

waymark



unitarians in edinburgh

Volume 52 Number 1
Feb / Mar 2020

**The soft blue sea turns black, deep, and silent,
The sky darkens early after grey, damp days,
Winter is upon us and nature casts its shadows to renew,
Critters coorie in, wrapping their tails around them,
While naked branches bend and snap in the whipping wind,
Heavy coats and woolly scarves, hot drinks and fires,
Then while drawing the curtains early to keep the dark out
A soft blast of colour spreads across the sky,
A reminder that love, warmth and beauty are not forgotten.**

Image by Kris Calder, words by Christina Harper

A Very Warm Welcome to St Mark's

from Rev Peter Fairbrother



Climate crisis — our response?

Bushfires, melting icecaps, flash floods... The increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions across the globe is relentless. Scientific evidence tells us that the world is warming, that biodiversity is diminishing, and that many of the earth's resources are critically depleted.

So how do we respond? During February and March our time together in community explores the relationship we have with nature, and the spiritual and ecological challenges of living with and addressing climate change. Doubtless, there are many questions and concerns... Can global warming be halted and/or reversed? Have we past the point of no return? How shall we live? What shall we do? What does it all mean for us, our children, and for future generations? I hope you'll join me and a host of guest speakers as we seek to be with what is arguably our greatest challenge — the survival of the planet.

Wishing you a brave and courageous start to this new year.

With love,

Peter

Unitarians in Edinburgh

St Mark's Unitarian Church, 7 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2DP
t: 0131 659 7600 • e: enquire@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk • www.edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Minister

Rev Peter Fairbrother • e: minister@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk
Available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Sundays — 10am-6pm

Celebrant

Joan Cook • e: marriagecelebrant@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Convener

Mary McKenna • e: stmarksconvener@gmail.com

Secretary

Margery Mackay • e: stmarkssecretary@btinternet.com

Treasurer

Ann Sinclair • e: stmarksunitariantreasurer@gmail.com

Church Council

Jane Aaronson, Katie Brown, Joan Cook, Ailsa Davidson, Lesley Hartley, Margery Mackay, Mary McKenna, Hugh McNeil, Ann Sinclair

Key Contacts

Volunteer coordination: Jane Aaronson • e: ja@ednet.co.uk

Children's programme coordinator: Sara Robertson • e: stmarkschildrensprogramme@gmail.com

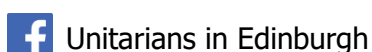
Pianist: Ailsa Aikenhead • e: enquire@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Church flowers: Mary McKenna • e: stmarksconvener@gmail.com

Waymark editorial team: Kris Calder & Christina Harper • e: editor@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Website and social media: Annabel Treshansky • e: webmaster@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Venue bookings: Ann Sinclair • e: venue@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk



Future Sunday Services at St Mark's

Services are at 11am in the church, with coffee and conversation in the hall afterwards. Children sit with their parents for the opening part of the service, and then follow their own programme.

2 Feb - Awakening

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother

Imbolc, in the Celtic calendar, is a time to celebrate new beginnings. Today we welcome the coming of Spring and the promise of renewal.

This is the first in a collection of services held during February and March exploring our connection with nature and the climate crisis.

9 Feb - The Secret Life of Rocks

Service led by Rev Kim Atherton-Dow, St Mark's Earth-based Paths Exploration Group

In awe of nature, Kim leads us in exploration of different indigenous traditions from the four directions, and in understanding animism, the belief that objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence.

16 Feb - Time to Act

Service led by Lesley Hartley, with Alison Johnstone MSP

Alison Johnstone, an MSP for the Lothian region and Co-leader of the Scottish Greens, speaks to us about the Scottish Parliament's response to climate crisis and the continued challenges we all face in taking action to avoid environmental catastrophe.

23 Feb - The Lost Words

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother

"All over the country, there are words disappearing from children's lives. These are the words of the natural world — Dandelion, Otter, Bramble and Acorn, all gone. The rich landscape of wild imagination and wild play is rapidly fading from our children's minds." — from 'The Lost Words' by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris. Today we honour our precious, personal connection to nature, appreciating its power and importance in our everyday lives.

