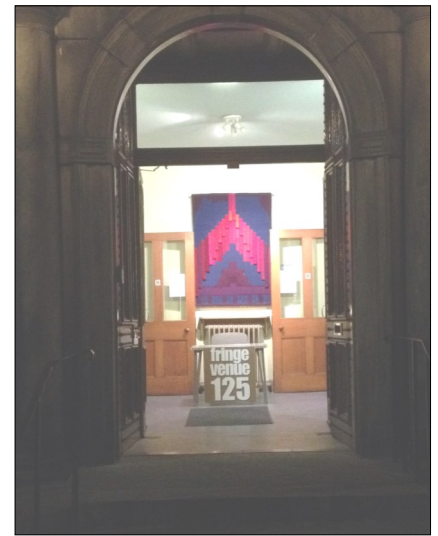


waymark

unitarians in edinburgh



Edinburgh Festival Venue 125
Come and Join us in August!
(see page 7 for more information)



St Mark's Unitarian Church

Castle Terrace

Edinburgh EH1 2DP

0131 659 7600

minister@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

www.edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Search for 'Unitarians in Edinburgh' on



www.facebook.com

Minister Rev Maud Robinson (0131 659 7600) office

Lay Celebrant Joan Cook

WHO'S WHO

Convener Mary McKenna

Secretary Margery MacKay

Treasurer Brian Robertson

Management Committee: Ann Sinclair

Church Flowers: Mary McKenna

Music: Jack Westwell

Children's Programme Co-ordinator: Ida Silkenat

Email: stmarkschildrensprogramme@gmail.com

Waymark

Editor Jane Aaronson

for Unitarians in Edinburgh

Email ja@ednet.co.uk

Waymark is published ten times a year for members and friends of St Mark's. Donations towards the cost of publication are always welcome. For more information please speak to Brian Robertson.

We welcome contributions, though space is limited, therefore contributions will be published at the discretion of the editor. Email to ja@ednet.co.uk by the 14th of the month. If you cannot send copy electronically, please note that Audrey Simon will type and email material to the editor. Please contact Audrey at St Mark's.

Attendances

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| April 24 | 47 (adults) + 1 (children) = 48 |
| May 1 | 51 + 5 = 56 |
| May 8 | 56 + 7 = 63 |
| May 15 | 27 + 5 = 32 |

SUNDAY DUTIES AT ST MARK'S

SUNDAY STEWARDS

June 5 Maciej Gutowski 12 John Reid & Mary McKenna
19 Lynsey Bailey 26 Ann Sinclair **July** 3 Rachael King

PEACE CANDLE LIGHTING

June 5 Niall Urquhart 12 ICUU 19 Julie Finneran
26 Coby Macaulay **July** 3 Margery MacKay

*International Council of Unitarians and Universalists

WELCOME

June 5 Anne Witcomb & Billy Lee 12 Brian Robertson & Maciej Gutowski 19 Ross Harper & Jane Aaronson
26 Bláthnaid Quinn & Amy McDonald **July** 3 Jill Woolman & Elizabeth Welsh

COFFEE

June 5 Mary McKenna & John Reid 12 Ida Silkenat & Margaret Ross 19 Julie Finneran & Louise Rhodes Ritchie
26 Brian Robertson & Maciej Gutowski
July 3 Lynsey Bailey & Margery Giles

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME

June 5 Susanne Urquhart & Rachael King
12 Lynsey Bailey & Emily Rueggeberg
19 Bláthnaid Quinn & Tom Stamper 26 Rachael King & Lesley Hartley **July** 3 Susanne Urquhart & Emily Rueggeberg

FLOWERS

June 5 Mary McKenna 12 Roger Hartley
19 Flower Communion 26 Joan Cook
July 3 Mary McKenna

St Catharine's Homeless Project



June

| | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 3 | Mary McKenna & John Reid |
| 10 | Rob Whiteman & Elaine Edwards |
| 17 | Lesley & Roger Hartley |
| 24 | Kate Foggo & Amy Worthington |

*We will be pleased to add your name to this roster.
Please speak to Maud Robinson for more details*

Moving Forward
MARY MCKENNA
Convener of Council reports

Firstly I want to share an important diary date. Rev Maud Robinson, our much loved minister, will hold her last service at St Mark's on **31 July 2016**. To celebrate this, and to say thank you for all of her seven and three quarter years of being our spiritual leader, we will be having a **Maud's Farewell Party** on that same afternoon. All members and friends of St Mark's are welcome.

For those members and friends who were around when Maud was appointed, we held a 'Getting to know you' party at Bryan Wade's house at Inverleith Terrace. The sun shone and it was a lovely event, and Bryan's wonderful home and garden provided a great setting for this informal get together. Bryan has offered to host Maud's leaving party, and this seems a great way of completing the circle. **Put the date in your diary.** Several members have offered their assistance with organising this event, and other expressions of interest and support would be welcome, just let me know how you can help.

