay. 'Yet I now approach my domestic labour differently. While I used to consider the work that I needed to do around the house utterly expendable, I now see it as integral for my and my family's happiness. Through my body's daily offering, I bear witness to the belief that my private sphere is just as worthy of my attention as my public sphere, and that my inner life is just as worthy of my care and labour as my outer one. And with each sock I put away, I trust that a sacred alchemy is unfurling.'

Why do we see toil that is physical, demanding, repetitive and apparently boring as always meaningless and undesirable? The story of Sisyphus is usually presented in this light. Sisyphus, a figure of Greek mythology, who angered the gods, was condemned to repeat forever the same meaningless task of pushing a boulder up a mountain, only to see it roll down again just as it nears the top. What

My Name is Fatema

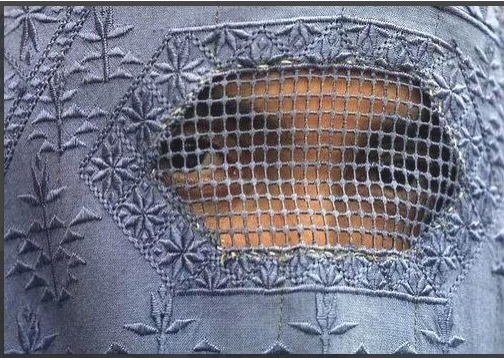
My Name is Fatema. I am from Afghanistan. I was born and raised as a refugee in Iran. When I was a child, I didn't understand what nationality meant; I always played with other children in our neighbourhood. Some of the children used "Afghani" as an insult. At that time, I always thought that "Afghani" was a kind of insult or a bad word.

When I wanted to start school, public schools wouldn't register Afghan children, so my siblings and I had to go to a small school which was just for Afghan refugees, with limited facilities. At that time, I found out what "Afghani" really meant. Throughout my education journey, I was reminded of this every day. Even last year, when I was studying at a university in Iran, my classmates - who were no longer children - used "Afghani" to insult and humiliate each other, despite knowing that I am Afghan.

Even though I love Iran as my birthplace, I was never accepted there and never felt at home. When we moved back to Afghanistan, I was happy because I thought that I would feel at home there. But as I am from the Hazara community - a group of people in Afghanistan that has always been a target of racism and genocide because of our different appearance and faith - I never felt safe or accepted. I didn't feel at home, even in my own country.

When I arrived in Ireland, I was so happy to achieve everything I wanted, like having the right to study, to have a job, feeling safe, choosing what I wear, and finally being treated as a human. I have always fought for these rights, which people here already have from the moment they are born.

In my first month in Ireland, Mary O'Brien took me to a beach near her house. All women and men were swimming together; they were all half-naked, but nobody cared about each other's dressing or even their bodies. I was thinking of the women in Afghanistan who must wear a burqa which covers their entire body, face, and even their



eyes, and they can't see properly through the burqa. They can't go to school after 12 years of age. They can't even go to the street to buy bread without a male accompanying them. They can't have a job, and some of them don't have a man in their family; how should they earn

money and pay for family expenses? They can't even talk loudly; a cat has more freedom than a woman in Afghanistan.

When I remember the women in Afghanistan and my family in Iran, I struggle with survivor's guilt, and I can't fully enjoy my freedom with this guilty feeling. Despite all these experiences and feelings, I have met a lot of good people and received a lot of kindness here in Ireland, and I am trying to do my best to find my home here in Ireland.

Fatema



Dublin Unitarian Book Club's choice for February 2026.

Camarade

by
Theo Dorgan

‘All things considered I wonder if shooting that policeman made me the man that I am?’

This is the question that Joseph, the protagonist of this novel asks himself throughout the telling of his story.

Joseph was born in Cork City in 1940 but has been living in exile in Paris for the past fifty years. He is writing his memoir following the suggestion of Vincent, a young Algerian student with political ambitions whom he helps in this endeavour.

Joseph recounts his childhood in Cork where he lived with his grandfather Michael John following the tragic death of his parents in a car accident. His grandfather had fought in the Irish war of Independence and he and his comrades regale Joseph with stories of ‘desperate ambushes and fear on the streets at night’, there is no bravado here or romancing of revolution. These ‘Band of Brothers’ have remained close and loyal to each other and hold a deep respect for Michael John as their former commander. Michael John had also fought in the Spanish Civil War against the Franco Regime. This is where he met Henri, a French Communist and fellow soul mate. They both went on to fight in the French Resistance during World War Two. The deep loyalty and trust they forged enables Michael John to call on Henri’s assistance to get Joseph out of Ireland after he shot Cassady, the malevolent Garda who has it in for him.

