



# Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society

The Newsletter of the Oxford Unitarian Congregation



## Services April-July 2025

### APRIL SERVICE THEME: *Joy*

- SUNDAY 6th APRIL:** Rev Sue Sinnamon, Chapel Society Chair
- SUNDAY 13th APRIL:** Rev Edie Campbell, Interfaith Minister
- SUNDAY 20th APRIL:** Dr Jacqueline Woodman, Chapel Society member
- SUNDAY 27th APRIL:** Carol Chambers, Horsham Unitarians

### MAY SERVICE THEME: *Imagination*

- SUNDAY 4th MAY:** Rev Dr Claire MacDonald, HMC Chaplain
- SUNDAY 11th MAY:** Vince McCully (via Zoom), GA Past President
- SUNDAY 18th MAY:** Rev Jenny Miller, Interfaith Minister
- SUNDAY 25th MAY:** Prof Ruth Baer, Chapel Society member

### JUNE SERVICE THEME: *Freedom*

- SUNDAY 1st JUNE:** Rev Dr Claire MacDonald, HMC Chaplain
- SUNDAY 8th JUNE:** Dr Michael Ahanchian, Chapel Society member
- SUNDAY 15th JUNE:** Gavin Lloyd, Chapel Society member
- SUNDAY 22nd JUNE:** Mary Jones, John Pounds Chapel, Portsmouth
- SUNDAY 29th JUNE:** Alan Ruston, Watford Unitarians

### JULY: *Theme free*

- SUNDAY 6th JULY:** Steve Hodges, Chapel Society member
- SUNDAY 13th JULY:** Rev Susie Courtault, Interfaith Minister
- SUNDAY 20th JULY:** Michael Garner, artist
- SUNDAY 27th JULY:** Bert Clough, Chapel Society member

### MONTHLY DISCUSSION GROUP

The themed discussion group takes place once a month after the service, in person and online. Dates will be announced in the weekly bulletin.

For those who would like to attend Sunday services online the Zoom link for 2025 is: 879 7913 6210

Weekly updates available on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/OxfordUnitarians](http://www.facebook.com/OxfordUnitarians)

Service listings and recordings of previous services available via links to '[Sunday Services](#)', and '[Past services](#)' on the Oxford Unitarians website. There is also a '[Newsletter](#)' link to our quarterly newsletters.

A service is held each Sunday at 11 am in the chapel of Harris Manchester College, Mansfield Road, OX1 3TD. Visitors always welcome! Services are also live-streamed on Zoom.



Sue Sinnamon  
Chair



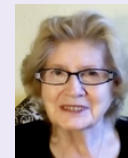
Christopher Whitehouse  
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Julie Page  
Hon. Secretary



Charles Roberts



Kay Wardle



Ruth Baer



Holly Templer



Jacky Woodman  
Worship Group Chair



Michael Zand Ahanchian

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## Trustees' Report - Sue Sinnamon

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**Sue Sinnamon – Chair**  
**Christopher Whitehouse – Acting Treasurer**  
**Julie Page – Hon. Secretary**  
**At large members:**  
**Ruth Baer                      Kay Wardle**  
**Charles Roberts              Holly Templer**  
**Michael Zand Ahanchian**

We have had three areas of focus in the past two months. The first area was developing a job description for a part-time minister for the Chapel Society. The second area was copyright protection for streamed music and hymns, and the third area was moving back into the refurbished chapel.

We recruited a team to look at the ministerial survey results compiled by the trustees. They were asked to consider which of the tasks of ministry were important to the community. We had a strong response to the survey from our membership, so we felt confident in the results. A description was submitted to the trustees at the February meeting and accepted with some edits. The description emphasises worship planning with the Worship Group, rites of passage, pastoral care, leadership development and outreach to the community. Funding the position is in process.