1 Mar - Green City Thinking

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother, with Councillor Gavin Corbett and Elaine Brown

City of Edinburgh Councillor Gavin Corbett, Scottish Green Party, outlines the Council's approach to climate crisis and how each of us can contribute to efforts to better care for the planet. We are also joined by Elaine Brown, the Director for Edinburgh Remakery, our 'good cause' charity for February and March, who speaks to us about this innovative recycling initiative.

8 Mar - #EachforEqual

Service led by Katie Brown

"An equal world is a peaceful world." The World Health Organisation has identified that gender equality is the number one predictor of peace. Creating a world based on gender justice means building 'collective power' rather than 'dominating power'. Making big change can feel like a tall order, but we can all contribute to actively challenging gender stereotypes and celebrating women's achievements. Today Katie leads us in exploring this year's International Women's Year's theme - equality for all.

15 Mar - A Service of Liberal Jewish Worship

Service led by Rabbi Mark Solomon and Sukkat Shalom

Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh's Liberal Jewish Community, meet regularly at St. Mark's. This morning we're delighted to welcome Rabbi Mark and members of the community in leading our time together in worship.

22 Mar - Climate Emergency

Service led by Lesley Hartley, with Dr Morris Bradley

How do we cope as governments continue to fail to stop world-wide destruction? Dr Morris Bradley, who has run successful U3A (University of the Third Age) groups on the climate emergency for nearly two years, shares his insights and perspectives.

29 Mar - Rewild Yourself

Service led by Rev Peter Fairbrother

To close our collection of services exploring our connection to nature and the climate crisis, we give thought to simple and accessible ways of getting closer to nature (our own and the worlds around us). Or, to put it in the words of author Simon Barnes, we'll spend time looking at ways for making "hidden things more visible".

Lighting the Chalice

St Mark's member Alastair McDonald lit our Chalice at the Blue Christmas service on 15th December with these words.

On Friday morning as I walked to my train past the WHSmith newspaper stand in Haymarket station, I saw two newspapers next to each other. The Daily Mail headline said simply "Rejoice!" - a word that sometimes pops up at Christmas time in connection with the nativity story. Next to it, the Guardian carried something along the lines of "Kind of blue: UK comes to terms with election result". Ah, I thought, here are my words for Blue Christmas.

The Guardian article went on to describe the sadness that many left-leaning voters are experiencing after Thursday's vote. It talked through the reaction to bereavement, a bereavement for ideas and dreams that will no longer come to pass. In this general election, those on the losing side may feel worse than usual, as a particular idea - the hope of remaining in the European Union - was at stake. For a bit more than half the electorate, a dream has been lost and irreversibly so. As with many bereavements, the losing political parties are now going through stages of denial, anger, bargaining and depression before hopefully reaching acceptance in the coming months.

Although the circumstances may feel unique, perhaps all newspapers should carry that same headline at every vote. Why? In almost all statistical counts, most people feel loss after a general election in the UK. Let me run through some of the numbers to prove it to you:

- of the 31,829,630 voters, 17,863,065 people now have a government that they did cast a vote for. This is normal for our political system and not peculiar to this election.
- of the nearly 1 million members of UK political parties - that is, the type of people who knocked on doors and delivered leaflets in the cold - about 80% will have worked on Friday morning feeling disappointed. The numbers fluctuate depend on who is the winning party, but a majority of activists always lose out.
- of the 3,322 candidates that stood in the election, 2,672 of them lost on Thursday. Again, this is fairly typical.

With a more human perspective, perhaps we should cast our thoughts to the narrowest marginal loser on the UK mainland, the former MP for Bury North, James Frith, who lost his seat by only 105 votes. On this Sunday, no doubt Mr Frith is re-running the campaign in his head, wondering what if he had knocked on a few more doors, what if he had gone to a few more summer fetes and what if he had visited just a couple more primary schools...an abundance of "what ifs" and "what could have beens".

Perhaps he and his local party colleagues - and those of us who are feeling blue right now - might want to look for inspiration from North East Fife. At the election in 2017, Elizabeth Riches lost by two - that's right two - votes. Rather than hiding away, Ms Riches continues to give public service, most notably as a Trustee of the East Neuk Festival. Her public service was recognised with an MBE last year. And her party in North East Fife? Galvanised and motivated once more, Thursday saw their candidate Wendy Chamberlain win with a majority of 1,315.

