OUR PURPOSE

The members of this church welcome all who seek meaning in life.

The church is founded in the Christian tradition but encourages freedom of individual thought and belief. It demands no allegiance to any particular creed or dogma but respects freedom of conscience.

We aim to provide strength and encouragement for daily living through our fellowship and love.

SUNDAY SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER 2017

Services are preceded by music for quiet reflection

3rd  Rev Kate Whyman: Intergenerational Service on ‘Quests and Questions’

10th  Ann Kader: ‘A Cup of Joy’

17th  Rev Kate Whyman: ‘Turning Points’

24th  Congregational Service for ‘Peace Sunday’. Co-ordinated by Christine Avery and Kathy Gilbert

Please offer your contributions by Sunday 17th at the latest.

Last Smile

Congratulations to Chinese comedian Ken Cheng who won this year’s ‘Funniest Joke Of The Fringe’ in Edinburgh with this:

"I'm not a fan of the new pound coin, but then again, I hate all change."

It is error only, and not truth, that shrinks from inquiry.

Thomas Paine

PLYMOUTH UNITARIANS NEWSLETTER
ABOUT US

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MINISTER
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CHURCH OFFICERS for March 2017-March 2018

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Apart from these officers, the AGM Committee members for March 2017 to March 2018 are: Sheila Evans (Pulpit Secretary); Tessa Hall; Brian Colling (Lettings); Christina Lovis (Membership Secretary)

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Rev Kate Whyman

To find out more about us…
please visit our website: http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/Plymouth
and find us on Facebook :http://www.facebook.com/plymouthunitarians
or on Twitter: @PlymUnitarians

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tue 5th  Mindfulness@Lunchtime 12.45pm in church (arrive from 12.30pm). Bring food to share. Led by Sheila and Myron.
Tue 5th  Community gardening 2.30pm (Weather permitting)
Wed 6th  Quiet Time 1pm with guest speaker Ann Kader on the theme ‘The 7 Principles of Spiritualism’

Every other Wednesday ‘Oasis of Calm’ 1 - 1.45pm

Sat 9th  Please note there will be NO BOOKSTALL this month.
Wed 13th  CMC meets at 2pm
Tue 19th  Poetry Group 7.30pm at the home of Thelma. Bring poems by Tessimond (20th century poet) and by Swinburne, also poems on ‘School’.
Wed 20th  Green Team 11am in the vestry
Tue 26th  Socinian Communion 6.30pm, led by Rev Kate

NB: The deadline for contributions to October’s edition of The Open Road is Monday 18th September 2017. Please send contributions (max 450 words fit one page) to: revkatewhyman@gmail.com

Advance notice: Our Harvest Festival service will take place on Sunday 1st October at 11am.
GREEN SLOT

VEGETARIANISM IN ISLAM? by Edgar Mihas

Vegetarianism and religious beliefs and practices are intertwined in a number of faith traditions that originated in ancient India. In Jainism vegetarianism is mandatory for everyone, while in Hinduism and Buddhism it is advocated by some influential scriptures and religious authorities, and is practised widely. By contrast, the Abrahamic religions do not appear to promote a vegetarian diet, though there are exceptions.

In Christianity, some minority groups promote vegetarianism on religious and health grounds, such as the Seventh Day Adventists. More recently, Jewish and Islamic groups have also begun to advocate a vegetarian diet for a multitude of reasons, ranging from practical necessities, such as unavailability of kosher meat, to concerns about animal welfare which can also have a knock-on effect on human health, both physical and spiritual.

However, though vegetarianism has been a common thread among the major world religions, with only a minority having adopted the diet as an expression of their faith, Islam's concern for animals goes beyond the prevention of physical cruelty or even condescending kindness to them, which is a negative proposition. Rather it enjoins on the human species, as the principal primates of the animated world, to take over the responsibility of all creatures in the spirit of a positive philosophy of life and to be their active protectors, and this according to Al-Hafiz Masri 'Animals in Islam'.

In a Hadith, Prophet Mohammed is believed to have warned people: “do not allow your stomachs to become graveyards.” The Prophet also said that a good deed done to an animal is as meritorious as a good deed done to a human being, while an act of cruelty to an animal is as bad as an act of cruelty to a human being. Is that not almost an endorsement of vegetarianism since killing an animal could be deemed the ultimate act of cruelty? The Qur’an (6:38) states “there is not an animal that lives on the Earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but forms part of communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they all shall be gathered to their Lord in the end.” There are many debates, but let me finish with a poem by Kabir Sahib, a 15th Century Sufi poet who wrote “On Eating Meat”:

Muslims, I see you fasting during the day,  
But then to break your fast you slaughter cows at night.  
At one end is devotion, at the other murder –  
How can the Lord be pleased?  
My friend, pray cut the throat of anger,  
And slaughter the ravages of blind fury,  
For he who slaughters the five passions,  
Lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride,  
Will surely see the Supreme Lord face to face.