Our Hon. Treasurer, Christopher Whitehouse, took on the job of ensuring we comply with copyright on streaming music and hymns. Working with Harris Manchester College, we have acquired a PRS Digital Music Licence for Worship which allows us the necessary licences to stream music. Christopher produced a list of hymns from our two hymnals indicating which ones we can use online and which ones we cannot stream or display their words. (If necessary, the Zoom hosts can mute the live feed during the service.) We ask the service leaders to consider this when they make their selection of hymns.

Finally, we have moved back into the refurbished chapel. The space is lighter and brighter and welcoming, and the sound is vastly improved. We are still working out the best way to stream the services and fixing minor inconveniences. Committee member Holly Templer represents us on the newly formed Chapel Group, led by HMC's Chaplain Rev Dr Claire MacDonald, to consider the interests of all chapel users.

We have hosted several events after church with the Social Justice Group. We are considering offering lunch one Sunday a month, as we find it promotes fellowship, and when new attendees join us we can get to know them better.

The Trustees are a hard-working group and a pleasure to serve with on the committee. We have most of our activities represented among the trustees and the group is representative of the congregation.

**Sue Sinnamon, MCOCS Chair**



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## From the Worship Group - Jacky Woodman

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The Worship Group consists of Chapel Society members who work collaboratively with the congregation, preachers and the committee in planning and delivering worship that is inclusive and welcoming. Our Sunday service leaders are drawn from both our own Chapel Society members as well as external speakers, both lay and clergy, from a variety of faith traditions.

The *Soul Matters* resource packs have now become a regular feature of our congregational life, with the monthly themes providing continuity and an opportunity for members to deepen their engagement with the theme if they wish. The current season from September 2024 to June 2025 has the overarching theme of *The Practices of Our Faith*, with a focus on how Unitarianism is a lived faith with a commitment to "deeds not creeds." The remaining themes until June 2025 are:

***The Practice of... Joy (April), Imagination (May), and Freedom (June)***

July and August of each year are 'theme-free' months when we intentionally explore more flexible formats of spiritual practice and worship formats. If you would like to lead a service or facilitate collaborative worship during these summer months (or at any other time) please contact the Worship Group through: [OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com](mailto:OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com). We would love to hear from you.

We are very grateful to the Chaplain of Harris Manchester College, Rev Dr Claire MacDonald, who helped to ensure that our recent return to the newly refurbished chapel went smoothly, and made us welcome at the college's mid-week services. Claire also arranged for visiting academics to deliver services for the Chapel Society during their time in Oxford. This led to memorable Sunday services with Rev Chris Hudson from Belfast, Dr Marc Roscoe Loustau from Boston USA, and John Deane O'Keeffe from Ireland. Claire will again be leading our worship on 4th May and 1st June. We continue our commitment to the inclusion of service leaders from different faith traditions by inviting three interfaith ministers in the next few months: Rev Edie Campbell (13th April), Rev Jenny Miller (18th May) and Rev Susie Courtault (13th July).

On 11th May and 29th June there will be "fun runs" in the centre of Oxford making access to the college more difficult. On these days the chapel will still be open as usual and a service conducted on Zoom will be viewable in chapel. These Zoom-led services also provide an opportunity to invite service leaders from further afield, and on 11th May we look forward to a service led by our General Assembly Past President, Vince McCully.

We do not have a minister or any paid staff to organise or support our worship services, so it is very much a team effort by our volunteers. If you would like to help in any way, including stewarding, reading in services or co-leading a service, then please email:

[OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com](mailto:OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com)

We look forward to welcoming everyone, whether in person or online, and trust that you will find a sacred space that is warm and welcoming.

**Jacky Woodman**

**On behalf of the Worship Group**



## In Memory of Margaret Pelling

Margaret, a member of our Chapel Society for almost 40 years, died in the Katharine House Hospice near Banbury on 16 February this year at the age of 76.

From a Cardiff council estate, Margaret was the first member of her family to go to university (on a scholarship to study at Oxford) ... graduated with a double First in physics ... was awarded a DPhil in theoretical astrophysics .... and eventually became a senior civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry.