Secondly, I wish to thank all members of Council who serve us so well with their knowledge, skills and experience. Especial thanks to Rob Whiteman who is leaving Council, and special welcome to new members of Council who were appointed at the AGM on 8 May; Jane Aaronson (*who in her capacity as Waymark editor was an observer*) now joins Council in her own right, and to Ida Silkenat, who is our Children's Programme Co-Ordinator.

After the formal business of the AGM, there were small group discussions on the key issues in relation to the appointment of our next minister. While there was a strong preference to seek a full time-minister, there is no doubt the financial projections outlined by Brian Robertson, raised concerns. The new Council will need to consider these concerns, and develop a range of strategies to resolve the projected funding gap. If, as we anticipate, there will be a gap in finding our next minister, there was support for us exploring the possibility of a guest minister to support our own programme of worship being led by our members and friends.

Also at the AGM there was substantial agreement to proceed with plans to carpet the upper hall, with the aim of reducing the reverberated noise that is creating difficulties for some people. The Management Committee will take this forward and would hope to have accurate costs and proposed carpet samples to share during the summer period. The Management Committee, under Ann Sinclair's leadership, does a power of work, and also hopes to progress plans to install new projection equipment.

Lastly, Maud has been working with a small group setting up a new web site for St Mark's. This should be a significant improvement on our existing website and should be up by early June.



REV MAUD ROBINSON reflects on..

.. building an understanding with those who 'profess different religious understandings'

The sermon reproduced in this edition of Waymark is one delivered at St Mark's in July 2015, by Safeena Rashid, of the Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh, to mark the end of the fasting month of Ramadan and the Muslim celebration of Eid al-Fitr. As the celebration of Eid al-Fitr comes around again for our Muslim neighbours, it is a good time to revisit it. Some of the religious concepts which Safeena spoke about in her address might seem incongruous in the setting of our very liberal religious community; she spoke about the devil as an almost tangible being, which could be kept at bay by the sacrificial act of fasting during Ramadan. I think it's important that we sometimes challenge ourselves to listen with open hearts and minds to the religious beliefs of others which are far removed from our own. The intention of inviting Safeena to speak to us was not in order to listen to ideas with which we would agree, or indeed to try and change our minds about these ideas, but to increase our understanding of the beliefs of those with whom we share our city and our country. Safeena's very concrete language describing God and the devil will have been uncomfortable for some of us for whom, if we use these words at all, they will probably be used in an abstract or metaphorical way to describe human impulses, or less well-defined concepts of some form of power or energy, which may, or may not, be at work in the world. However, what we certainly hold in common with Safeena is the impulse to compassion and kindness in our actions toward our fellows, which she also spoke about in her address. In our world we are surrounded by people who understand our world in very different ways – in terms of very specific religious beliefs or in completely secular ways – but with whom we can work together to build an understanding of how we can live together in harmony, and with compassion. As Unitarians, we are called upon not to agree with those who profess different religious understandings, but to enter into dialogue with them and find how we can work with them.

Leading Worship – A Workshop

Saturday 4 June

11.00am – 4.00pm

at St Mark's

Our minister, Rev Maud Robinson will be leaving St Mark's at the end of July, and there will be a period before the appointment of a new minister, during which members of the congregation will be called on to organise and lead services. It will be a challenging time, but also a time of great potential for growth and the discovery of new resources within members of our community.

If you are interested in leading a service, or participating in a team service, during the period following Maud's departure, this workshop is an ideal opportunity to gain skills and explore resources to enable you to do so.

Please bring your own lunch
tea and coffee will be provided

*If you have a laptop please bring it along,
as we will be exploring some online resources.*

It is not essential to register, but it would be helpful if you could let Maud know if you intend to participate
(by email maudrobinson@gmail.com
or phone 0131 659 7600)

INTERFAITH MATTERS

Interfaith matters have recently been highlighted at St Mark's, and below you will find a flavour of the discussion. Margery Mackay reports on a presentation during the service on 10 April, by Iain Stewart and Stew Green from the Edinburgh Interfaith Association. This service was led by our minister, Rev Maud Robinson, who began with opening words by Marilyn Maciel. Next, following a suggestion from Katherine Huq, we publish two verses from The Sultan's Crown, a poem by the 14th century Persia Poet, Hafiz. To coincide with Ramadan, which begins on 7 June, we are publishing an address given in St Mark's on 19 July 2015 by Safeena Rashid, of the Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh, about Ramadan, Eid and her experience of living in Edinburgh, as a Muslim woman. Lastly, on 24 April this year, Richard Ross delivered some thought-provoking words when lighting the chalice.

