

Ditchling Unitarian & Free Christians

at the Old Meeting House



Newsletter



OCTOBER — DECEMBER 2021

www.ditchlingunitarians.org.uk

*He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.*

William Blake (1757-1827)

PULPIT ARRANGEMENTS 2021

<i>DATE</i>	<i>SPEAKER</i>	<i>PIANIST</i>
3 Oct		
10 Oct	Rev Duncan Voice	
17 Oct	Stephen Crowther	Phillip Sear
24 Oct	Rev Duncan Voice	
31 Oct	Rev Ashley Hills	Liz Hills
7 Nov	Stephen Crowther	Phillip Sear
14 Nov	Rev Duncan Voice <i>REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY</i>	Joe Ward
21 Nov	Rev Martin Whitell	Kathy Pitt
28 Nov	Rev Duncan Voice	Phillip Sear
5 Dec	Stephen Crowther	Nicola Grunberg
12 Dec	Alan Larcombe	Phillip Sear
19 Dec	Rev Duncan Voice <i>CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE 3.00pm</i>	Nicola Grunberg
26 Dec		

MONDAY MEETING DATES

Old Meeting House

from 2.15pm on the *SECOND* MONDAY of each month

The OCTOBER MEETING has been CANCELLED.

The NEXT MEETING will be held on MONDAY 15th NOVEMBER

15th Nov *Duncan Voice – One Way Ticket to China*

Chairman — Jill

New Ministry for Duncan at Horsham

I am pleased to be starting my new ministry at Horsham Unitarian Church on 1st October 2021. This is a half-time role, which I intend to carry out alongside my quarter-time at Ditchling. I hope that the two roles will work well together. I will of course have less flexibility with my time in Ditchling than before, but my commitment remains the same and I hope there may be some benefits such as sharing of good practice and ideas.

Rev. Duncan

Mid-week Gathering

Before the pandemic began (all that time ago!) you will recall that I worked out of The Old Meeting House on some Wednesday mornings, and some of you would drop in for a chat. As we continue to gradually return to some kind of normality, I am planning to work at the Old Meeting House on selected Thursday mornings instead. I hope that we might be able to make this a monthly mid-week gathering; something less formal than a Sunday service. Possibly a discussion group? Certainly involving coffee, and perhaps the occasional cake. Who's a good baker?

For our first gatherings, and to start things off, I will lead short devotions (about 20-30 minutes) **from 10.00am**. No hymns or address, just some readings or music or poetry or prayers and some quietness. After that I'll make the coffee. You wouldn't want to miss that would you! So do come along for a chat and a break from your usual routine. I will be at The Old Meeting House on the following dates in 2021:

Thursday 14th October, 10.00am

Thursday 18th November, 10.00am

Thursday 16th December, 10.00am

Rev. Duncan

Meditation Group

Our small and friendly meditation group welcomes new members. We practice mindfulness meditation together 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 7.00pm, and each session lasts for about 30-40 minutes. Payment is by donation.

Join us on any of the following dates:

Tuesday 19th October, 7.00 pm

Tuesday 23rd November, 7.00 pm

Tuesday 21st December, 7.00 pm

Contact Duncan if you have any questions.

Christmas Carol Service

Our Christmas Carol Service will be on **Sunday 19th December at 3.00pm**. Therefore, there will be no Service that morning. Bring your family and friends and join us to sing familiar carols and enter into the festive spirit. We hope to be able to share Christmas cake, mince pies and a glass of something after the Service, but we will definitely offer you a warm welcome.

*The editor would be pleased to receive contributions
for the Old Meeting House newsletters 2021*

The Hero Inside Ourselves

Glancing through a book of reflections called *Fragments of Holiness* compiled by Catherine Robinson, a member of our Oxford congregation, I came across a quote from Christopher Reeve (1952-2004). You may recall he was the actor who played Superman/Clark Kent in a number of films. Not the usual sort of contributor to this kind of book I thought. I glanced down at the notes and discovered he was a Unitarian Universalist (the American equivalent of Unitarians here in the UK). I was also reminded that he suffered a serious riding accident in 1995 which left him paralysed from the neck down. The quote was,

Some people are walking around with the full use of their bodies – and they're more paralysed than I am.

