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| February Newsletter |

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| **Sunday Services** Please note: services are at 11 a.m. See below for detailsWe would be grateful if you would switch off your phones before the start of the service. 2nd February -      Rev Duncan Voice, Ditchling                              Pianist Stuart Deeks9th February -       Jef Jones, Lay Pastor, Brighton Unitarian Church                              Pianist Pamela Nickels16th February -      Stephen Crowther, Lay Pastor, Hastings Unitarian Church                                Pianist Kathy Pitt23rd February -      Jef Jones, Lay Pastor, Brighton Unitarian Church                               Pianist Joe WardQuiet Reflection    7 - 8 pm, Thursday 13th February 2020 |

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|  **Our Mission Statement** Brighton Unitarian Church provides a caring environment, with spiritual depth, without dogma, offering a community resource to diverse groups in congruence with our values, promoting a diversity of Unitarianism nationally, and with a concern for a more compassionate world.  |

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| **Welcome from Jef** |

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| Welcome everyone to our packed newsletter for February. There is news below of our Annual Meeting, our successful Welcome Cafe and an update from the committee.You'll also find below details of this year's Hucklow Summer School, and a vivid account of last year's Summer School from our member Jennifer Sanders. I've been to Summer School several times myself and it really has made a positive difference to my life. The opportunity to devote a whole week to spiritual development with like-minded folk in a lovely rural setting is a great blessing. Many people who go also make lasting friendships with Unitarians from around the country. Do consider going to Summer School this year- it really is a Unitarian jewel!  |

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| **From the Lay Leader**On Sunday 25th January we held our Annual General Meeting. This was my last AGM. I will be retiring from my vocation here in September so of course I have been thinking about our church, about Unitarianism in general and about Unitarianism in Brighton.I said in my report to the Annual Meeting that some part of being a Unitarian and indeed some part of being a member of this church should be hard. It sounds harsh. Many of us come to this church because we don't like what might be called hard~core Christianity. We come here because it's welcoming and open~minded, and because it's affirming and compassionate. And yes, our approach to the spiritual life is unique, empowering and inclusive. But it should always be more than a walk through a progressive sunny meadow. We don't offer easy or magical solutions. It will always be easy to fill liberal churches with fellow travellers, to make them clubs for progressives and radicals who like a bit of mysticism every now and again. We could stop calling our places of worship churches and forget very happily and very easily the ethos of our founders, which was to bring a rigorous practice of reason together with the heart of faith. They strove to  honour, in a democratic spirit, both of these principles equally: faith and reason.Our founders were surely rebellious. They were opposed to elaborate worship and to church hierarchies. They were democrats who stood against tyranny, slavery and inequality. But they weren't just against things. They believed that a free and respectful church is the most dignifying context for the hard work of the soul and for religious inquiry. They thought hard about the meaning and worth of their lives, about death and suffering and evil. They thought hard about the ultimate truths, about God and about how to live a wholesome and generous life. Unitarians like to say that we live in the questions but there is a rather convenient effect that can come out of a culture of questioning. For sure the spirit of dissent, of protest, of trying to make real change is woven into our denomination and heaven knows at this moment in human it's vital. We need to keep saying that money, status and power matter much less than justice, than the earth, than kindness. We need to keep saying that  each and every one of us alive right now can realise our divine potential when we are free, when we treat each other with respect, with equity and with compassion. But there is a potential spiritual trap here. Questioning can get rather comfortable. Questioning the mainstream can be really rather cosy and simply deciding that other people are wrong is not really a spiritual life. Real spiritual depth comes from service, sacrifice, self examination and spiritual practice. This is the hard stuff and generally we have never shied away from it in this church. We question ourselves in our services, in our small groups and in our workshops. It restores to an honoured place in the spiritual life a habit of doubt, of using our God -given minds to reflect not just on our beliefs but on how we live and on the purpose of our living. This is what I mean when I say that Unitarianism should sometimes be hard.Jef Jones |

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| **Church News** We held our Annual General Meeting on Sunday, January 26th. Congratulations to the following, who were elected to the committee: Caroline Drijver, ChairpersonKathy Pitt, TreasurerJennifer Sanders, SecretaryJeannette Webb, Ordinary MemberJo Howarth. Ordinary MemberRetiring members Fanny Tulley, Jo O'Sullivan and Trisha Purchas were thanked for their service and presented with bouquets. The meeting expressed its apprecation to Fanny, Jo and Trisha for their considerable contributions to our spiritual community. Ann Woodhead was also thanked for her invaluable work as Safeguarding Officer - Ann has recently stepped down from this role. Thanks are also due to our very efficient Election Agent, Jen Barton.  Members will be receiving a copy of the minutes of this meeting soon. Congratulations are also due to new members Bella Cranmore, Marcia Connell and Stuart Deeks. Thank you for joining our church and welcome!Finally we are looking for a volunteer with a strong back to spend an afternoon helping Jef pack up and move some of the books from the vestry. If you can assist with this please speak to Jef.  |