Opening words by Marilyn Maciel, read by REV MAUD ROBINSON at the Interfaith service on 10 April, MARGERY MACKAY reports

I you us them those people
wouldn't it be lovely if one could live in a constant state of we?
some of the most commonplace words can be some of the biggest dividers:
they?
what if there was no they ?
what if there was only us ?
if words could be seen as they floated out of our mouths
would we feel no shame as they passed beyond our lips?
if we were to string our words on a communal clothesline
would we feel proud as our thoughts flapped in the breeze?

I think quite a few members were on holiday when Iain Stewart, General Secretary of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) accompanied by his wife Umutesi and Stew Green, the Jewish Representative on the EIFA Board came to speak to us, so I want to tell you about it here.

Maud had prepared a beautiful service that fitted in with the theme. She talked about the beauty of diversity and the enrichment we receive from it. She told the children the story of different blind people trying to work out what an elephant look like by touching different parts of the elephant. They came up with different ideas. People think differently about God, however you interpret God, but God is bigger than all of the ideas. In a meditation Maud mentioned the breath of life flowing through us all, through all time, interconnecting us and inspiring us-Ruach, Pneuma, Spiritus, Holy Spirit.

Iain Stewart acknowledged Unitarians involvement in interfaith work locally, nationally and internationally right from the beginning of the Interfaith Movement. Iain mentioned the hymn we had just sung 'Our Faith is but a Single Gem' by John Storey in which each gem of a rosary was compared to important aspects of different faiths. He said that the Unitarian ethos fitted well with EIFA's, but it was not just about intellectual knowledge of World Faiths, exploring different beliefs and coming to understand our own spirituality better. What EIFA offered was for people to meet real people from other faiths who live in Edinburgh and to get to know them on a personal level and realise that they are just people like us with the same hopes and desires. One could visit their places of worship, work with them on charity work; some interfaith groups are working together on 'Foodbanks' and the Sikhs have a food kitchen. At this time when there are so many terrible things happening due to extremism it was more important than ever to build good relations and understanding between all the faith communities and none and to work for peace. EIFA does work in schools, and runs an Interfaith Week with various events, some of them dynamic, also the Holocaust Memorial Event. The best way to get started I think is to come to an Interfaith Community Meal. They happen on the first Monday of the month at The Well Cafe at the Methodist Church in Nicolson Square, Edinburgh at 6.30pm.



We have a short talk and discussion and then eat food together.

Iain was grateful to St Mark's for inviting him and Stew and for taking a retiring collection for EIFA as with all charities funding channels were reduced and money tight. Stew Green explained how he had come to EIFA three years ago and it had helped him to continue his exploration of God in a wider way. He had first found help and consolation when he joined the Liberal Jewish Community after not having been involved for some time. He wanted his son to share both his Jewish Heritage and his wife's Asian Roman Catholic Heritage. EIFA helped him to do this and he supported EIFA's aims and wanted as many people to sign up as members as possible. All you need do is to provide your email address to become a member. Membership is free but any donations are gratefully received. Please speak to Margery MacKay or Gillian Woolman if you want to attend the Community Meal. Alternatively you can give them your email address or you can make a donation. See www.eifa.org.uk

Life as a Muslim

An address given in St Mark's by SAFEENA RASHID on 19 July 2015.

Thank you for inviting me to speak. It is an honour to be standing in front of you addressing you today. I will be talking about Ramadan, largely from a spiritual perspective. Then I will talk about Eid, and I will finish by speaking more generally about being a Muslim in this country. First, a brief preamble. I was born and brought up in Scotland, and I have been a Muslim all my life, so everything that I do in this country, everything I do in this city is very normal to me.

- It is normal for me to testify that there is only one God and that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is the last messenger
- It is normal for me to pray five times a day
- It is normal for me to read the Quran
- It is normal for me to give charity, and it is very normal for me to fast during daylight hours for one month every year.

I am aware that my way of living is not normal to everyone else around me though. Indeed people around me might be curious about how I live my life, or why I choose to do certain things that I choose to do. Some people might even be scared of it, because there's a natural fear of the unknown. This is why opportunities like this, where I get to explain certain aspects of Islam, are priceless for me. I would much rather a curious person, or a scared person come up to me, and ask me questions, rather than remain in that state of curiosity or fear forever.

With this in mind, if at any point you have any questions about anything, then I will be more than happy to answer them, if I can.

Ramadan

Moving on to speaking about Ramadan. Ramadan is the name of the Islamic month in which Muslims fast. The physical aspect of fasting involves refraining from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. Much of what we do in life is driven by the desire for these three things. Forcing ourselves to refrain from these physical acts is one way of making us realise that we should be, and can be, in control of our desires, rather than our desires being in control of us. Controlling desires, remaining in full control of the senses, is an important discipline for the Muslim.