But her friends in the congregation knew her as a poet who was passionate about the sea and the stars ... as a novelist who created whole worlds and lived within them ... as a loving wife and a proud mother and grandmother, with an unflappable faith in her family ... and in her final months as a source of inspiration, facing her own impending death with a total lack of self-pity and a refusal to be defined by her medical condition. She would meet each setback with her characteristic wry laugh and a shrug of the shoulders.

We always loved to hear Margaret musing about whatever book she was writing at the time: she did meticulous background research and would describe her characters to us in great detail, even down to the collar worn by a particular French admiral, a prisoner of war after the battle of Trafalgar. She simply had to get it right. Perhaps this was a manifestation of her Autism - the diagnosis of which (at the age of 70) she welcomed, because many aspects of her past finally made sense to her.

Her husband's love was a source of huge stability throughout Margaret's life, as was her love of nature. Her custom of noticing the small daily changes as she walked in green spaces was a mindful practice that we could all follow. Her calm strength and resilience in coping with her double cancer diagnosis, and all the daunting treatment procedures that she had to undergo, were an inspiring example of how to cope with stress and uncertainty.

Margaret's Unitarian faith was central to her life. She used to say that she had no proof of the existence of God, but – as she wrote in the chapel newsletter a few years ago – *“I am intensely aware of the creative spirit immanent in the natural world, and I find that my life works better when I am living it in accordance with the idea that there is a ‘mysterious presence, source of all’ – a ground of our being, a source of vitality and love which I might as well call God.”*

Margaret will be much missed. We give thanks for her life, and thanks to her husband Chris and their family for their devoted support for her, right to the end.

**(A tribute by Catherine Robinson and other friends of Margaret)**

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## Dipping a toe into Summer School - Julie Page

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Since 2020 Hucklow Summer School has offered an online variant alongside its familiar residential format, providing live-streaming of the daily themed talks with an engagement group on Zoom. Attending Summer School online is a good option for anyone who wants to try out the Summer School experience before committing to a whole week away from home.

I had heard many others talk positively about their experiences at Summer School – Mary Jenkins attended online in 2023 and Jacky Woodman attended in person in 2019, describing it as "life-changing." So I decided to dip a toe in and signed up for the online Summer School in August 2024.

Last year the engagement group for online participants was led by Rev Jane Blackall, minister with Kensington Unitarians, and Rita Woditsch. The format was like a longer version of a Heart and Soul circle, with opportunities for deeper reflection and sharing, and a short burst of journaling. Jane and Rita were kind and skilful facilitators, enabling the group to run smoothly with a friendly atmosphere where it was safe to share. Online participants are encouraged to attend the themed talk every morning before the engagement group starts, but this is not compulsory. The video of each themed talk is available on YouTube later each day for anyone to watch. (Links to this year's daily talks will again be posted in our weekly email bulletin.) I also attended the live-streamed worship live on four occasions last year and it was a delight to "be there" in the Peach Hall with everyone else, with excellent themed talks led by many friends familiar from our own pulpit.

The name 'Summer School' puts some people off, or might imply that it's for children. (Children are welcome to accompany their parents at Summer School and have their own youth programme.) Someone in my group suggested calling it a "retreat" instead, but to me that implies a chilly monastery, rather than the comfy Nightingale Centre in the beautiful summertime Peak District. Whatever we call it, I would warmly recommend attendance at the online Summer School if you want to deepen your spiritual reflection, or are working towards another goal, such as Worship Studies training. I have already booked for the 2025 online Summer School, and I intend to set aside more time this year for reading and journaling to maximise my immersion in the theme.

The residential 2025 Summer School takes place from Friday 15th to Friday 22nd August, with the theme of *Finding our Religion: Being Unitarian in the 21st Century*. The online option runs for two hours a day from Saturday 16th to Thursday 21st August, and costs £90. Bookings are set to close on 22nd April but it is often worth asking for late availability. Funding is available for Unitarian events from our congregation, and the Summer School has its own bursaries.



