



Ditchling **Unitarians**



Newsletter

February – April 2024

Open Minds, Kind Hearts, Free Spirits

The Values of Our Community

- Kindness and compassion to guide our actions;
- Freedom and independence of thought, belief and expression;
- Respect, equality and fairness for all people;
- Truth, peace and justice in human affairs;
- Reason and integrity in our search for spiritual meaning;
- Reverence and care for our Earth and all life.

www.ditchlingunitarians.org.uk

SUNDAY SERVICES – 11 am

<i>DATE</i>	<i>SPEAKER</i>	<i>MUSICIANS</i>
4 th February	Rev Duncan Voice	Phillip Sear
18 th February	Susie Courtault	Nicola Grunberg
3 rd March	Rev Duncan Voice Followed by the church AGM	Phillip Sear
17 th March	Jenny Miller	Nicola Grunberg
7 th April	Rev Duncan Voice	Phillip Sear
21 st April	Edie Campbell	Nicola Grunberg

MONDAY MEETINGS – 2pm

19th February – Carly Watts from
Poison Ivy Flower and Gift Shop

18th March – TBC

15th April - TBC

Further details on posters nearer the time!

Join us at this friendly gathering for older
people.

All welcome.

Organiser: Jill Clutterbuck



*Life is precious and is a gift.
The world is beautiful, and we are privileged to live
in it. May we know this as truth.
And what we know as truth,
may we exhibit in our lives.*

- Rev. Ant Howe, Unitarian Minister

Creating Something Beautiful

I realised the other day that it has been over five years since our meditation group first met. I don't have a record of the exact date we first met, but I started as minister in October 2018, and it would have been sometime shortly after that. We even continued to meet online through the periods of Covid lockdown. A number of people have come and gone in that time and sadly last month we said goodbye to one of our former members, Jennifer Mathur (see obituary later in this newsletter). Some, however, have been attending for all, or nearly all, of that time. It has been a great privilege for me to share such a special time with lovely people, and to simply be.

It is a strange thing though when you come to think about it, gathering to sit and be quite for a while! Difficult to describe, but in a sometimes frantic and uncertain world, it is something that calms our minds and bring us peace. The peace that we find in that short time together is also something that we can take with us into our everyday lives. And The Old Meeting House is a great place to meditate too!

I think many people would probably think meditation is pointless or boring though. There is no prize or reward, there is nothing to strive for, there are no gimmicks or distractions. Nothing hi-tech, and no quick results. It is just you and your breath, trying to dwell in the present moment, cultivating stillness and quietness, but somehow it is more. And even in silence, together there is a shared experience. If you have never given it a try, or you've tried before and

given up, why not come along, you would be very welcome.

I suppose anything connected with coming to church can be a mystery for many people today. Bad experiences or old ideas and negative stereotypes don't help either - you know, God as an old man on a cloud or something similar. The truth is however, that although churches have some things in common, they vary greatly in their approach and their outlook. We like to think of our church as being welcoming, inclusive, liberal, non-prescriptive and free, but others might see us quite differently.

Many people describe themselves as atheist today, and would see that as an immediate bar to coming to church. In the case of our church however this is definitely not the case. We welcome people as they are. Although, there are of course limits and if someone holds hateful or discriminatory views, we won't welcome them sharing those. However, if you have questions and doubts then you and they are very welcome. And not just welcomed so that you can be steered in a particular direction or towards a particular belief either. Welcomed so that you can explore fully and come to your own conclusions, so that you can find the faith within you, such as that may be. So that you believe what you must, not just what you are told.

This approach has in the past labelled Unitarians as trouble makers, and we have often been shunned by some Christian churches. Asking "why" has not been encouraged in many religious groups, and certain things are considered off limits or inviolable. The reason that we have no creeds to repeat on a Sunday

morning though, is that we do encourage this freedom. And our belief is that the answer you may discover through this approach, or perhaps the next question you may discover, will be all the more truthful and meaningful for it.

Our church hasn't got all the answers and we need to recognise that change is necessary and important. Our ways of seeing and understanding the world are not the same as previous generations, especially if they lived thousands of years ago. Even if some truths do run like a golden thread through the ages, we need to take into account new knowledge and modern approaches. We need roots, but we also need wings.