This year (2015) that discipline had to be exercised for particularly long days. Regardless of the long days, when you speak to Muslims in the run up to Ramadan, a lot of them will be looking forward to it. When you speak to Muslims after Ramadan, a lot of them will be missing it.

Why on earth would you look forward to starving yourself during the day? Why on earth would you look forward to not quenching your thirst in the summer with an ice cold drink? Why on earth would you look forward to depriving yourself of pleasures in life which you would normally take for granted?

The simple answer is that fasting is so much more than a mere physical act. It has a wider spiritual dimension, especially during the month of Ramadan. Many people ask me how I manage to refrain from eating or drinking for these long hours. I know that if it was just a physical act, for example, if I was just fasting to lose weight, then I would not manage it. When I fast as an act of worship though, it is not the physical benefits I am craving but the spiritual benefits.

Spiritually, I want to get closer to the Lord who is not only my Lord, but the Lord of the entire universe. I fast in the hope of achieving God's mercy, in the hope of gaining lots of rewards for the deeds that I do, and ultimately in the hope that God gives me paradise and saves me from hellfire.

I am unable to enumerate the spiritual benefits, but I will briefly touch on three.

Firstly, Ramadan is a month in which God promises us far more rewards for our good deeds than are available at any other time of year. This is one of the reasons why you will see Muslims falling over themselves during this month to do lots of extra good deeds, for example, giving more in charity, or spending longer at night praying. The act of fasting in itself is a good deed, and the exciting thing about this is that God has not actually told us how much reward we will get for it. This is because the reward is probably far beyond anything that we could comprehend.

Secondly, it is a month in which God chains the devil up. The devil is mankind's clearest and oldest enemy. He whispers in our ears in an attempt to coax us into doing bad deeds, in an attempt to take us away from our Lord. If we want to do something bad, the devil will make it very appealing for us, and he will also facilitate ease in doing it. If we try to do something good, the devil will put obstacles in our way to make it more difficult. During the month of Ramadan this opportunity is taken away from him. When God chains the devil up for this month, it leaves us free to do as many good deeds as we want, without as many obstacles. We also try our hardest to stay away from doing bad things, in an attempt to get closer to God. Effectively, Ramadan is a training course in which we prepare ourselves to successfully do battle with the devil for the other eleven months of the year.

Finally, the entire month is one in which the chances of our prayers being accepted increases. This is why in the run up to this month, I try to think very carefully about exactly what I want to ask of God, remembering that when I am supplicating, I am supplicating to the One who is capable of giving me whatever I seek. When I pray to God, I have that certainty in my heart that God is all capable, and that God will accept my prayers. Over the years, I have actually seen manifestation of that acceptance, and I am confident that this year will be no different.

(continued on page 6)

The Sultan's crown, with priceless jewels set,
Encircles fear of death and constant dread;
It is a head-dress much desired - and yet
Art sure 'tis worth the danger to the head?
'Twere best for thee to hide thy face from those
That long for thee; the Conqueror's reward
Is never worth the army's long drawn woes,
Worth fire and sword.

Ah, seek the treasure of a mind at rest
And store it in the treasury of Ease;
Not worth a loyal heart, a tranquil breast,
Were all the riches of thy lands and seas.
Ah, scorn like Hafiz, the delights of earth.
Ask not one grain of favour from the base.
Two hundred sacks of jewels were not worth
Thy soul's disgrace.

From the Sultan's Crown by Hafiz

Eid

I will now speak about the festival of Eid.

We work very hard during the month of Ramadan. We deprive ourselves of things we normally take for granted, and we make the effort to up the level of good deeds, both in terms of quality and quantity. While ultimately we seek reward in the form of paradise, God rewards us in this life by giving us a celebration at the end of the month. That celebration is called Eid al Fitr. This is a celebration of breaking the fast. We are not rejoicing that Ramadan has come to an end, but we are congratulating ourselves on having completed the month. We are also thanking God for having allowed us to complete the month.

On this day, a billion Muslims around the world will be celebrating Eid. The beautiful thing about Islam is that it is a way of life which, within certain remits, accommodates many different cultures. Therefore, it does not matter what country I am in, what language I speak, what type of food I eat, what kinds of clothes I wear, I can still celebrate Eid. There will be certain ways of celebrating that will be universal across all cultures. For example, there will be a special prayer on the morning of Eid, we will make the effort to wear nice clothes, we will visit family and friends, and there will certainly be a lot of food eaten. How this is done will vary from culture to culture.

An effort is also made to make Eid special for children. Many children are so excited about Ramadan, that they will try to fast. Though fasting is not an obligation on them, they are enthusiastic about it, and want to join in with everyone else. Regardless of whether or not they fast, children are an important part of the celebrations.