Joseph embarks on a new life and identity in Paris with the help of Henri and his compatriots, other members of the Communist Party and former members of the resistance. There is always a sense of political intrigue in this novel as old rivalries and allegiances reemerge and seep into events such as when Joseph returns to Cork after many years for Michael John’s funeral and the Paris student’s spring revolution of 1968 during which Joseph translates reports for the ‘Party’ into English. This involvement gives Joseph a sense of the camaraderie of men and women fighting for perhaps an idealistic cause, a better world always to be hoped for.

Joseph becomes an English teacher and grows into a very sophisticated and cultured man. The author gives great descriptions of places like Joseph's Paris apartment, the café's and restaurants that he frequents, the library in the Sorbonne and the streets that he walks through, all told with a poet's eye.

This is an introspective characterisation of a man in his seventies who is going on an internal journey and so the reader needs to take the time to go at Joseph's pace as he remembers that past and reflect on whether he has become the person he was destined to be. It is a book about friendships, camaraderie, family love and loyalty, and the love you find in other people. There is a goodness in these ordinary men and women who meet the challenges of their times by perhaps doing extraordinary things with the hope for a better future.

The book club readers enjoyed this book and thought the writing was really good despite being a bit slow in parts. However, when the French characters were speaking to Joseph the author wrote their part of the dialogue with a French accent. This did not work for me personally as I thought it unnecessary and distracting. It was an interesting and different story and the readers would recommend this book.

Alison Claffey

Dublin Unitarian Book Club

TITLE	AUTHOR	Month
Lessons in Chemistry	Bonnie Garmus	January
Camarade	Theo Dorgan	February
Orbital	Samantha Harvey	March
Dear Life	Rachel Clarke	April
My Brilliant Friend	Elena Ferrante	May
You Are Here	David Nicholls	June
The Door	Magda Szabo	July
All the Beauty in the World	Patrick Bringley	August
Three Men in a Boat	Jerome K. Jerome	September
The Correspondent	Virginia Evans	October
Intermezzo	Sally Rooney	November
Fathers and Sons	Ivan Turgenev	December

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 26th April 2026

NOTICE

The Congregational Annual General Meeting will take place in the church after Sunday Service on Sunday 26th of April 2026. The meeting agenda and related items will be included in the Annual Report which will be available to all Members one week prior to the AGM.

Voting Members may submit motions for inclusion on the AGM agenda and may nominate other Voting Member(s) for election to elected position(s).

Motions or nominations for submission should be sent in writing to the Secretary, Trish Webb Duffy, at The Unitarian Church 112 St. Stephen's Green Dublin D02 YP23 or at:-
secretaryunitarianchurch@gmail.com

The closing date for the receipt of motions, nominations, and other items for inclusion on the AGM agenda is Saturday 11th April 2026.

Denise Dunne
Chair

Ordination and Installation of Rev.Gavin Byrne

We marked the ordination and installation of Rev.Gavin Byrne on Saturday 21st March 2026. The service was led by Rev.Bridget Spain, Moderator of the Synod of Munster. Over 180 friends, family and members were present to witness this significant milestone in the history of our congregation. A similar number watched the service online. Ministers travelled from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to participate in blessing Gavin as he begins his ministerial work in Dublin. Our celebration was enhanced by Gavin's friends from five different choirs including our own. Our thanks to Josh Johnston who led the rehearsals and conducted the combined choir on the day.

The following was delivered by our new minister at the service.

Statement of Principles and Objects that led me to Ministry.

Ministry is relationship - it is at its heart facilitating people to build a relationship with the sacred and to respond to that relationship by offering their gifts and love to an often broken and hurting world. I am comfortable trying to grasp the mysteries of existence - I greatly love being with people, even if that is simply being present. I understand the importance of empathy and listening, responding to the deep questions of life. I believe everyone should have the opportunity to have an abundant life, and that begins by ensuring we give people the dignity and respect deserving of everything and everyone within the sacred thread of life. These beliefs draw me to ministry and this is how I wish to be in the world. Come, come whoever you are...a Unitarian community is a place where we strengthen our connections, explore our values, which are often challenged; it is a place to hear new and old stories and where our faith in the unity of creation can be expressed; where we honour each other's belief and unbelief in God.