So if you have picked up this newsletter, but are not involved with our church, why not consider coming along. If you think caring, open-minded, spiritual community sounds appealing, then why not come and help us to create something beautiful. You will not be asked to say, or do, or believe anything you don't want to. Our church is democratic, not run by a church hierarchy. You can have your say, and your say will be listened to. Or you just can sit quietly for a time, and simply be.

With blessings,

Duncan

Meditation Group

Our small and friendly meditation group welcomes new members. We practice mindfulness meditation on selected dates. Our evening together usually consists of a guided meditation, a reading about mindfulness or meditation, a time of quietness and sometimes some sharing. We start at **7 pm**, and each session lasts for about 40 minutes. Payment is by donation.

Join us on any of the following dates:

20th February

23rd April

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Ditchling Unitarian and Free Christian Church will take place after the Service on:

Sunday 3rd March

Followed by a *bring and share* lunch

All Welcome

Jennifer Mathur

30th November 1936 – 22nd December 2023



On Friday 19th January The Old Meeting House was full, as family and friends gathered to say goodbye to Jennifer Mathur. Jennifer was well known locally for her involvement in community activities and her love of art, having co-managed the Ditchling Gallery for a time.

There were moving tributes from family members, readings from the Gospel of Matthew and Shakespeare, and a variety of recorded music.

Her thoughtfulness, her compassion and her determination were among many endearing characteristics that were highlighted time again through the different recollections and stories about her life. Driving to India in the 1960's with her new husband Sudhir was particularly memorable, as was the care she gave to disabled children with whom she worked for a time. She had a long and happy marriage to Sudhir and enjoyed life, but always balanced this with her concern for those who needed care and help.

It was my honour to share these precious moments with those who knew Jennifer well. She is remembered with much love. May she be at peace.

Rev. Duncan

Time for a Chat

I will be working at The Old Meeting House between 10am and 12 midday on the following dates:

- **Tuesday 13th February**
- **Thursday 7th March**
- **Tuesday 16th April**

Please feel free to pop in for a chat and a coffee. If you would like a private appointment to discuss anything, then please contact me directly.

Duncan

Enquiries

For wedding, funeral or baby naming enquiries please contact our Minister, **Reverend Duncan Voice**.

For enquiries about The Old Meeting House, including hire, please contact chairperson, **Philip Eckstein**.

Contact us through our website

www.ditchlingunitarians.org.uk

Food Bank Collections



We are collecting for Burgess Hill Food Bank, 85 Church Walk, Burgess Hill. Donations can be left at The Old Meeting House. Please leave your donation in the box provided at The Old Meeting House. Please remember not to leave perishable or out of date items. Take a look the foodbank website for a list of the items they particularly need at this time.

burgesshillfoodbank.org.uk/how-you-can-help

If you find you are struggling and need the services of the Food Bank, then have a look on their website for details of their voucher system. The Town Council Help Point is one of the easiest places to request one, and you can contact them by phone on 01444 244726 or email **helppoint@burgesshill.gov.uk**

Burgess Hill Food Bank is open 3 days each week - Tuesday and Thursday from 11am to 1pm, and Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.

Collection is available from Hassocks:
Powell House, 21 Keymer Road
Monday and Friday 10am – midday

and a delivery service in Hurstpierpoint, but times are limited. See their website for details,
burgesshillfoodbank.org.uk/how-to-get-food

Our congregation has been meeting at The Old Meeting House for over 300 years. We believe that people should be able to reach their own conclusions about what they do or don't believe, and we try to offer a welcoming and supportive environment in which to explore this. We are grounded in the Christian tradition, but we are open to the insights of different faiths and non-religious wisdom. Traditionally we have used reason as a way of discerning the value of religious claims, however we also recognise that faith is a matter of the heart. What is meaningful to one is not always logical to another. We are inspired in many ways and by many sources, such as poetry and nature and art. We greatly value caring community, and we see different lifestyles as valuable and enriching. Whoever you are, and whatever your journey, we offer you welcome at The Old Meeting House, Ditchling.