Being a Muslim in this country

For me in this country, Eid is a nice experience. I head to the mosque, to pray the special Eid prayer in the morning, in my best clothes. I love going to the mosque where I know I will bump into family and friends. Regularly the mosques will put on activities for children in celebration of Eid. The rest of the day involves a lot of food consumption. I keep telling myself my diet will start tomorrow!

For the rest of the year, in general being a Muslim in this country is a positive experience. Of course I have had the occasional bad experience of racism, and unfortunately incidents of Islamophobia are also becoming more frequent. However, I know that such incidents are not representative of the general population.

I was once getting on a bus at a bus terminus. Given that I wear a headscarf, I am very visibly a Muslim. The bus driver asked me if I would prefer to live in a Muslim country. My response was no. As I was born and brought up here, I know no different to living here. When I have been abroad, to Pakistan for example, I miss home and am itching to come back after a couple of weeks away.

I am very grateful for the fact that I live in a country where I am pretty much free to live the way of life that I want. Although, I was born a Muslim, I have actively chosen to practice Islam. For me, other than adhering to what is outlined by God in the Quran, and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), there is no other way to get close to God. There is no better way for me to worship God than the way He sets out Himself. I sincerely believe that being in Scotland has facilitated this freedom for me to choose to practice Islam, and it has facilitated the freedom for me to learn how to practice Islam.

On a day-to-day basis, my faith only has a positive effect on my life. It has not hindered me in any way. I went to a state school in this country. I was the only Muslim in my year, but that did not stop me getting the same opportunities as everyone else. I went to university in this country where the resources open to everyone were naturally also open to me. I work for the government in this country, and I have no issues wearing the clothes that I need to wear or praying at the times that I need to pray. I live in the knowledge that if I respect others, others will respect me. I live in the knowledge that I am Scottish. Ultimately I live in the knowledge that I am Muslim.

*Copyright Safeena Rashid
used by permission
given in St Mark's on 19 July 2015*

Safeena Rashid ended her address by inviting members of the congregation to visit The Edinburgh Central Mosque during the Edinburgh Festival.

Chalice Lighting in St Mark's

by RICHARD ROSS

Recently I was in Pinner, a pleasant, leafy suburb of North-West London. We lived near there for five years, and know the district well.

We were in a café having coffee with some friends on a Saturday morning. Across the road on a corner was a local synagogue set back a little from the street. Jewish people were coming and going from the Sabbath service. I had passed this way many times before. But this time something was different. Large, anti-assault blocks of concrete had been placed on the two sides of the synagogue facing two streets. Two men were keeping watch and speaking into their walkie-talkies.

I had a feeling of shock. Can this be happening in our country now? Is this what things have come to that people feel at risk going to their place of worship and in their place of worship? I wanted to stop and speak to one of the guards, but I knew at once that that would be seen as a potentially dangerous distraction. I walked on.

And recently here in Scotland, in Glasgow, a man belonging to the Ahmadiya sect of Islam was murdered for his allegedly heretical beliefs.

I light this candle for all those who suffer from hatred within religions, and between different religions.

Edinburgh Festival Venue 125

MICHAEL MULLIGAN, Venue Manager, reports

Hello again from me, Michael Mulligan, the Venue Manager once more at artSpace@StMarks, for all three weeks of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Also back this year, will be Ross to run things on a day-to-day basis, and to look after the fantastic team of volunteers made up from members of the church.

Our programme this year is as diverse as previous years, with something for all.

In a major event for the venue, we have leading Scottish theatre company Stellar Quines, bringing 'The View from Castle Rock' by Alice Munro. All about the subject of Scots emigrating to Canada, it is linked to the Edinburgh International Book Festival, and there will be nineteen performances over all three weeks. We also welcome the return of 'Interrupt' the Routine from London, with their wonderful hour-long spoof on old fashioned radio plays called 'The Gin Chronicles'.

As always, of course, the bulk of our performers are musicians and singers. This year we have both the Edinburgh Renaissance band and the Edinburgh Festival Ensemble, and the evergreen Royal Scottish Pipers Society.

Veteran Boys of the Lough, star Cathal McConnell, returns with friends for three shows of great folk and Celtic music.

Leading Australian contralto Rose Nolan presents 'Blissful Harmonies' which will be glorious in the superb acoustic of the church, and Sheena Jardine returns to play violin pieces from Dvorak to Handel, accompanied on piano by Steven Doughty.



THE ROCK TRUST is the St Mark's good cause in June. The suggestion to support the Rock Trust came from B Jones. Given that we already help the homeless in our support of the St Catharine's Homeless Project, supporting the Rock Trust seems a natural thing to do. We help the St Catharine's Homeless Project by assisting at the convent on a Friday evening; through our good cause collection in September and October; by the donation of tinned food at that time; and at Christmas, our congregation donates, small toiletries, hats, scarves and gloves (see photo on page 10).