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| **From the Committee**13th January was the final meeting of our committee before the Annual Meeting on 26th January at which a new committee was elected. [See Church News above.]At our last meeting we decided that people from the congregation who take a service at short notice to fill in for a cancellation will be offered payment for this until such time that we have a new leader. We will also offer payment to people from the congregation for leading services during the time that we are without a new minister. As soon as we have a new minister these offers of payment will cease so that the new minister can be fully involved with this discussion and decision can be made in line with their thoughts on this too. Jef will continue to be our point of contact for any safeguarding issues. We need a new person to work with Jef on safeguarding as Ann Woodhead has stepped down from this. We are grateful for the years that she has been doing this for the church. Fanny is leading on looking into updating our staging and lectern, ready for our bicentenary in the summer. We are buying some charity collection boxes for the church. We will get the collection boxes for the sanctuary Housing Project collected soon, and thereafter we will be collecting for the Welcome Cafe (lunch for homeless people).We had our first Welcome Cafe on 11th January and it went well. There are ongoing considerations regarding the setting of up of this in the new year. The committee appreciates that financial impact to the church should be none or minimal, and also that this is something that many congregational members are committed to providing. We will keep you in touch. There is a wish and a will to be part of Pride again this year - more on this at a later stage.   |

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| **Kathy's Quiz Night****7pm Saturday 29th February** Oh yes, get ready for the return of Kathy's Quiz Night! Our popular fundraising night is back on the evening of Saturday 29th February. There will be food, a donations bar, soft drinks and of course diabolical questions! Teams of six are allowed to enter this year and the ticket cost is yet to be finalised.**Gift Aid Forms** Could everyone kindly return your updated Gift Aid forms to Kathy Pitt, our treasurer either by post, care of the church, in person or just dropping them off after a service.  |

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| **Heart and Soul**7.3O pm Thurs 6th February 2O2O7.3O pm Thurs 20th February 2O2O  Heart and Soul gatherings are an opportunity for us to come together as a congregation during the week. There is a time of reflection and stillness and we go on to explore different aspects of our spiritual lives together. Everyone is welcome! If you would like to lead a gathering of Heart and Soul, or suggest a topic for discussion you are also welcome. Starting in January Heart and Soul meetings will take place on the first and third Thursday evenings of each month, and will begin at the later time of 7.30 pm.  |

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| **Quiet Reflective Circle**Thursday, 13th February, 7 - 8 pm |

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| At our monthly Quiet Reflection Circle we gather for candle lighting and quiet reflection. As always 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! |

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| **Welcome Café**Our Welcome Cafe is a new church initiative which provides a complimentary lunch for people experiencing isolation and homelessness. And if the first Café is anything to go by then this will become a joyous event in our church calendar. The volunteers were wonderful and were greatly appreciated by our guests who were respectful, grateful and, for the most part, extremely hungry!  It was a very positive experience for all of us involved and for the guests who were able to enjoy a hot meal and some friendly company during the coldest time of the year.  We will improve the delivery of the operation in the future with continued guidance from those with experience in this area and with your feedback. Your contributions for tea and coffee on Sundays will now be set aside to help fund this enterprise.  The Welcome Café will only take place in February, March, September and October this year but next year we will be able to run it on the second Saturday of each month.We need volunteers (the more the merrier!) for the next two cafés, the first of which will take place on 8 February between 1.30pm to 3pm You can choose either to take orders, greet the guests, help with serving tea, coffee and soup or sit and talk to the guests, whichever role you feel more comfortable with.  We all chipped in with clearing up last time. We will need volunteers to arrive by 1pm at the latest, although a small number of us will be in the kitchen from 11am preparing Jo’s delicious cheese sandwiches, warming the soup and heating the hotdogs.  If you would like to get involved, please let me know.  I can be contacted at trishapu213@gmail.com or on 07710 288399.  Trisha Purchas |

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|  **Speaking the Truth in Love:Having the Courage of our Convictions in a Post-Truth Age****Hucklow Summer School****22nd-29th August 2020**                                                                                                                   Nightingale Unitarian Centre, Great Hucklow, DerbyshireHow can we discern the difference between truth and lies, in a world which increasingly seems beset with malicious forces intent on sowing confusion by spreading disinformation, propaganda, and ‘fake news’? How can we ensure that our openness to multiple truths does not leave us vulnerable to manipulation by people of ill intent or unwilling to ‘take sides’ in matters where justice is at stake? How can we be sure enough of what’s right and wrong to stand up and speak out boldly about our moral convictions? How can we cultivate the qualities of honesty, integrity, truth-telling, and good judgement in our own everyday lives? And how might we best articulate our shared Unitarian values, and focus our collective action, in order to help bring about a better world? In this year’s summer school we’ll consider how we can summon the confidence and courage to ‘speak the truth in love’ as individuals, communities, and as a denomination.Hucklow Summer School 2020 is now open for applications! Further details of this year's exciting programme and an application form can be found at www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk. |

