Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society

The Newsletter of the Oxford Unitarian Congregation

WINTER 2026

Services January - April 2026

JANUARY *Practising Resistance*

SUNDAY 4th JANUARY: Rev Sue Sinnamon and Rev John Maxwell Kerr
SUNDAY 11th JANUARY: Kevin Watson, Cheltenham Unitarians
SUNDAY 18th JANUARY: Dr Jacqueline Woodman, Chapel Society member
SUNDAY 25th JANUARY: Bert Clough, Chapel Society member

FEBRUARY *Embodying Resilience*

SUNDAY 1st FEBRUARY: Sacha Mouzin & Edith Darin, Chapel Society
SUNDAY 8th FEBRUARY: Michael Garner, artist
SUNDAY 15th FEBRUARY: Carol Chambers, Horsham Unitarians
SUNDAY 22nd FEBRUARY: Tebogo Khutsoane-Hinton, Oxford Bahai

MARCH *Paying Attention*

SUNDAY 1st MARCH: Steve Hodges, Chapel Society member
SUNDAY 8th MARCH: Dr Jacqueline Woodman, Chapel Society member
SUNDAY 15th MARCH: Rev John Maxwell Kerr, Chapel Society member
SUNDAY 22nd MARCH: Rev CJ McGregor, LDPA District Minister
SUNDAY 29th MARCH: Prof Ruth Baer, Chapel Society member

APRIL *Embracing Possibility*

SUNDAY 5th APRIL: Dr Michael Ahanchian, Chapel Society member
SUNDAY 12th APRIL: Rev Edie Campbell, Interfaith Minister
SUNDAY 19th APRIL: TBA
SUNDAY 26th APRIL: Rev Feargus O'Connor, Golders Green Unitarians

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 2026 is: 862 9861 0903 (no password)

Weekly updates available on Facebook:
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.

www.OxfordUnitarians.org

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
Hon. Treasurer

Julie Page
Hon. Secretary

Charles Roberts

Ruth Baer

Holly Templer

Michael Ahanchian
Worship Group Chair

Arif Kirmizitas

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Chapel Society Chair's report from AGM 2025

I want to say something about the state of Unitarians and Free Christians in the UK and where we are in relation to the changes we see. Chapels are closing, membership is stagnant and leadership more difficult to find. At the same time there is dynamic work happening at the national and local levels. Some congregations are growing, imagining their mission, reaching into their communities, and finding new leadership and partnerships. We are in a time of great change which, as the Chinese character represents, is both danger and opportunity. This Chapel Society is experiencing all of these changes. We are not resisting, but in a period of discernment of who we are and what we are called to do and be in this community.

I want to begin this report by expressing my sincere gratitude. Our community is welcoming, diverse, thoughtful, caring, and socially active. As Unitarians we work together to create the kind of world we would like to inhabit, and it is our dedicated volunteers who make this possible.

Facilities and Growth

We moved back into the Chapel in February after four months in the Warrington Room during the renovations. The improvements to the space are stunning. We hardly took a breath and continued our work serving folks in this community and beyond. If you take a look at the reports from our teams and other groups, you can see how much we are doing for the Unitarians in Oxford. We are growing in membership and Sunday attendance. There is a sense of folks being engaged in this community.

Ministerial Search and Committee Work

Our big work this year was launching the subcommittee for the ministerial search. This group represents all of our diversity and has many years of experience with the Chapel Society. This is not a simple task and we appreciate their willingness to serve. I appreciate the willingness of the trustees to work on behalf of the community.

Training and Representation

I appreciate the members who seek training to serve the Unitarian community and this Chapel Society. We have members in the Worship Leadership training, Community Organizing training, representing us at the GA, FUSE, and Pocket FUSE. They bring their knowledge and experience back to us.

Going Forward in 2026

What is ahead for us as a community is preparing ourselves to work with a minister. Shared ministry calls us to listen deeply to one another. We see the work before us we are choosing to do together. Our strength is our ability to change and adapt with a deeper understanding of who we are in the world and what we are called to do. As new people have joined us and as our reach into the community has extended, we grew in wisdom and spirit. In the short time I have been here I witnessed the recovery from the pandemic, the introduction of worship themes and small groups, the extension of the worship team, the creation of the Social Justice Team, increased participation in training and events, and the welcome addition of Friendly Carers. We began a search for a minister for the Chapel Society. We seamlessly adapted worship to the Warrington Room during the restoration of the chapel and leadership has changed and grown.

Conclusion

I feel truly blessed to serve alongside so many individuals committed to making this planet and all its beings better. While the world can feel challenging at times, being together as a community helps us heal ourselves and the world. May we continue to grow and thrive.

Blessed Be,

Rev Sue Sinnamon, Chair of MCOCS

Abridged from her report to the AGM in November 2025

From the Worship Group

Jacqueline Woodman, Sue Sinnamon, Julie Page, Patsy Clarke, Mphala Mogudi, Steve Hodges, Kay Wardle, Michael Ahanchian

It's been five years since I joined the Worship Group and it's been a joy to work with such a creative, dedicated and generous group of fellow Unitarians. But all things must come to an end and with my acceptance to Ministry training in 2026 I have to step back from some of my duties at congregational and district level as I prepare myself for the next stage of my Unitarian journey.