THE ROCK TRUST works in Edinburgh and the Lothians with young people between the ages of sixteen to twenty-five, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Its role is to advise, educate and support young people, whom they help to build the personal skills and resources required to make a positive and healthy transition to adulthood.

THE ROCK TRUST also runs a number of projects, under the auspices of its 'Compass Project', which 'works with young people who have a history of being looked after, offending and/or homelessness'.

THE ROCK TRUST is looking for volunteers to decorate flats and maintain greenspaces. It also would like assistance with fundraising; social media; communications; community engagement; events and office administration. For more information go to <http://www.rocktrust.org/>

An old favourite also returns for three fantastic evenings, with pianist Richard Michael and his improvisational takes on all things piano from jazz to wherever! Concert pianist Peter Seivewright is our star performer on the last Saturday evening, with a jazz themed classical night, which will include Gershwin's Piano Concerto.

Sundown Swing will be back to swing you through the big band sounds from Miller to Basie, and for the whole three weeks London-based singer Gary Bland presents his tribute to singing great Johnny Mathis.

Lawrence Dunn will have several concerts including Vivaldi's Four Seasons and, in another first for the venue, will have two late evening Saturday screenings of the classic silent movie 'Nosferatu' with live musical accompaniment.

Also new to us this year are the Wayfarers from Australia. Under the guidance of one of Australia's leading musicians, Judith Clingan, there will be six shows with three performances each of 'The Little Prince' and 'So Good A Thing'.

So there we are, there really is something for everyone, and we look forward to welcoming you along, as either a volunteer, or audience member, or both. Here's to Fringe 2016 in our great central venue at St Mark's.

Full details of the programme at artSpace@StMarks will be available with the July edition of Waymark.

Calling all Families and Volunteers Children's Programme Picnic!

When: After the service on Sunday 5 June

Where: Prince's Street Gardens
or the church hall, if the weather is bad

Bring food to eat and to share, a picnic rug
and help the children say goodbye to Maud

For more information please email
Bláthnaid Quinn blathnaid@blathnaidquinn.com



illustration with acknowledgement to clipart

Mindfulness @ Lunchtime

meets at St Mark's at 12.15 pm on Tuesdays

Interbeing Buddhist Meditation

meets at St Mark's every Thursday, usually at 7.15 pm

For further information speak to Jon Bagust

www.facebook.com/mindfulnessatlunchtime

St Mark's Annual General Meeting

IDA SILKENAT, who was recently elected to Council and is the Children's Programme Co-ordinator, reports



On Sunday 8 May, after morning service and coffee and conversation, a sizeable contingent of the membership settled into the upper hall for St Mark's Annual General Meeting. While, as the name suggests, this is a yearly event, and always of importance and consequence, there was a sense that this one held special significance, as it was the first large official gathering since our beloved minister, Maud Robinson, announced she will be moving on to new opportunities at the end of July. The

meeting was held in two parts, the first consisting of the official business we are required to carry out as a charitable organisation, and the second, a discussion of how the congregation wishes to move forward in light of Maud's impending departure.

As for the official business, the minutes of last year's meeting were formally adopted swiftly and without much ado. Council presented the annual report, and shared that progress had been made on many previously identified priorities, including the hiring of a children's programme coordinator; investigation into what new technology might enhance the worship experience at St Mark's; and becoming more aware of the church's environmental impact. Brian Robertson presented the treasurer's report, explaining that formal statements are done by an accountant to be in line with charity law. In consulting with the accountant, he had queried items which did not make sense to him and was satisfied with the answers he received. His conclusion was that, 'We seem broadly to be breaking even . . . over the past few years.' Money is often an area in which these kinds of meetings can get hung up on nit picking, but all seemed to trust the competency of our elected leaders, and the annual report was adopted.

The next order of business was electing Council members. Brian Robertson announced his intention to step down as treasurer some time ago, but has graciously agreed to stay on for the time being, as no one has come forward to replace him, and we are going into a period of transition which will affect the work of the treasurer. Rob Whiteman will be stepping down from Council. Other current members, Mary McKenna, Margery MacKay, Ann Sinclair, David Wood, John Bagust and Kate Foggo agreed to stay on for another term, and Jane Aaronson and Ida Silkenat joined them as new Council members. The proposed Council was unanimously approved.

In other matters, one member asked if it might be appropriate for the congregation to take an active role in the current refugee crisis, especially of the plight of orphaned and unaccompanied refugee children. The suggestion was that we might do more than just raise money, but potentially taking up a lobbying position as was done on the issue of same sex-marriage. After some discussion about how best to choose an organisation to affiliate ourselves with for this cause, it was agreed that an open evening should be arranged at which interested members could discuss ideas about the issue, and how we, as a congregation, might have the most positive impact. James MacDonald Reid volunteered to organise such an event. This concluded the 'official business' portion of the meeting, and while my retelling of it makes it sound like a long and drawn-out process, all of this was accomplished within half an hour, proving that inefficiency is not the inevitable result of a large gathering of strong minds.

