



*Brighton*  
**Unitarians**

## December 2017 Newsletter

### Sunday Services

Services 11 a.m. All Welcome

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|-------------|---|
| 03 December | Jef Jones (Lay Leader, BUC)                             |
| 10 December | Francis Clark-Lowes (BUC Member)                        |
| 17 December | Jef Jones (Lay Leader, BUC) - Solstice Service          |
| 24 December | Stephen Crowther (Lay Leader, Hastings) - Carol Service |
| 31 December | Rev Anthea Ballam (BUC Member)                          |

Quiet Reflection and Candle Lighting  
Thursday 14 December 7 - 8pm

### Welcome from Jef

Welcome to our newsletter. You'll see that our Winter Solstice Service is on 17th December and as always there will be a time during the service for the congregation to contribute. Please do bring a reading or a reflection that you would like to share. And do come along to our Carol Service on Christmas Eve, led this year by our friend and member Stephen Crowther.

In addition to our Sunday services we have three weekday opportunities for reflection and worship; an Advent Workshop on Thursday 7th, our usual Quiet Reflection and Candle Lighting on Thursday 14th and an evening of meditation on the theme of rest on Thursday 28th. Details of these are below.

I'd like to wish you a Peaceful and Happy Christmas

Best wishes, Jef Jones, Lay Leader

## Welcoming the Divine

A workshop and meditation on the theme of Advent  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 7 – 9.30 pm

We are approaching a time of great spiritual significance; Christmas is coming and so is the Winter Solstice. For many of us this is a time of joy and celebration; for some it can be stressful, lonely or sorrowful. What does this time of year mean to you? How would you like to prepare for it spiritually? This workshop will provide a safe space to explore these questions, and will close with a meditation to help us welcome the sacred into our lives during the coming season.

## Quiet Reflection Circle

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 7 - 8 pm

On the second Thursday of each month we gather for candle lighting and quiet reflection. Starting at 7pm and lasting no longer than an hour. There will be readings, time for candle- lighting, stillness and a few simple closing words.

If you've been having a busy week, and could do with some stillness, do come along. If you're looking for a time and place to reconnect with your spirit, do come along. If you'd like to sit quietly in a sacred place, please do come along. All are welcome!

## Resting in the Sacred

Workshop and Meditation  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> December 7 - 9 pm

This will be a gentle workshop exploring the theme of stillness and resting - a time of respite between Christmas and New Year. There will be some gentle music, some poetry and a guided meditation. Stop striving and simply sit in the candle-lit tranquillity of our sacred space and be restored.

## Dinah Ballance, 1956 - 2017

We're sorry to bring you the sad news that our member Dinah Ballance died on 8th November after a long illness. Although she had been too ill to come to Church for several years Dinah was a committed Unitarian. Inspired by her great sense of compassion and justice, for all her adult life she campaigned passionately against all kinds of injustice and exploitation. Dinah was a brave and gentle radical and atheist who found spiritual meaning in Unitarian values, and described herself as spiritual but not religious. Our kindest thoughts and prayers are with her husband John and the family.

## Thank-you from Anne

Anne (who brings the flowers) would like to thank everyone who contributed to her Box of Treasures! The items you donated to be recycled have helped raise money

for SeeKenya, a UK-based charity providing eye care services to marginalised communities in Kenya. In October the charity sent another team of 15 volunteers there and in 3 days saw 500 children with complex eye problems, and 700 people the following week. The charity provides glasses, medication and surgery.

Please do continue to donate broken watches, clocks, broken jewellery, necklaces and chains, odd earrings and cufflinks, obsolete keys and coins and postage stamps and old glasses and sunglasses. They are most welcome.

## Bottle Bricks and Beach Huts

Every year an organisation called BeyondChurch organises the wonderful Beach Hut Advent Calendar in Hove. This is what they say at their website; *This is the tenth Annual Beach Hut Advent Calendar when every night from the 1st - 24th December a different hut will open to reveal an art installation as we count down the days until we celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day.* You can find more details at [www.beyondchurch.co.uk](http://www.beyondchurch.co.uk).

The community group Pass1on is requesting bottle bricks for their beach hut which opens on Dec 8th. They say *We are going to repurpose plastic bottles and plastic household waste into bottle bricks to reimagine Christmas at our beach hut during the Hove Advent Beach hut Event on December 8th.*

*We have a world to look after and our installation will carry an important environmental message, showing that the old story itself of Christmas can be recycled , repurposed and has something to say to every generation.*

*We need 1000k bottle bricks made by 1000k individuals , each with a personal message of hope for the world written on them.*

There are more details at [pass1onorg.wordpress.com/bottle-bricks](http://pass1onorg.wordpress.com/bottle-bricks)



## December

**1st** Plaegan Piano Trio: Helen Sills (violin), Michael Nebe (cello) and Alan Brown (piano). Performing works by Dmitri Shostakovitch and Robert Schumann.