You can find all details about this year's Summer School at:

<https://www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk/programme/>

Contact our Treasurer, [Christopher Whitehouse](mailto:christopher.whitehouse@oxfordunitarians.org), to discuss the possibility of funding: [treasurer@OxfordUnitarians.org](mailto:treasurer@OxfordUnitarians.org)

Links to audio and video recordings of previous Summer School themed talks are available at:

<https://www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk/talks/>

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## Twenty Questions for Arif Kirmızıtaş (Kirmizitas)

### In conversation with Catherine Robinson

*Arif, born into a Muslim family in Turkey, currently lives in Oxford with his wife and young daughter. He has been attending our services for the past six months.*

**What was your earliest ambition?** - My ambition in primary school was to become an explorer and find the lost continent of Mu. I must have read too many adventure stories.

**In fact what did you end up doing?** - When I was in middle school, many members of my extended family suffered from cancer. I lost some of them at quite a young age. So I decided to become a doctor or a scientist, to help alleviate such suffering. I studied molecular biology and genetics in Ankara, followed by a PhD at State University of New York in Stony Brook. After finishing my studies, I came to the UK to join the University of Oxford as a postdoctoral researcher. At present I work for an immunotherapy company.



Arif Kirmızıtaş

**How did your childhood shape your adult self?** - I grew up in a large extended family headed by my grandmother. She was a very religious yet open-minded person. Summers were a mixture of scripture lessons in the mornings and joyful carefree afternoons. During my middle-school years, my family went through crisis after crisis due to illnesses and the general dysfunctional state of my country of birth. Fortunately, I did very well at school and won a scholarship to study at a boarding high school. So I ended up leaving home when I was 14.

**What are your hobbies and interests?** - I think my biggest hobby is actually my job. I love tinkering with things in the lab and eventually making an experiment work. When work gets too frustrating, I usually rush to my allotment to do a bit of stress digging. Allotments are great contemplative places, and as a bonus you grow stuff to eat. I like going on long hikes with my family, or any activity that puts us in contact with nature. For holidays, I enjoy visiting a great city, learning all about it, and soaking myself in its history.

**Favourite author?** - That's hard. There are so many great books and authors, and I haven't read enough of them. But I'd go for Orhan Pamuk, the first Turkish Nobel laureate. I read a few of his books in my youth. They are complex and rich. I remember getting dizzy, but at the same time so hooked that I couldn't put them down. He studies his subjects obsessively before starting to write. Perhaps there are some parallels between us. I should re-read one of his books after finishing this questionnaire.

**Favourite film or play?** - Again, there are so many good ones to choose from, including *Up* (an animated Pixar adventure) ... *The Pursuit of Happyness* ... and *Life is Beautiful*. Because hope and love prevail over life's trials, tribulations, and horrors.

**Favourite piece of music?** - I like film scores. Ennio Morricone's *Cinema Paradiso* soundtrack is one of my favourites, especially the selection played by the Korean trio, Layers Classic.

**Favourite work of art?** - Come tomorrow, I will have a different answer. But works by the three Italian Renaissance masters. They perfected the skill and grandeur in art.

**If you could acquire one particular talent or skill, what would it be?** - Playing the piano. I tried - but maybe not hard enough.

**What is your most treasured possession?** Memories. Everything in life is ephemeral, and I am not into material possessions.

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## Twenty Questions for Arif Kirmizitas - continued

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**Who has been the most important spiritual influence in your life?** – My mother. She didn't go to school much, but she acquired wisdom through oral tradition. I am grateful for her loving care, and for passing on to me – by example – her core values from the wisdom of centuries.