And thus the time had arrived to move on to the matter which seemed to lie at the heart of what had brought us together.

Mary began with a full acknowledgement of the 'immense loss' that the congregation will experience when Maud leaves us this summer. She also pointed out that change can bring with it new opportunities. Realistically we could be without a minister for some time as there are currently many more vacancies for Unitarian ministers in the UK than there are people qualified to fill them. Council has appointed a ministerial search committee which had met once at the time of the AGM. While the committee is tasked with finding suitable candidates to bring forward, it will ultimately be the members of the congregation who make the final decision about hiring a new minister.

Brian spent some time going over the financial implications of hiring a new full time minister. He explained that, to cover the projected expenses of paying the salary and other associated costs, the congregation needs to bring in an additional £1000 per month. This could be accomplished by more members contributing by standing order, and, by those in a position to do so, giving just a bit more. As always, it is understood that some members are unable to donate monetarily, but they contribute to the life and well-being of the church in other ways. As an employer, the congregation must be confident that we can make a long term commitment to a full time minister if we chose to hire one.

At this point the members present broke into small group discussions to consider the following three questions: Are you sufficiently confident that we will address our future income shortfall to commit to appoint a full-time minister? Do you think we should explore any part-time or shared ministerial arrangement? As we anticipate it may take some time to secure our next minister, should we seek to appoint an interim minister? Lively and engaged conversation ensued and, many were still considering these questions when it was time to draw the meeting to a close. Council collected the feedback generated from the questions. Mary assured everyone that, while these issues may have seemed to be rushed through on this particular occasion, this was only the beginning of what will be an ongoing conversation. The concluding vibe was that we, as a congregation, have the collective capacity to carry out our beloved community forward lovingly and responsibly through this time of transition.



Members of Council

from left to right, back row, Brian Robertson; David Wood; middle row, Mary McKenna; Margery MacKay; Ann Sinclair; Jon Bagust; front row, Kate Foggo, Jane Aaronson and Ida Silkenat.

Photo by Joan Cook

Thanks Giving 2015-2016

Once again, we give, and record, our thanks to all the members and friends who have helped during the year with the life and work of St Mark's.

Minister: Maud Robinson

Lay Celebrant: Joan Cook

Officers: Mary McKenna, Convener; Brian Robertson Treasurer; Margery MacKay, Secretary

Council: Jon Bagust, Kate Foggo, Ann Sinclair, Rob Whiteman, David Wood

Ministry Team: Maud Robinson, Jon Bagust (until April 2016), Tony Finlay, Rachael King, Elizabeth Welsh and everyone who has been responsible for, or involved in Sunday services

Management Committee: Ann Sinclair, Maciej Gutowski, and, ex officio, Mary McKenna, Brian Robertson

Venue Group: Ann Sinclair, Roger Hartley, Mary McKenna, Maud Robinson, Ida Silkenat, Rob Whiteman

Ministry Evaluation Group: Maud Robinson, Jean Lapsley, Ali McDonald, Bláthnaid Quinn,

Gift Aid (tax reclaim): B Jones

Acting Venue Manager: Ann Sinclair

Venue Treasurer: Lorri Scilini (until April 2015) Ida Silkenat

Fringe: Our Fringe Manager and Front-of-House Manager

Lettings: All volunteers who helped with front-of-house and box office during the Fringe, and those who attended public events throughout the year, assisting our paying guests, and looking after security

Caretaker: Euan McGlynn

Housekeeper: Kay Thornhill

Music: Ellen Beard, Heather and Leon Coates, Lesley Hartley, Jim Scott, Svetoslav (Slav) Todorov, Jack Westwell, Andrew Woodward

Editors, Waymark: Jane Aaronson and Eric McFadd (until July 2015). From October 2015, Jane Aaronson with assistance from Kirsty Murray

Website: Jon Bagust, Roger Hartley, Caroline Puck Graves (editing Podcasts), Maud Robinson, and at Essex Hall, James Barry and John Wilkinson (DUWIT Team)

Mindfulness@lunchtime: Jon Bagust and helpers

Theology Reading Group: all who facilitate this group

Poetry for Pleasure: Margery MacKay

Bring and Share Suppers: all who facilitate this group

Children's Programme: Ida Silkenat, Children's Programme Co-ordinator, Lynsey Bailey, Katherine Caldwell, Hugh Davidson, Lesley Hartley, Arden Hody, Rachael King, Kirsty Murray Blathnaid Quinn, Emily Rueggeberg, Susanne Urquhart and those on standby duty