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| **Reflections on Summer School 2019**                                                                                                                                 The Old Chapel, Great HucklowIt seems a long long time ago since the summer but I did want to take this opportunity to reflect on  Summer SchoolI had heard about this annual event for several years but had shied away from It.. the very idea of school in summer was enough to put me off but finally curiosity got the better of me and with financial help from a bursary and assistance from the church (for both I am very grateful) I found myself driving up the M1 with Trisha Purchas on an adventure that would truly change my relationship with Unitarianism.Up to this point I had attended church fairly regularly and taken services across the south east and despite going to Fuse and attending a foundation course in Unitarian worship had often felt a little distant from community , a little like *What is all this Unitarianism all about ?*With a challenging journey under our belts and a luxurious stay at the Hilton on route nothing would quite prepare me for Summer School .What I dreamt of as a sprawling country house with acres of ground turned out to be a much smaller and intimate affair with my wonderful single room sanctuary to retreat to when I needed a little space to myself The weeks activities came in the form of booklet and months before we had been invited to pick our focus groups for the weekKnowing that this was it - I was here for the week there was a kind of surrender to whatever was going to happen and happen it did .. but at times when I least expected itIt does what it says on the tinIt's summer and it is like going back to schoolThe day starts early - if you wish-  with silent or guided meditation after which the first of 3 wonderful hearty and abundant meals are servedThe catering is wonderful and nothing is too much trouble, and  you have the option of supplementing your diet if required with the use of the secondary kitchen . And just to have all your meals cooked for you and the washing up done was magical... mind you there was little time for any self cateringThe week is structured with keynote speakers and engagement groups each morning, a range of afternoon activities including a feedback session from the morning speaker and then any evening activities that are available. It is non stop and despite the warning in our booklet it took me a couple of days to realise that I didn’t have to do it all. In fact that was an impossibility with such choice on hand . That was the biggest struggle just deciding what to attend !We were lucky enough to have 5 wonderful speakers that took us through the week . 80 mins of delivery with depth and insight, challenge and reflection. By the 10.30 am tea break ones brain was bursting with questions.The engagement groups which met daily in the morning gave an opportunity to be with a smaller group , some very structured , some offering reflection on the week and various workshops.It took me a few days to really allow myself to settle into a new life of summer school, find my own routine and pace . At times I wanted to run away- and there is always the chance to scoot into town for a bit of retail therapy or a bit of normality !But I did find my way and then remarkable things began to happen - I found myself having very intimate conversations about faith , my growing role within the Unitarian church and that nagging voice of - Well are you going to commit a little deeper ?There's nothing like being surrounded by other Unitarians with an eclectic mix of topics to challenge and question your part in it all?There were also moments which were quite frankly sublime . The evening silent candlelit walks to the Unitarian chapel on the other side of the village were beautiful and brought with them the reminder of worship as a community . Some simple words, a song or two and the opportunity for community reflection will stay with me.As will many moments of laughter and joy and silliness . And the competitive part of me unleashing itself in the silent auction which raises money for Summer School Bursaries. I was determined to win the VW camper van jigsaw puzzle!!I almost didn’t go on the planned walk one afternoon. I was so tired that part of me just wanted to go to bed and watch rubbish on Netflix but curiosity go the better of me.After an hours driving and walking we arrived at a stream and pool of natural water . Picture the scene! It was summer but it was raining and yet nearly 20 of us stopped to put on our swimming costumes and plunged into the icy depths of fresh water . Despite not being able to feel my feet or in fact any of myself for some minutes after something quite amazing happened .It was like a community baptism. Submerging ones body into free flowing cold water straight off the hills was an incredible religious experience for me . I was changed in that moment and since .There were many other moments In fact every moment at summer School was packed full .There were those that overfilled their weeks , those that sat back and reflected , those that worked incredibly hard and those that bumbled there way through writing that they would be carried .Please don't let “school “ put you off! . I am incredibly grateful to Summer school and to our church for helping me with funding my place without which I would not have been able to attend .I can honestly say it has been a life changing experience and although it has taken me some time to reflect and write this with a few months of digestion time I realise how much that week has helped me to grow spiritually and as a Unitarian .I would invite any of you to set aside any preconceived ideas that you may have about going to school in the Summer and try an experience that is magical transforming, challenging, full, fun, and mostly all with a loving community.                                                          Jennifer Sanders  Rev Winnie Gordon, Keynote Speaker at Summer School 2O19 For your information there is an archive of theme talks from Summer School at www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk/talks/ |

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| **February****7th:**Nick Andrews is joined by young soprano Rose Berelowitz for a recital of beautiful songs including works by Faure and Mozart. **14th:** Lyndsay Jeffery and Nick Andrews play a selection of well-known music for clarinet and piano. Across the eras, from classical to jazz to 20th century, there will be something for everyone to enjoy!**21st**: Mary Culloty O' Sullivan is an Irish Soprano. Her programme is a delightful selection of Irish Ballads, Italian Aria and Love Songs. **28th**: Maria Gibson and Lisa De Simone – Duo MaLi. Violin and classical guitar playing Piazzolla: Cafe, Bordell, Libertango; Villa Lobos: Bachiana Brasileira n 5; Granados: Playera, Pujol, Palermo, Condombe, St Telmo from suite Buenosaires; Ibert Entract. Doors and coffee at 12 noon.  Concert 12.30 - 1.15 p.m. Suggested donation £4. |

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