So today I'm going to light the peace candle for losers in elections. The losers - eventually - accept losing as an unpleasant but necessary corollary for us all having a choice in a democracy. I light the candle too for those that came so close but missed out, and hope that after their Blue Christmas, they dust themselves down and emerge with their commitment to public service renewed and refreshed.

2020 Focus

Sunday Services During the Year Ahead

The future's bright... the future's themed!

Rev Peter Fairbrother explains: "Something that the ministry team has been giving increasing thought to is how to build greater cohesiveness and continuity into our worship programme, whilst retaining the diverse, eclectic range of services that is much valued and appreciated. In December we trialled lightly linking a number of services by shared theme — that of 'Blue Christmas'. This was well received, and so our intention in 2020 is to connect small clusters of services at points during the year in a similar way. Of course, each service will continue to hold its own uniqueness and completeness, but we hope that building greater linkage between offerings adds extra richness to our spiritual journeying, to our sacred time together.

Broadly, we'll be holding four themes during the year ahead. The first, which spans the period of this Waymark, concerns our connection with nature and response to **climate crisis**.

Our second theme is **identity**. During June and July we'll delve into our perceptions of who-we-think-we-are, how this affects us and our relationships, and the challenges and opportunities for growth and development arising from re-examining the self.

In August, we celebrate **all things festival** with Sunday services involving contributions from Fringe performers and surprise guests.

And in November, we take time in **remembrance** with services that provide space for us to be with loss and bereavement.

Along the way there'll be the return of some well loved favourites: our **flower communion** service; **Edinburgh Pride** service; and following its well-received introduction last year, a further '**Blue Christmas**' service is planned. Alongside, possibly a few resurrections... I hope 2020 marks the return of the **St Mark's Panto!** I'm serious. ("Oh no you're not!" "Oh yes I am!") If this excites you, or frightens you, let's talk!

As Unitarians we have a proud history of openness, welcome, and connection to other faith communities. I'm delighted that we'll be joined in March by Rabbi Mark Solomon and our friends in Sukkat Shalom for a service of Liberal Jewish worship, and in May by our Quaker friends, providing an introduction to their faith. A Sufi-inspired service of universal worship, led by local interfaith minister Rev Kim Atherton-Dow, is also planned for May.

Finally, further to the success of our Autumn programme of community events, a quick mention that a Spring programme of special events is being planned. More on this next issue. As always, please share your feedback and ideas with both me and members of the ministry team on the services and events you'd like to see, and if you'd like to participate in their planning and/or delivery.

As always, doors wide open."



We can each play our part in better caring for the environment. Recycling contributes to this.

At St Mark's we are now recycling **paper**, **glass**, and **mixed packaging** — you can find the recycling bins in the kitchen.

Please use them. Thank you!



St Mark's Good Causes

An important part of our community is our commitment to supporting local charities. As most of you know, we give to six 'good causes' each year through retiring collections following the Sunday service.

Listed opposite are the amounts raised for all our good causes last year. A huge thank-you to all who contributed.

Money Raised for Good Causes in 2019

Chennai	£1,644.95
Rape Crisis Edinburgh	£130.00
Edinburgh Interfaith Association	£180.00
Turning Point Scotland	£120.00
St Catharine's Homeless Project	£535.00
Waverley Care	£214.95
Women's League National Project – Smile Train	£310.00



Among the six good causes for 2020 detailed here are our three long-term, long-standing commitments: St Mark's partner church in Chennai, India; St Catharine's Homeless Project; and a charity choice made by the Unitarian Women's League. The remaining three good causes were drawn from suggestions proposed by you, the community of St Mark's, with Minnie and Peter (*see picture on left*) once again doing the honours at our family Christmas service on 22 December.

Chennai Unitarian Christian Church

depends on the support we can give through the 'Chennai Fund' for their unique and wonderful social outreach projects, which benefit the underprivileged people and children of the church,



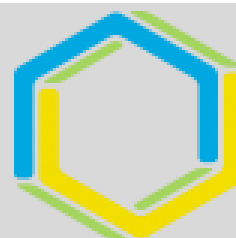
and the children of the Unitarian school in the Dalit village of Ammanambakkam.

Once a year we forward money from the Chennai Fund to cover specific projects identified by the Chennai congregation.