**Do you have a personal sacred place?** – I can't single out one in particular, though it's on my bucket list to visit the holy cities in the Middle East where the great prophets lived and preached. Perhaps a sort of sacred place for me is the Bosphorus. Whenever I visit Istanbul I have to be there, on a ferry and ideally alone, so I get to reboot myself by standing in awe of nature, feeling the joy of life, facing the sea breeze. I think it also represents all the promise of my youth: I used to take that ferry to my boarding school on Sundays and return home on Fridays.

**Which half a dozen individuals do you most admire?** – *Barack Obama*, for being a principled politician and doing his best to bend the arc of history in a better direction. ... *Martin Luther King Jr* for inspiring Obama and many others to work towards justice. ... *Albert Einstein* for explaining natural phenomena without killing the magic of existence. The theory of relativity fascinates me. Will I ever understand it fully? ... *Marie Curie* for her grit, resilience, and sacrifice. ... *Malala Yousafzai* for the courage she displayed at such a young age. ... *Muhammed Yunus* for devising a creative and dignified solution (the Grameen Bank) to alleviate poverty. ... And all the nameless heroes who keep humankind from slipping into insanity.

**What good causes are closest to your heart?** – I try to work in medical establishments where I hope I can have a shot at helping the sick in some way. Plus I can't stand injustice, especially when manifested as oppression or poverty. There was a time when I was quite passionate and political, but at the moment I try my best to help people in my close circle to cope with injustices.

**How did you become aware of Unitarianism?** – I was raised as a Muslim with Sufi influences, and I still feel a spiritual connection to the Islamic faith. But I spent most of my adult life without faith – or with faith but without religion. Some years ago, when I regained my faith, I decided to read the main religious texts of the Abrahamic tradition, and I developed my own understanding and synthesis of them. The moral code and practices that I derived from them sustained me for quite some time; but no man is an island, and one can only do so much without being spiritually nurtured by others. So I was looking for a like-minded congregation where I could fit in. When I came across Unitarians online, I realised I have been a sort of Unitarian for my whole life. So here I am.

**What do you value most about the Unitarian faith?** – It is not dogmatic. It acknowledges the mystery of life and accepts the whole spectrum of religious experiences.

**What aspects of the denomination would you like to change?** – I haven't been with Unitarians long enough to form a critique of the denomination. But perhaps we could do more to reach out to solitary Unitarians?

**What is your favourite hymn?** – The only spiritual songs that I learned as a child were Muslim *ilahis*, while attending summer school to learn the Quran. So when I first started attending the chapel services I wasn't sure about singing hymns – but I found that I enjoy many of those that we sing. Ask me in a year or two and I might name a favourite, but for now it's all new to me. By the way, apologies for my off-key singing.

**What are you most grateful for?** – For my family, for my job, for living in Oxford, and for being blessed with good health and a sharp mind.

**What are your remaining ambitions or aspirations?** – I'd like to spend more time on reading and my spiritual journey. On the professional side, I have been looking for an opportune moment to start my own business. I hope it is not too late.

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## Forthcoming Services and Service Leaders

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### Rev Edie Campbell

**Edie Campbell** is a friend of Meadow Unitarians, Godalming, and an Interfaith minister, creating and leading Sunday services, funerals, weddings and baby blessings, as well as holding women's circles. Edie designed and taught an elective course on death and dying for first-year medical students. She has worked as a proofreader, a simulated patient for medical school exams, as the registrar for *Women in Power* and in university admin. Edie is an actress with *LynchPin Productions* and performs an award-winning one-woman play, *Apples in Winter*. Of Dutch and Canadian parentage, Edie has a BA from Oxford Poly (as was) in English and French Literature, and an MA in English Literature from the University of Iowa where she lived for nine years. Having moved back to the UK in 1997, Edie and her American husband, Jack, now divide their time between Godalming and the USA, where her two step-children and three grandchildren live.