I first came to this church in a spirit of discovery; I was searching for a community where my soul would be nourished. I found an open and liberal religion, a safe place where a persons gender and sexuality is respected and celebrated; where no ritual, dogma or doctrine is put in the way of discovering one's place in the sacred thread of life; where a persons place in the beloved community is not dependent on a confession of faith but a willingness to search for the truth. I also came believing in God but I came to understand that belief is a spectrum - I respect the values represented by everything from atheism to theism. I understand Jesus to be an extraordinary prophet, the rebel and trouble maker who challenged the orthodoxy of his time which stripped people of their dignity and worth. I understand the minister's role, at the very least, to be one of facilitating people to build a relationship with the sacred and to respond to that relationship by offering their gifts and love to an often broken and hurting world. Coming to this Unitarian church didn't involve a conversion or a rejection of other beliefs. It was a realisation — that I am free to think, to choose what I believe and most importantly, what I cannot. I was invited, silently but powerfully, to reject what offends my soul and to embrace what nourishes it.

I seek to grasp the mysteries of existence. I will speak nothing as religion, that I have not experienced inwardly and made my own. I believe we must to draw from our own well of understanding, experience and wisdom and be grounded in our current reality - I will always be open to that which I do not understand including all that is mysterious and all that cannot be explained or fully understood - this is what freedom, reason and tolerance looks like.

It is in our Unitarian tradition to commit to using our power to create a more just and fair society. Our radical spirituality calls us to speak prophetically and truthfully and when necessary, to take a stand on the big questions and challenges facing our world. The root of this tradition is the belief in equality of all souls before God. We recognise and celebrate the diversity of theological views, all valid and worthy of discovering. I embrace our tradition of searching the wisdom and truth offered by all major religions and philosophies.

As a pastor, I will accompany people through their challenging times. I will also celebrate their achievements and joys. I will endeavour to always pay attention and offer only what I can. My abilities, skills and competencies have limits. And I have my own joys and concerns, many of them ultimate concerns. But, thankfully, there is wisdom and insight in us all - I wish to hear it. I will practice empathy and compassion throughout my ministry and will look for the same from others. I will listen with care and respond only when invited to. I will endeavour 'to care and not to cure'; or in the words of Rumi, 'be still, be quiet, you are not God's mouthpiece - be an ear.'

Rev Gavin Byrne,
Minister St.Stephen's Green, Unitarian Church.

21 March 2026

CLASSICAL MUSICIANS NETWORK CONCERT

Shari McDaid
flute



Eva Ordonez
flute



Tracy O'Donnell
piano



26 APRIL | 14:00 | DUBLIN UNITARIAN CHURCH

Admission Free

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

In aid of Christian Aid



PLANT &
FLOWER SALE
Sunday 10 May 2026

*Bedding Plants - Shrubs - Tomato Plants
- etc etc*

Tell all your friends !



Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St. Stephens Green Dublin 2.

Service 11.00a.m.

Sunday Rota for April 2026

5th April *Easter Sunday.*
Service **Rev.Gavin Byrne**
Reader **Tony Roche**
Flowers **Paula Mills**
Welcomer **Paula Mills**
Coffee **Charlie Kinch, Malachy Hevehan, Andy Pollak**

12th April *Freedom, Reason and Tolerance*
Service **Liz McManus**
Reader **Trish Webb-Duffy**
Flowers **Janet Mulroy**
Welcomer **Trish Webb-Duffy - Isabel Hayes**
Coffee **Janet Mulroy, Gráinne Carty, Sheila Hanley**

19th April *Life and Dignity*
Service **Rev.Gavin Byrne**
Reader **Mary O'Brien**
Flowers **Mary O'Brien**
Welcomer **Charlie Kinch - Andrew Connolly-Crangle**
Coffee **Mary O'Brien, Daniela Cooney, Freda McDonald**

26th April *Nourishing the Soul.*
Service **Rev.Gavin Byrne**
Reader **Andy Pollak**
Flowers **Daniela Cooney**
Welcomer **Máire Bacon - Peter White**
Coffee **Maeve Edwards, Gráinne Carty, Sheila Hanley**

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

Recordings of previous services are also available on the website.