Sunday Duties: all the Sunday stewards, peace candle, welcome and coffee people

Sunday Coffee (maintaining supplies): B Jones, Ann Sinclair

Flower Rota: Mary McKenna, and thanks to all who dedicated and arranged flowers

Duty Rotas: Jane Aaronson

Good Cause Arrangements: Jane Aaronson, Eric McFadd (until July 2015)

St Catharine's Homeless Project: All volunteers who help with this project on a Friday evenings, and who help in other ways during the year

Chennai Fund: Jon Bagust, Mike West

Care of indoor plants: members of children's programme

Waymark mailing: Minnie Masterman, Jane Aaronson, Jean Lapsley, Margaret Mackenzie, and others who gave occasional help

Representatives: 2016 Margery MacKay and Mary McKenna (General Assembly). Joan Cook, Margaret Evatt (until February 2016), Maud Robinson, Ann Sinclair (Scottish Unitarian Association). Jill Woolman ((Edinburgh Interfaith Association) Maud Robinson (Equality Network).

Edinburgh Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra

EMGO and Guests will be performing
their end of season concert

on
Friday 24 June
at St Mark's

Concert starts at 7-30pm (doors open 7-00pm)

Admission free, but donation invited

The concert will present a new and attractive programme of music. There will be music from around the world and from across the years. To add to evening's variety, there will be performances by a number of ensembles as well as by the full orchestra

Poetry Reading for Pleasure Group

will meet on
Sunday 12 June at 12.45

you are all very welcome to come and share
some favourite poems

*want to know more?
please speak to Margery MacKay*



illustration with acknowledgement to clipart

THIS MONTH IN ST MARK'S

Most events in this diary are open to everyone, and we look forward to seeing you at them.

New courses and groups start up each year, and you are all invited to join. If you are interested in arranging an event, or starting a group at St Mark's, speak to Maud Robinson (Minister) maudrobinson@googlemail.com

| | | | |
|----------|----|-------------------|--|
| Saturday | 4 | 11am - 4pm | Church Worship Workshop (more information on page 3) |
| Sunday | 5 | after the service | Children's Programme Picnic (more information on page 7) |
| Saturday | 11 | 11am | Bereavement Group |
| Sunday | 12 | 1pm | Poetry Reading for Pleasure (more information on page 9) |
| Saturday | 18 | 7.30pm | Gary Ryan Classical Guitar Concert (tickets £12, concessions £8) |
| Sunday | 19 | 10.15-10.45am | Chalice Singing Group rehearsal |
| Friday | 24 | 7.30pm | Edinburgh Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra (more information on page 9) |
| Sunday | 26 | 10-10.30am | Chalice Singing Group rehearsal |

Dates in July for your diary

July

| | | | |
|----------|----|---------------|---|
| Saturday | 2 | 11.00am | Waymark mailing at various venues, email ja@ednet.co.uk |
| Sunday | 31 | 2.00pm-5.00pm | Farewell Party for Rev Maud Robinson (see page 3, and below for more details) |

**Farewell Party
for
Rev Maud Robinson
on 31 July
from
2.00pm to 5.00pm
at
Bryan Wade's home
34 Inverleith Terrace
Edinburgh, EH3 5NU**

*for more details speak to Mary McKenna,
and read Mary's article on page 3*

SUNDAYS IN ST MARK'S

Services are at 11.00 in the church, with coffee and conversation in the upper hall afterwards. Children sit with their parents for the opening part of the service, and then follow their own programme. The good cause in June is The Rock Trust. See page 7 for more details.

Sunday 5 June

Rev Maud Robinson

Not In My Name

As our Muslim neighbours prepare for the beginning of the fasting month of Ramadan, it is good for us to reflect on the negative perceptions of Islam which have taken hold due to the actions of some who claim to represent Islam.

Sunday 12 June

Rev Maud Robinson

The Cosmic Calendar

In order to go through life, do we need to fool ourselves into thinking we're a bigger part of the universe than we really are? Does the vastness of time and space make human life seem more insignificant, or more precious?

Sunday 19 June

Jill Woolman & Tom Stamper

Flower Communion

We join together for our annual celebration of Flower Communion, reflecting on what we give and receive within our Beloved Community. Each attendee is invited to bring one, or a few, flowers (garden or wild flowers, if you can).

Rev Maud Robinson is on annual leave

Sunday 26 June

Joan Cook

What has the General Assembly done for us?

An overview of the GA. What has the GA done for us? What it has done for me?

Rev Maud Robinson is on annual leave

Sunday 3 July

Rev Maud Robinson

Let's Settle this God Thing Once and for All

An ambitious proposal from writer, Anne Lamott. Let's give it a try and see how we get on!

St Mark's AGM

*from left to right, Margery MacKay,
Secretary, Mary McKenna, Convener,
Brian Robertson, Treasurer*



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