**Edie Campbell**

**Edie leads our service on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April**

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### Carol Chambers



**Carol Chambers**

**Carol** writes: I am a worship leader and celebrant, and I've been a member of Horsham Unitarians for 27 years. I work part-time as a beauty/holistic therapist and lecture at a local college to cover illness and holiday leave. I am a published author and am currently working on two memoirs. The Angmering South Downs Rotary Club has my involvement and I am president-elect of that club.

As a worship leader, I have been fortunate to take services in several different chapels in Sussex, Richmond & Putney, and Lewisham. As a celebrant, I am recommended by friends and clients to lead services for funerals, which tend to happen to be more than weddings or child naming ceremonies.

My service title for the April service is *Care for the Soul*: taking care of ourselves, being aware of our souls, and embracing joyous moments and love in our lives.

**Carol leads our service on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April**

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### Rev Dr Claire MacDonald

**Claire MacDonald** is the Chaplain and Ministry Tutor at Harris Manchester College, where she is also developing The Carpenter Centre, a new college-based initiative for scholarship and creative practice in Unitarian and Dissenting Studies.



**Claire MacDonald**

**Claire leads our services on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May and Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June**

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## Rev Jenny Miller



Jenny Miller

**Jenny Miller**, MA (Distinction), MA (Distinction) LLB (Hons), Dipl (Psych) is an ordained Interfaith Minister and a Worship Service Leader of the Unitarian Church. Jenny's background is formerly in both Law as a Solicitor and with professional qualifications in Transpersonal Psychotherapy and Integrative Child Psychotherapy, with specific experience in Bereavement Counselling. Jenny was an MA Tutor in Transpersonal Child, Adolescent and Family Psychotherapy before having three daughters.

Having recently completed a second Masters Degree with Distinction in Christian Spirituality at Sarum Theological College, with a specific focus in interreligious mystical theologies, Jenny is now researching for a PhD which bridges the interdisciplinary subjects of Mystical Theology, Transpersonal Psychology and the Philosophy of the Self.

Jenny has been invited to speak on areas of Interfaith, Mystical Theology and Transpersonal Psychology at leading University Conferences, including *The Borderless Borders of Faith* at SST (Society for the Study of Theology), *Florence Nightingale's Mystical Theology* at St Mary's University London, *Interreligious dimensions of Action and Contemplation* at MTN (Mystical Theology Network), Practical Mysticism for the Mysticism and Lived Experience Network, *The Depth-Apex of Mystical Theology and Transpersonal Psychology* for the International EUROTAS Conference at New College, Oxford and will be speaking at the forthcoming MTN Conference at Antwerp University on Thomas Merton. Jenny was the joint winner of The World Congress of Faiths' Essay Award 2019 on the subject *Is Interfaith Worship a desirable practice?* which was published in The World Congress of Faiths' International publication *Interreligious Insight*. Jenny's first academic publication is *Merton's Unity of Action and Contemplation in Transpersonal Perspective* which has been published in *Religions* as part of the Special Issue *Mysticism Reloaded: Innovative Approaches, Methods, and Theories to Study Mysticism*: PDF version: <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/16/2/147/pdf>

The theme of Jenny's next chapel service will be *The Mysticism of Sound and Music in Hinduism and Sufism*, accompanied by cellist and vocalist **Anna-Helena McLean**.

**Jenny leads our service on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May**

## Mary Jones

**Mary** writes: My loves in life are friends, chatting and being chatted to, walks, preferably those including coffee and cake, watercolour painting, playing recorders, singing, reading, Unitarianism, our young granddaughter and our two cats. I'm married to Michael, and we live in Emsworth near Chichester after six decades of living in Cornwall. Music has been a lifelong love. I studied it in Bath, taught woodwind across Cornwall for 30 years and then led *Singing for Dementia and Wellbeing* in Cornish Memory Cafes, Stroke Units and anywhere else they'd have me! My spiritual path, beginning as an evangelical Anglican, wandered into a Theology Diploma with Exeter University which was eye-opening and progressively liberal, led me into voluntary chaplaincy in Mental Health and with the Spiritual and Pastoral Care team of Truro hospital. Then finally, having discovered Unitarianism, in 2017, to be a Unitarian chaplain at the Cornwall Campus of Exeter University, a role I continued online as a virtual chaplain during and post-Covid, after moving to Hampshire.



