



# **Ditchling** **Unitarians**



## **Newsletter**

**Nov 23 – Jan 24**

**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](http://www.ditchlingunitarians.org.uk)

# SERVICES – 11 am

<i>DATE</i>	<i>SPEAKER</i>	<i>MUSICIANS</i>
5 <sup>th</sup> November	Rev Duncan Voice	Phillip Sear
26 <sup>th</sup> November	Cynthia Parks	Nicola Grunberg
3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Rev Duncan Voice	Phillip Sear
<b>Saturday</b> 16 <sup>th</sup> December	Rev Duncan Voice – <b>Carol Service,</b> <b>6.30PM</b>	Andrew Wickens and Elizabeth Hills
7 <sup>th</sup> January	Rev. Duncan Voice	Phillip Sear
21 <sup>st</sup> January	Carol Chambers	Nicola Grunberg
4 <sup>th</sup> February	Rev. Duncan Voice	Phillip Sear

## MONDAY MEETINGS – 2pm

20<sup>th</sup> November – A talk about Stoneywish Nature Reserve by Rosemary and Michael Alford

18<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas Event

15<sup>th</sup> January - TBC

Further details on posters nearer the time!

Join us at this friendly gathering for older people. All welcome.

Organiser: Jill Clutterbuck



O come together in truth;  
O come together in peace;  
O come together in joy and sharing,  
Come together in love and caring;  
Come together,  
O come together,  
O come together in love.

- From Hymns for Living  
Words by Dorothy Grover

## **Blessed Are the Peacemakers**

*My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me continually,  
'Where is your God?'*  
-Psalm 42:3

*Tears have been my food day and night* said the Psalmist all those years ago, and today many people in the land where he once lived will echo his sentiment. People will be feeling such pain. People in Israel, people in Gaza, people with relatives in the area, people around the world appalled to see violent conflict break out in this troubled region once again. One of many regions blighted by war of course.

Martin Luther King Junior, Baptist minister, political activist and justice seeker (among other things) said that, *we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.* In other words an injustice perpetrated somewhere affects us all. Violence inflicted somewhere affects us all.

It may not seem so sometimes. The violence we see in news footage may just seem unreal, like a movie. But it is real, and those who inflict it, and those that suffer it, are real human beings just like us. And if it is in the heart of one person to do such things, then potentially it may be in the heart of any of us. As the poet Wordsworth put it, *we have all of us one human heart.*

The physical harm of the world's wars may not be affecting us directly here at this time, but if we realise our mutuality, our connectedness, then the pain and sorrow is for us all to bear. This may seem a lot to carry. That we have the

potential in us to do terrible things, that we must somehow share the pain of others involved in conflict. But without this kind of awareness, this kind of realisation, will there ever really be peace in the world? Will we continue to try to solve disputes with violence until the weapons we use become so powerful that we destroy all humanity?

Second world war Jewish diarist Etty Hillesum said, *Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that is its due, for if everyone bears his grief honestly and courageously, the sorrow that now fills the world will abate. But if you do not clear a decent shelter for your sorrow, and instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge – from which new sorrows will be born for others – then sorrow will never cease in this world and it will multiply.*

These are prophetic words, I believe, spoken in a time of great conflict and persecution. Etty could see how hatred was filling the hearts of those close to her. She turned to a form of spiritual contemplation at that time, and came to recognise God, (or as she put it, that which I call God *for the sake of convenience*). Not as a sky dwelling intervener, but as her inner light and strength. A friend, as close to her as her own breath. Supporting her through all she was going through and would face. Helping her to speak words of courage and wisdom to those closest to her and to us today, if we are prepared to listen.

Two people who have listened to her words, are two peace activists in Israel. Emma Sham-Ba Ayalon is a Rabbi, artist and poet, and Dina Awwad-Srouf is Palestinian lecturer and writer. You can find out a little more about them, and their work, on their website, [www.ettyhillesumcards.com](http://www.ettyhillesumcards.com).

I was privileged to join Emma and Dina for an online peace vigil a few weeks ago. It was very moving and attended by people from all over the world. I thought afterwards how much more difficult their work has become, now conflict has escalated and that more hatred and bitterness has taken root. However, I soon realised that it is my work too. It is our work. Peace must be the work of us all.

To quote Martin Luther King again,  
*We must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. Before it is too late, we must narrow the gaping chasm between our proclamations of peace and our lowly deeds, which precipitate and perpetuate war. One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.*

At times of war we can feel helpless and hopeless, but we all have an inner strength that we can draw on. Let us clear a space for our sorrow. Let us find that strength within ourselves, in our togetherness and our community. Let us put aside old prejudices and hatred of others, and show solidarity with those who make peace.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

Shalom, Salam, Peace.

With blessings

*Duncan*

# Christmas Carol Service

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December, 6.30pm**

Join us for carols by candlelight at The Old Meeting House,

with music from Andrew Wickens and Elizabeth Hills.



Followed by refreshments

# 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:

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November**

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December**

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January**





**Ditchling  
Unitarians**



# Craft Day



The Old Meeting House will be open to visitors to try their hand at some crafting. Materials will be provided. **For adults and children.** You may like to make a Christmas decoration or have a go at crocheting? You could bring along your own project or just pop in for a cake and a chat.



There will be some stalls selling crafts, art and sculpture by artist Tim Wheeler and a display of automata hand crafted by Ivan Morgan.

**Delicious refreshments will be available.**

**Saturday 18th November, 11 am to 3 pm**

**The Old Meeting House**

**The Twitten, Ditchling, BN6 8UJ**



Contact Duncan Voice for further information  
revduncanv@gmail.com or go to our website  
[Ditchlingunitarians.org.uk](http://Ditchlingunitarians.org.uk)

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## **Time for a Chat**

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

- **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November**
- **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

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](http://www.ditchlingunitarians.org.uk)**

# Words for Reflection

When the song of angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost,  
to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild nations,  
to bring peace among the people,  
to make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman (1899-1981) African-American philosopher and civil rights leader.

## 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.

However, if you are struggling and need the services of the Food Bank, then have a look on their website for details of their voucher system. Vouchers can be obtained from:

**Citizens Advice** – 0808 278 7969 or **Burgess Hill Town Council** 01444 247726.

The Food Bank offers collection from Burgess Hill, Hassocks, and a delivery service in Hurstpierpoint, but times are limited. See their website for details, [burgesshillfoodbank.org.uk/how-to-get-food](http://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.