In recent years the projects have included providing additional space to start a daily afternoon/evening school for the local children; providing sewing machines for teaching tailoring skills to the young women of the church; providing teachers for the evening and tailoring classes; providing essential clothes and bedding material for those church members in greatest need; and providing scholarships for some children to attend schools and colleges.

The **Edinburgh Remakery** provide support and help to those in the community who need it the most. All profits go back into pursuing their ongoing mission of making repair skills and education accessible to everyone and anyone.

They also provide additional services and support to other members of the community through their #RemakeADifference projects, which last year included running free monthly workshops to teach students and members of the public how to make their own sustainable, zero waste and reusable sanitary pads out of recycled fabric; working with the Edinburgh Council's Refugee Resettlement Programme to provide free IT equipment to vulnerable individuals and families in the community; and working closely with Social Bite to offer work placements to those who have come out of homelessness.



EDINBURGH
REMAKERY

ses 2020



Unitarian Women's League

The British League of Unitarian and other Liberal Christian Women

The Unitarian Women's League aims to quicken the religious life of our churches and to bring Unitarian and other Liberal Christian women into closer fellowship. St Mark's good cause supports the Women's League in their Annual Project, which aims to raise over £5,000 for a nominated charity.



St. Catharine's Mercy Centre

St Catharine's Convent Homeless Project offers friendship and practical support to homeless and disadvantaged people. They provide morning and evening meals, toilet and shower facilities, and perhaps, more importantly, a warm welcome, a listening ear and a place to call 'Home'.

The project is used by up to 200 people a day. These range from long-term homeless people who are sleeping rough or staying in hostels around the city, to old age pensioners who bus in from their flats in the Edinburgh estates for a meal and some company.

SCOTTISH FAITHS ACTION FOR REFUGEES

Offering hospitality to strangers is a common requirement of many different faith traditions.

In recent years in Scotland many faith groups and individual members have lived and worked alongside refugees and asylum seekers, often in partnership with members of other faiths and with voluntary and statutory agencies.

In many places at a local level faith communities in Scotland have a degree of experience and understanding of the issues.

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees have been active in areas of refugee integration since 2015, supporting campaigning calls for changes to the UK asylum system, engaged in work around resettlement programmes and raising awareness about the ongoing international situation facing people forced to leave their homes.

The Kilbrandon Children's Fund (Edinburgh) was set up to relieve hardship and distress in cases which are referred to the City of Edinburgh Children's Panel, by helping families in need to purchase essential items that would benefit a child's development and welfare.

The Kilbrandon Fund also give small grants for a wide range of activities and items to improve the lives of children who are under the care of the local authority because of family circumstances. The grants are used to pay for sports equipment, holiday camps, clubs fees, school trips, musical instruments or other things which contribute to the children's wellbeing.

Volunteer Opportunity! Volunteer Opportunity! Volunteer Opportunity!

Many of you will be aware of the Harvest and Christmas collections at St Mark's for the **St Catharine's Homeless Project**. You may not be aware, however, that every Friday two members of the St Mark's congregation assist the Project in serving an evening meal to their clients.

Brian Robertson explains: "Some of us, such as myself, have been on the rota since the start (2011) and I have found it a very satisfying way of giving practical help. Unfortunately the rota is now looking a bit slim as people and their circumstances move on. As a result, this is an appeal to newer members and younger members of the congregation to consider joining us. The commitment is one Friday every 4-5 weeks, depending on rota numbers. Volunteers assemble at St Catharine's at about 5.15pm, ready for the 5.30pm start. Tasks include serving food, pouring tea, clearing and re-setting tables, or helping in the kitchen. We are always struck by how mannerly and polite the clients are. Service stops at 6.30pm prompt, and after clearing up, we assemble in Sister Aelred's office for prayers. There is no obligation to go along to this part but I do, and it is a very restful few minutes which makes you feel part of the whole thing. Please consider joining us."

If you would like to join the rota for St Catharine's, speak to **Brian Robertson** or **Elaine Edwards**, or you can email Elaine at elaine.m.edwards@virginmedia.com.

Chennai Unitarian Christian Church

Jon Bagust provides a snapshot of the community at one of St Mark's good causes, the Chennai Unitarian Christian Church in South India.