Mary Jones

As a politely 'nosy' person, I love listening to people's stories and experiences. I am quite an extrovert, and not without eccentricities. The Unitarian Worship Leader training has enabled me to lead services at our home church in Portsmouth, Billingshurst, Godalming, back in Plymouth, and it is always a delight to be invited to your beautiful church in Oxford. So, thank you!

**Mary leads our service on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June**

## Rev Susie Courtault

After working as a social worker for 40 years, Susie trained as a minister and was ordained in 2012 by OneSpirit Interfaith Foundation. This organisation embraces the universal truth at the heart of all the spiritual traditions and honours and supports peace-making where it is needed throughout the world. In 2015 Susie became very involved with the congregation at Brighton Unitarian Church (BUC), serving on the committee as vice-chair for four years, and leading many worship services (Unitarianism is very aligned with her interfaith training). BUC honours both its Christian roots and pagan forebears, celebrating equinoxes, solstices and moments in the calendar like Christmas and Easter. Susie is an independent celebrant and also on the Rites of Passage team at BUC. She is particularly interested in creating bespoke ceremonies for couples and their extended and often reconstituted families.



**Susie Courtault**

Susie is a grandmother of five and a mother of three. She loves reading, the creative arts generally and has a degree and a Master's in the history of art. She also loves to sing and is a member of *Companion Voices*, a group which accompanies people at the end of life.

**Susie leads our service on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July**

## Michael Garner



**Michael Garner**

**Michael** writes: I have had a remarkably diverse career, including journalism, data science, computational lexicography, project management, graphic design, intelligence analysis, and teaching. I've worked with NASA, CIA, Meta, Amnesty International, Department of State, and one of the oldest independently-owned newspapers in the USA, *The Lakeville Journal*. I also founded a nonprofit animal rescue organization (<https://www.saveallthepets.org/about/>). These experiences have broadened my view of the human condition and given me a unique perspective on which to base my art.

Art has inspired and comforted me in good times and bad ones. During a particularly difficult time in my life when I worked for the CIA, I took refuge in art to not just escape but to inhabit and explore another plane of reality in which mundane rules don't apply. This experience allowed me to transcend my challenges and realize the potential for innumerable possibilities in the world.

Some of my works are serious and philosophical, dealing with social and political issues or questioning authority. Through these, I encourage the viewer to think critically about society. Others are more whimsical and light-hearted. This balance is important. Communicating through the modalities of humor and beauty allows me to smuggle in deeper, darker issues that may spark difficult thinking about the world around us – and perhaps even encourage prosocial behavior.

I am affiliated with the Royal College of Art in London, where I was fortunate to receive the President and Vice-Chancellor's International Scholarship. I live in London and speak Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, some French and a little Russian.

Michael's website: <https://www.garner.art>

**Michael leads our service on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July**

## What are you celebrating?



Share your cultural, personal or religious celebrations with us for inclusion in the weekly email bulletin!

Email contributions to:  
[OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com](mailto:OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com)

GOLDEN WEDDING anniversary?

Graduation?

New grandchild?

Personal achievement?

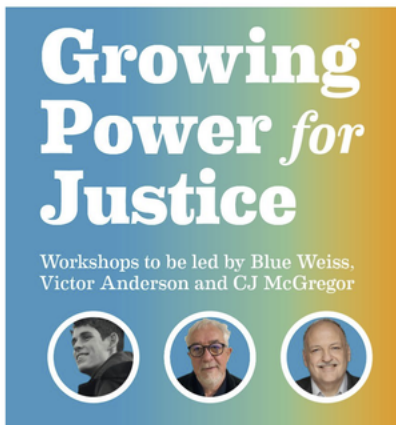
**BIG BIRTHDAY?**

Other personal news?