FROM THE MINISTER

Dear Friends

Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

John O'Donohue

As we approach the Autumn Equinox we reach another turning point in the year and an opportunity to take stock. The brief equivalence between the lengths of day and night is a pivotal moment in our solar system and one that invites us to take a breath, a pause...in which to acknowledge where we are in our lives at this time. It is a chance to give thanks for the warmth and light of the summer behind us, and to look forward in welcome anticipation of the cooler and darker autumn months ahead. This is a time of year in which we can centre ourselves once again and bring a crisper focus and a steady gaze to both new and long-cherished projects.

All over the country young people will be starting – or returning – to school, college and university and soon we’ll see thousands of students back in our city – nervous and excited as they begin new courses, form new friendships and embark on new adventures.

We have our own projects here. Important maintenance to the outside of the building is already underway, including to the windows and roof, and the organ is all set to be reburbished, which I hope will lead to it being played a little more often.

And personally we each have our own dreams and adventures and changes of direction, some tiny and some enormous.

May the spirit go with each one of us as we take our next steps, however big or small, cautious or bold they may be. May we know that we are never alone on our journey and have faith that the world awaits us.

Blessings  
Kate

PS Please note that Kate will be at the Ministers’ Conference in Great Hucklow 4-7 September inclusive.
TESSA HALL INTRODUCES CARLO ROVELLI

I enjoy reading books that describe the image of the universe that is emerging from modern science; and it seems that many other people share my interest. Carlo Rovelli’s book ‘Seven Brief Lessons in Physics’ was published in October 2014 in Italy. By November 2015, 300,000 copies had been sold. The book has now been translated into 41 languages. Rovelli has said he wanted to write for those who know little or nothing about modern physics. Also he wanted to focus on the beauty of the physics of the 20th and 21st centuries. Rovelli’s descriptions certainly increased my feeling of awe and wonder about our universe. One passage describes the ‘empty’ space between planets and galaxies as ‘an entity that undulates, flexes, curves, twists’ and it ‘can vibrate and oscillate like the surface of a lake’.

I like to find out a bit about the authors whose books I read. Carlo Rovelli is a theoretical physicist who has significantly contributed to research in the field of quantum gravity. He is an atheist, in that he does not believe in any of the Gods described by the major religions. However, he has many friends who are religious and he respects their views. Some of his friends find it strange that he likes to touch trees and he feels he gets something back from the trees.

Rovelli’s research takes him to the frontiers between the known and unknown. He says ‘Here in the vanguard between the borders of knowledge, science becomes even more beautiful – incandescent in the forge of nascent ideas, of intuitions, of attempts. Of roads taken and then abandoned, of enthusiasms. In the effort to imagine what has not yet been imagined’.

Rovelli believes that it is likely that some progress will be made in our understanding of reality, but there will always be far more mystery than certainty. I respect scientists who are aware of the limits of human understanding and don’t believe that everything can be explained by their subject.

On the role of human beings, he says that we are observers, collective makers of the photograph of reality we try to compose. ‘We are nodes in a network of exchanges through which we pass images, tools, information and knowledge’. But also we are an integral part of the world. ‘Our view of it is from within its midst. We are made up of the same atoms and light signals as are exchanged between pine trees in the mountains and the stars in the galaxies.’

Carlo Rovelli features in many interviews with Robert Kuhn in the Closer to the Truth series which can be viewed on the internet.

MUSINGS FROM ANN

Just for today I will let go of worry.

I’m sure a lot of you are like me - constant worriers. Worry about this worry about that, worry about worrying.

So I am trying to worry less, which is difficult. I realise I invest too much energy into worry. Worrying about the past is futile because the past is gone. Worrying about the future is irresponsible because your energy is being directed to creating unwanted results. Letting go of worry begins with remembering there is a divine or universal purpose in everything. Accept choices you made in the past and learn from them. If thinking of the future, invest in what you want but try as much as you can to live for today and put aside worry.

So just for today, put aside your worries.

"Like the joy of the sea coming home to shore, May the relief of laughter rinse through your soul."  
John O'Donohue

God bless,  
Ann

Do you have admin or computer skills?

We are looking for someone to help with general admin and design of simple posters while our usual admin support person, Nicky, is indisposed. If you have reasonably good computer skills and think you could help, please speak to Kate or a member of the CMC. We’d be delighted to hear from you.