St Mark's partner church acts as a social hub for local people in Chennai, and is especially welcoming to children and young adults, with food being provided for them after Sunday services.

Harrison, the Minister in Chennai, told Jon that during one particular week last year, no less than 90 local street-children attended 4 hours each day for moral education classes. A separate youth programme also organises several social trips outwith Chennai.



Children attending education classes – the cost of teachers and teaching materials are covered by St Mark's 'Chennai Fund'



Dancing at the village school

The Spring festival of Pongal is a time for merriment in South India, with church members travelling to the Unitarian village school in Amanabakkum. The festival programme includes the giving of presents, singing, dancing, and the drawing and painting of 'Kolams', which are geometrical patterns the children decorate the school compound with. Food is cooked for and enjoyed by the village children, and all is very merry!



Drawing Kolams



Preparing food

Find out more about Chennai Unitarian Christian Church on St Mark's website
www.edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk/our-partner-church-in-india

Unitarians on TV!

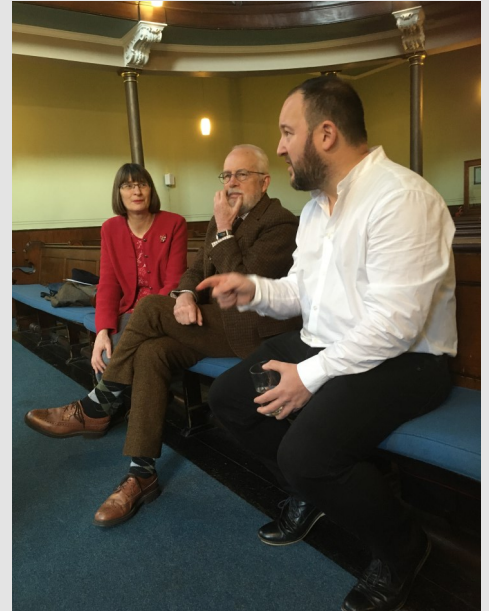
In December last year, St Mark's members Jane Aaronson, Margery MacKay, James MacDonald Reid and Eli Roth, along with Rev Peter Fairbrother, met with Lynn Rusk from **That's TV Scotland** to publicise St Mark's '**Blue Christmas**' initiative which ran throughout December. The news bulletin was broadcast on 12 December and at points during the festive season, and was also posted on That's TV Scotland's Facebook page, where it can still be viewed.



Eli Roth (front) with Lynn Rusk



Lynn Rusk from That's TV Scotland with Rev Peter Fairbrother



L to R: Margery MacKay, James MacDonald Reid, Rev Peter Fairbrother. Photo Jane Aaronson

Jane was particularly impressed with the journalist & photographer, Lynn Rusk, who arrived carrying all the camera equipment herself — no camera crew! Lynn said that she just carried all the equipment around with her on the bus.

Celebrations at St Mark's!

A very special welcome from St Mark's to Catriona Mairi Maciver.

Catriona was born on 16 January weighing a very healthy 6lb 8oz.

Proud parents Kirsty Murray and Ruairidh Maciver are over the moon!

Love and blessings to the family from all at St Mark's.



In and around St Mark's

St Mark's Games Night!

Friday **20 March** from **6pm-10pm** at **St Mark's**

Come and get your game on! We'll have the tables and chairs set up, snacks and beverages set out, and some favourite games to play. Come along and play an old favourite or try a new game! This is just for fun (and maybe a few prizes) and to create a bit of community joy. Invite friends of all ages.

To help us know how many are coming, to say you can loan us your favourite game, or to find out more information contact Eli Roth
e: eli.roth.personal@gmail.com

The Bereavement Support Group

The Bereavement Support Group offers support to anyone suffering a loss through bereavement, separation or estrangement.

Saturdays **15 February & 21 March** at 11am

For more information contact Jane Aaronson
e: ja@ednet.co.uk

Poetry & Prose Reading for Pleasure

Come and share some favourite poems or prose.

Sundays **9 February & 15 March** at 1pm

For more information contact Margery MacKay
e: stmarkssecretary@btinternet.com

Mindfulness @ Lunchtime

Every Tuesday at 12.15pm

For more information contact Jon Bagust
f: mildfulnessatlunchtime

Soup & Social

Join us for a bowl of heartening soup, some nice bread, tea or coffee, and some good company.