Intrigued, I read a little more online. He was interested in acting from an early age and studied alongside Robin Williams before graduating in 1974. He had a few smaller roles on stage and screen before getting his big break as Superman in 1978. Catapulted to instant fame, he immediately put his celebrity status to good use, supporting many good causes including coaching disabled athletes. However, he was not involved with any religious group at this time, and even at his memorial service he was described as *not a religious man, in the traditional sense, but he was the 'most spiritual man I've ever known.'* (Hall, 2010)

It seems he started attending a local Unitarian church after his accident. I'm not sure he ever "found God", but he certainly found a way to live more spiritually which seems to have helped him cope with the radical change in his physical abilities. He returned to his creative work directing films and writing books, and supporting others, particularly through the

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Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. He found meaning, new meaning, perhaps a deeper meaning, for his life once again. He said of his accident,

Who knows why an accident happens? The key is what you do afterwards. There is a period of shock and then grieving with confusion and loss. After that, you have two choices. One is to stare out the window and gradually disintegrate. And the other is to mobilize and use all your resources, whatever they may be, to do something positive. That is the road I have taken. It comes naturally to me. I am a competitive person and right now I am competing against decay. I don't want osteoporosis or muscle atrophy or depression to beat me. (Ability Magazine, n.d.)

Of his spirituality he said,

Spirituality is found in the way we live our daily lives. It means spending time thinking about others. It's not so hard to imagine that there is some kind of higher power. We don't have to know what form it takes or exactly where it exists; just to honour it and try to live by it is enough... As these thoughts unfolded in the process of learning to live my new life, I had no idea that I was becoming a Unitarian. (Reeve, 2004)

The character of superman is fictional, but Christopher Reeve seems to have been an inspiring person. Not many of us will have had to face such a dramatic change to our lives as he did, but all of us face challenges, both mental and physical, especially as we get older. He reminds us that our spirituality could be the key that helps us to find meaning in our changing circumstances and may lead us to find whatever else it is that we need to live our lives, love, courage, inspiration, support or

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something else. His story also reminded me of the lyrics of the song, ‘Search for the Hero’, by British band M People,

*You've got to search for the hero inside yourself
Search for the secrets you hide
Search for the hero inside yourself
Until you find the key to your life

You've got to search, inside yourself
Deep, deep down inside yourself, yeah
You've got to search, inside yourself.*

Christopher Reeve’s accident happened on 27th May 1995, M People’s song was released just over two weeks later on 12th June 1995. I don’t know if he ever heard it, but he certainly lived it. May we be inspired to do the same.

Rev. Duncan

Ability Magazine (n.d.) Retrieved from wikipedia.org:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Reeve#Superman

Hall, R.F. (2010, September 16th). *christopher-reeve-a-life-for-all-seasons-october-31-2004*. Retrieved from uuwestport.org: <https://uuwestport.org/christopher-reeve-a-life-for-all-seasons-october-31.2004/>

Reeve. (2004). *Reeve (2004), “Faith”*. Retrieved from wikipedia.org:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Reeve#Superman

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We reported in our last newsletter that our dear friend Don Craft had moved into a care home near his family. Sadly, as many of you will be aware, he passed away on 19th July and his funeral took place on 24th August. He will be greatly missed by friends and of course his family. His daughter Gill gave a lovely eulogy at the funeral service, alongside granddaughter Fran. Here is what Gill said,

Don Craft

30th October 1928 - 19th July 2021

As many of you will be aware, my dear Dad, Don Craft passed away a short while ago at the age of 92. A regular visitor and supporter of the Meeting House, I know he took enjoyment, comfort and solace from the weekly services and was very fond of the friends that he met there over the years, especially after Mum passed away in 2006. We have always felt it was a very special place.

Dad had to face many challenges over the last few years, and especially over the last six months. However, my Dad lived a long and happy life.

Born in October 1928 in Marylebone, West London, his parents lived above an ironmonger's shop situated on Edgware Road, his father Alfred was the proud manager and before they married, Violet, his Mum, had been a manageress of a Lyons Tea Shop on nearby Oxford Street.



One of my Dad's earliest memories in 1936, age 8, was his father taking him up to the top of the house to watch the glow in the night sky from the Crystal Palace as it burned down on the far side of London. Early years were safe and happy above the shop in Edgware Road, but in 1939 the threat of war gripped London. Dad and his sister Pam were packed up and taken to Marylebone Station by their Mum to be safely evacuated out of London, along with thousands of other children.

Soon afterwards, having gained a scholarship to St Clement Danes Grammar School which had been evacuated to Oxford, he was moved there to continue his education. After finishing his Grammar School education in 1945 as the war finished, he was encouraged to pursue a career in art, and Dad started a three-year Graduate course at St Martin's School of Art and London College of Print in central London.

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However, as he completed the degree course, instead of being able to start his chosen design career, he became eligible for National Service and was recruited into the Army. Again, he was packed up and sent off, first to Northern Ireland for initial six-week training and later posted to the Royal Signals Regiment in Catterick, Yorkshire. Happily, this is where Dad first met my dear Mum Holly. She was doing her National Service in the WAAF and was stationed near Dad in Yorkshire.