**8th** Pam Cragg and Maggie Grimsdell (one piano, four hands). A selection of brilliant music by Russian composers and others with a Russian theme including Brahms, Glinka, Glière, Moskowski and Rachmaninov.

**15th** The a capella vocal group A Bunch Of Daph's will perform a selection of Advent and Christmas music ranging from the mediaeval period to the present day.

**22nd** Please join Nick Andrews and his friends for this year's high quality, surprisingly excellent, Christmas music.

**Doors and coffee from 12 noon.**

**Concert 12.30 – 1.15 p.m.**

**Tickets £3.50 on the door.**

## From the Lay Leader

### A Sacred Season

As the Winter Solstice approaches I think of the earth, making her majestic way around the sun, her northern hemisphere tilting away from it and the southern hemisphere leaning towards it. Her journey is grand yet it has an intimate effect on the tiniest living things.

In our part of the world the thin soil of the South Downs will hold the seeds of its wildflowers in stasis. Speedwell, poppy and buttercup will exist in the cool earth as little nuggets of potential. Cold-blooded creatures such as snakes, frogs and newts will find safe and hidden places to overwinter. Dormice will hibernate and of all the animals that do they are the most committed sleepers, as their name suggests. Sometimes they do not emerge from their nests until April or even May. Brent geese, however, will not get much rest. They will arrive in their thousands on the mudflats around West Wittering and Chichester Harbour. They come to feed on the eelgrass, migrating each year from Canada and northern Russia.

The coming season will, of course, effect human beings too. For some of us Christmas brings a degree of sadness. We are all too aware of the loved ones we have lost and their absence can make the festivities rather daunting and lonely. It can also be a season of anxiety; there is such pressure these days to have a spectacular Christmas, to give fabulous gifts, eat wonderful food and to spend a lot of money.

For some of us though Christmas is a straightforward and happy holiday. As a welcome break from work it brings opportunities to rest, have fun and unwind, and to spend quality time with family and friends.

Somewhere underneath all the shopping and all the wrapping paper is a sacred season. In the traditional Christian story God comes into the world in the form of a baby. He is born under a star, signifying the cosmic meaning of his presence on earth. It's a star of hope and love. In the old pagan stories the Sun God himself is reborn on the solstice. His renewed power guarantees a good harvest later in the year. There will be a spring and a summer.

The earth has seen so many lives and life forms come and go, and heard so many stories, and continues to trace her celestial circles around the sun. However we view the coming season let us each take a moment to discern the ways in which we are blessed and to give thanks for what we have. And may we each take ownership of

our gifts; we all have a unique contribution to make. Finally just as the sacred earth holds delicate, little lives throughout the winter let us pray to be held safely in the tender embrace of the divine.

I wish you a Sacred Solstice and a Happy Christmas.  
Jef Jones

## BUC Fundraising

Christine Clark-Lowes has made another great selection of up-cycled Christmas cards. These will be on sale before the Friday Lunchtime Concerts and after Sunday Services. All proceeds to the Building Appeal Fund.

And don't forget our mugs! These will make a very nice Christmas present for your friends and family. Just £5.

### **Sunday 17th December, 3 p.m.**

Johan De Cock Christmas Organ Recital. Organ music and a few congregational carols! Christmas cake and mulled wine. Free entry. Retiring collection. All proceeds to go towards the upkeep of Brighton Unitarian's Kirkland organ. Please do come along, it will be fun!

## Collection for Clock Tower Sanctuary

Each Sunday in December we will be taking a retiring collection for the Clock Tower Sanctuary which is a drop-in service providing support to homeless young people (aged 16-25) in Brighton & Hove.

The day centre is the only one of its kind in the city and is open 6 days a week. It provides a friendly, bright, centrally-located, safe space for young people to engage with their peers and other visiting agencies, without the worry of having to share a service with older homeless people who can be intimidating.

## December Diary Dates

### **Saturday 9th December. Doors 7 p.m. Concert 7.30 p.m.**

Concert: International language Winter Warmer. Music & dance from around the world.

Tickets £8 <http://www.wegotickets.com/event/416291> or on the door.

## Forward Diary Dates

**Friday 12th January 2018**, 7.30 p.m. Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society. Edwin Wood – *'Finds from the Portable Antiquities Scheme, Sussex, 2017'* Members free. £3 non-members.

**Saturday 13th January 2018** Kathy and Ann will be holding another one of our popular quiz evenings this time with curry rather than fish'n'chips. More details to follow.

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2 – 4 p.m.** Death Cafe. 2 - 4 p.m.

Drop in to drink tea and eat cake, and to share and discuss all aspects of death in a safe and supportive environment. Free event - donations towards costs and church building appeal fund are welcome. Host Frances Tulley, civil funeral celebrant.

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1 – 3 p.m.** Stitchin' Time. £3 donation. Bring lunch. Learn: knitting, crochet, embroidery, patchwork. Or bring your own project.