Wednesdays **12 February & 4 March** at 12noon

For more information contact Rev Peter Fairbrother
e: minister@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Earth-based Paths Exploration Group

A sacred space for informal discussion of topics related to Earth-based traditions.

Wednesdays at 12.30pm

19 February

The Wheel of the Year: the changing of the seasons and cycles in nature

18 March

Deities: gods and goddesses and saints, oh my!

For more information contact Eli Roth
e: eli.roth.personal@gmail.com

Heart-Circle — Be by Candlelight

Wednesdays **19 February & 18 March** at 6.30pm

A safe, private space to honour what we're with.

For more information contact Rev Peter Fairbrother
e: minister@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Edinburgh Wild Geese Sangha (Interbeing Buddhist Meditation)

Every Thursday at 7.15pm

If you have any photographs, articles or news you would like to share in Waymark, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Just send an email to our editorial team (Christina and Kris) at:

editor@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Waymark Deadlines

13 March — April / May issue

15 May — June / July issue

17 July — August / September issue

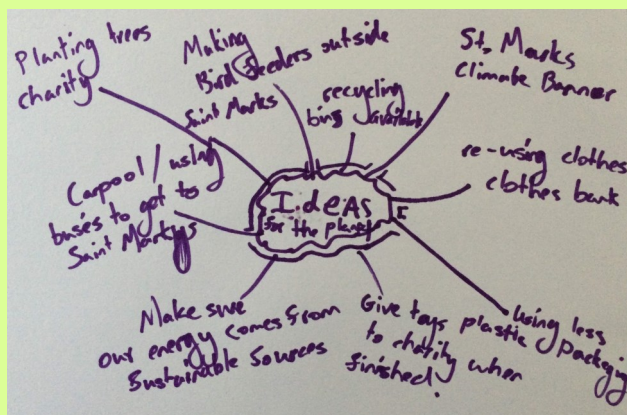
11 September — October / November issue

13 November — December / January issue

Children's Corner with Sara Robertson

Hello from the Children's Programme!

On 22 December, the theme for our Family Service was "Celebrating the Winter Solstice". The children acted out the battle between the animals of the night and day, with the realisation that a balance between the two was needed. They made protest posters for the animals to campaign for their preferred time of day.



Recently in the children's sessions we have been looking at that ways we as individuals and as a church community can help the environment. We will be exploring this in more detail through February.

From March, we will be hearing stories and doing activities from the UUA social justice themed curriculum — Sing to the Power. The children's session on **Sunday 8 March** will be a group outing to the **National Museum of Scotland**. We hope you can make it.

February Theme - Climate Change

- 2 Feb - What is Climate Change?
- 9 Feb - What is a Carbon Footprint?
- 16 Feb - Carbon Audit
- 23 Feb - Time for Action?

March Theme - Sing to the Power

- 1 Mar - The Power of Earth
- 8 Mar - Group Outing
- 15 Mar - The Power of Roots
- 22 Mar - The Power of Growth
- 29 Mar - The Power of Stillness

I am stepping down from the role of Children's Programme Coordinator as of the end of March after two years in the role. I would like to thank all the children, parents and everyone else at St Mark's for making me and my family feel so welcome. I hope to be an active member of the community for some time to come.

Children's Programme Coordinator

St Mark's would like to appoint a **Children's Programme Coordinator** to continue the development of the spiritual programme for children and young people. This role will support the current programme leaders, parents, children and young people who participate in the programme and promote St Mark's as a family-friendly community.

This is a self-employed position and subject to a PVG check

5 hours per week **£12 per hour**

For more information and a detailed job description please email Lesley Hartley at lesley.j.hartley@gmail.com

The image features a close-up of dark, silhouetted thorny branches against a soft, hazy sunset sky. The branches are intricate, with several sharp thorns visible. A few small, round, dark fruits or buds are attached to the branches. The sky transitions from a pale yellow near the horizon to a light blue at the top. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

“If the only prayer you say in your whole life is **thank you**, that would suffice.”

Meister Eckhart

Image by Philippa Crawford

Waymark printed by Crawford Print & Design Ltd, 25 Rodney Street, Edinburgh EH7 4EL t: 0131 556 1234