## Save the date!

**Pocketfuse\***  
MINI FESTIVAL OF UNITARIANS IN THE SOUTH EAST

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May



Our third **Pocket FUSE**, *Growing Power for Justice*, will be held on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May at Golders Green Unitarian Church from 11am-3pm.

As we build justice programmes in our congregations and communities, it's important to learn how to build connections, advocate for change, and discern strategies and opportunities.

For more details and to book a free place please visit:  
[www.ldpaunitarians.org/pocket-fuse-3](http://www.ldpaunitarians.org/pocket-fuse-3)

## FUSE 2025: *Captivating the Peacemaker*



**fuse**  
 FESTIVAL OF UNITARIANS  
 IN THE SOUTH EAST

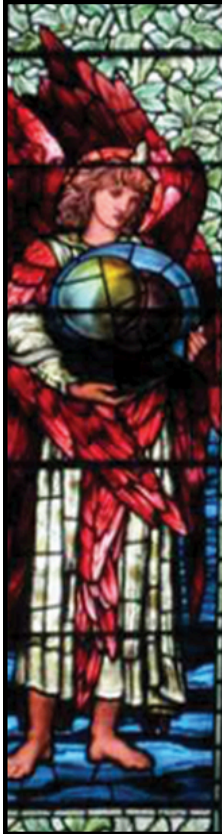


### Captivating the Peacemaker

The **Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE)** will be the weekend of 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June. We gather again at The Friars, Aylesford, Kent, a 13th-century Carmelite priory built on the medieval Pilgrims' Trail to Canterbury. This historic retreat offers an environment rich in spirituality, contemplation, nature and creativity and we hope you will join us as we explore our theme *Captivating the Peacemaker*. Residential bookings close on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

For details and booking: <https://www.ldpaunitarians.org/fuse2025>

For further details on LDPA events and news, see *Impulse* newsletter on LDPA website:  
<https://www.ldpaunitarians.org/newsletters>



# Oxford Unitarians

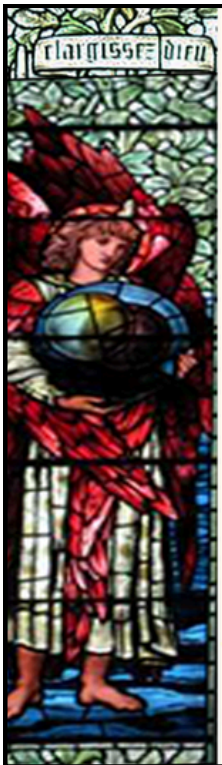
We are a religious community that is inclusive, not exclusive.  
Our Chapel embraces all free-thinking Christians  
but equally those of other faiths and those who have none  
but are also seeking a spiritual path.

We respect and value the views of all those entering this church  
for your insight can deepen our religious community.

We hold to no conformity of belief but seek communality  
of spiritual purpose.

Our religion is about deeds not creeds.

Our purpose is to help us follow a spiritual path  
authentic to each of us.



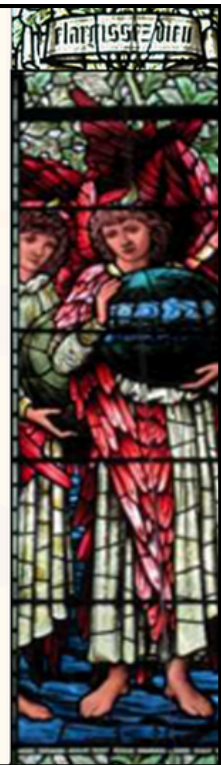
## Oxford Unitarians

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Deadline for next newsletter: Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2025

The newsletter is compiled by volunteers of the Chapel Society and contributions from members  
and friends are welcomed. Please email: [OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com](mailto:OxfordUnitarians@gmail.com)

The Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society committee exercises final editorial control.