By 1951 Dad was beginning to find his way in the fledgling design industry taking off in London. He had a strong interest in graphic design, photography and printmaking, being a keen member of the London Private Press.

Mum and Dad married in 1953 and bought their first house in Stanmore, North London in the mid 1950's. This is where me and Paulette, my sister, were born. By then Dad had worked at various advertising agencies in Central London, building his portfolio and gaining new skills and making new contacts. It must have been such an exciting time to be working as a graphic designer in swinging, post war London.

By 1963 Mum and Dad decided it was time to move out of London, and so we moved to Haywards Heath. Dad continued to commute to London during the week while building up a freelance graphic design business, working late into the evenings and at the weekends in his home studio – our spare bedroom. Eventually Dad decided to give up commuting and concentrate on his own graphic design company, Don Craft Designs, which was very successful and carried him through to retirement in the early 1990's.

After Paulette and I had fled the nest, Mum and Dad moved into a little cottage called Little Crank on Ditchling Common, a former farm building, but with an interesting history associated with the workshops run by the sculptor and typographer Eric Gill. It was really just an empty shell when they moved in but with their home-making skills they made it into a wonderfully comfortable home that our family and friends loved and fully enjoyed over the years.

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Mum and Dad always loved France, especially Provence, and after a few holidays with friends Mum and Dad took the plunge and bought a very run-down static caravan on a beautiful, wooded campsite. It was very, very basic but they travelled down by car twice a year, usually with bulky building materials on board and even a fridge on one occasion. They would enjoy a working holiday 'doing it up' before turning round and driving all the way home again, using the journey as part of the holiday to explore the small villages along the way.

Sadly Mum became ill with cancer in 2004 and after gruelling treatment, lost her battle and passed away in 2006. Mum and Dad had already planned to move into the village before she became ill, and Dad carried through on that plan. He also maintained a healthy social life thanks to his many dear friends, involving himself with the running of the Meeting House, a Dog Walking group, a Cooks Club, the old and the new Ditchling Museum, the local Probus group, Ditchling Wine Club, Cinema Club, Bowls, and the weekly Art Group that met at the Meeting House which he loved and gave him a creative outlet.

My Dad had a long and happy life, a wonderful marriage to Holly lasting 54 years and enjoyed a creative, rewarding career. He was always wonderful company, a loving Dad, Grandad and recently a Great Grandad. We are all missing him hugely already, but we have some wonderful memories and stories to remind us of all the good times we shared together.

Rest in Peace Dad.....

CHAPEL CONTACTS

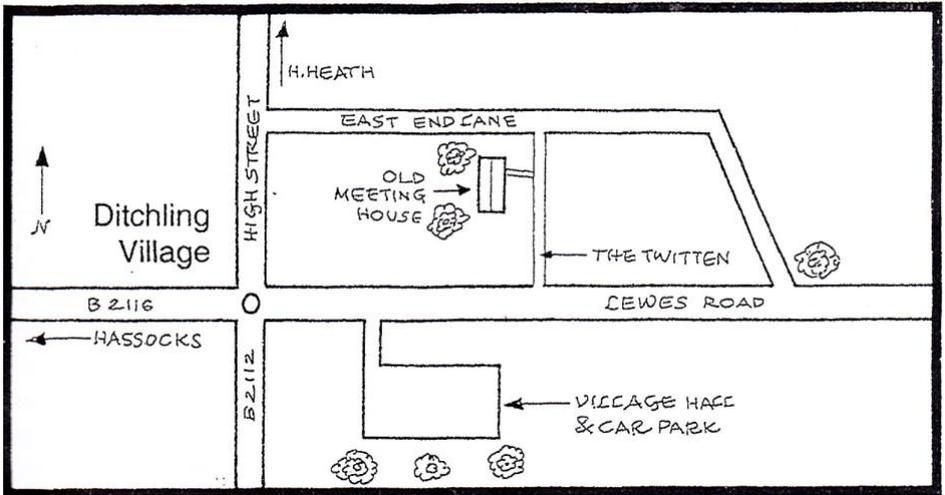
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NB: Ditchling Unitarian newsletters can be accessed via ukunitarians.org.uk/ditchling or by Googling *Ditchling Unitarians* and selecting *Newsletters*. *Ed*

Church Committee Secretary Required

We still have a vacancy on our committee for a secretary. If you feel you may be able to help, please speak to Brian or Duncan.

Thank you



Unitarians have an open-minded and welcoming approach to faith. There is no list of things that Unitarians must believe; instead, we think everyone has the right to reach their own conclusions. We see different opinions and lifestyles as valuable and enriching and are open to insights from all faiths, science, the arts, the natural world, and everyday living.