The Worship Group came into being in 2018 and its terms of reference were summarised in the Worship Group report for the AGM of 2020, a tumultuous year that taught us many lessons from which we learned to adapt and grow. For those who may not know what the Worship Group does or what and who it's for, here are our terms of reference:

January: Practising Resistance
February: Embodying Resilience
March: Paying Attention
April: Embracing Possibility
May: Awakening Curiosity
June: Flourishing Together

Soul Matters **service themes**
January to June 2026

1. To be accountable to, and report back to, the main committee and thereby to the membership;
2. To take account of the wishes of all members and regular attenders at chapel services;
3. To share the responsibility for the themes and formats of our services and worship;
4. To produce a list of potential worship leaders and to update this regularly;
5. To agree from this list who should be invited to take services for the following year;
6. To be a forum for discussion for new ideas with regard to forms of worship;
7. To give particular support to ministerial students taking services;
8. To give encouragement and practical support to congregational members who would like to lead their first services, perhaps through mentoring.

From my personal perspective, there is no 'perfect' worship service. But we can create the conditions whereby we experience an authentic worshipful experience in all its shortcomings and imperfections. Our service leaders and our membership are varied in background, experience and outlook and by coming together we aim to 'recognise the inherent worth of each other' every Sunday that we meet. These words from one of Stephen Hodges' services many years ago has been the best definition of 'worship' that describes what we try to do in chapel and online.

I am grateful to all our service leaders – both external and our own members – who lead services and prepare rich and spiritually nourishing worship for us each Sunday. As a congregation we are blessed to have talented, creative and generous individuals who take time and effort to train in worship and lay leadership and share their spiritual journeys and insights with us through their services.

I leave the worship calendar in the capable hands of its new chair, Michael Zand Ahanchian and the supportive members of the Worship Group.

Jacqueline Woodman
On behalf of the Worship Group

Congratulations

The Chapel Society wishes Jacky all the best for the official start of her ministerial training in June 2026. She will still be in chapel often and will report back on her experiences, starting with her orientation weekend at the Nightingale Centre in February.

Jacqueline Woodman

Oxford Unitarian Friendly Carers Group

In the absence of a minister providing pastoral care within our congregation, a group of members have formed the **Friendly Carers**. Their aim is to offer help to those members who might need support while living with challenges such as ill health, loneliness or bereavement - or you just need to talk to someone. The group can't provide professional therapeutic services, but are here to offer sympathetic and practical support such as telephone or Zoom calls, home visits, or lifts to hospital appointments.
Please contact the group convenor, Heddwen Hewis, in confidence: carers@OxfordUnitarians.org

The **Friendly Carers** have produced the following list of **Useful Contacts**:

Mental Health

In a crisis (e.g. feeling suicidal):

- Call the NHS on **111 and then press 2** for mental-health support.
- Or **Oxfordshire Mind** for details of their "Safe Haven": 01865 247788 (or go online: Safe Haven — Oxfordshire Mind)
- Or **Oxford Samaritans**. Tel: **116 123** (24 hours a day, free from any phone).
- Or the **Oxford Adult Mental Health Team: 01865 904111** (out of office hours)
- For anxiety and depression, the **NHS offers free talking therapies** to anyone over the age of 18 who is registered with a GP in Oxfordshire. Tel: **01865 901222** or visit: www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies.

Social Issues

For advice on Benefits, Consumer issues, Debt and Money, Employment, Family, Health, Housing, Immigration, and Law Courts:

- Visit or call **The Citizens Advice Bureau**. They have six Advice Centres around Oxford and a drop-in service at the Library in the Westgate Centre. Open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 am onwards. Phone their advice line for free on **0808 169 6031**
- For debt problems there is a national Charity called StepChange, which offers free advice: https://www.stepchange.org/

Crime and domestic abuse issues

- **Crime**: see Thamesvalley.police.uk
- **Domestic abuse**: National Domestic Abuse Helpline Tel: **0808 2000247**. Email: refuge.org.uk
- **Stalking**: National helpline on **0808 802 0300**

UniYouth weekends - Julie Page

The children light candles in Hucklow Old Chapel with the Director of Unitarian College, Helen Mason

The residential weekends at The Nightingale Centre have been at the centre of the Unitarian youth programme for decades, with separate events for *Juniors* (7-11 years old), *Inters* (11-14 years) and *Seniors* (14+). Each group enjoyed age-appropriate activities, with a light religious touch, often making Unitarian friends for life. The pandemic interrupted uptake at the youth weekends, especially among the two older groups but, once the *Juniors* weekends resumed in October 2022 the children made friends quickly, as did their parents and carers. Soon many of these children were timing out of the *Juniors* weekends at the age of 11, but they wanted to continue to see their new friends.

Parents and carers lobbied Unitarian College to make provision for the older children by accommodating them alongside the *Juniors* programme in the Nightingale Centre where there was plenty of room for all of them: children's weekends enjoy exclusive use of The Nightingale Centre for their youth programme. That's 78 beds!

There were successful precedents for this arrangement at The Nightingale Centre: *Uni-Fest* was a one-off family weekend in June 2019, completely filling the centre with Unitarians of all ages. And in March 2018 *Juniors* and *Seniors* had to be rescheduled for the same weekend because of heavy snow. Both age groups still had their own programmes, housed in separate sections of the spacious Nightingale Centre but sharing mealtimes and some activities. It worked well, and formed the blueprint for what in 2025 became the *UniYouth* weekends. (Both groups were snowed in that weekend in 2018, but that's a different story!)

There is plenty of room for large groups of children and their carers inside the Nightingale Centre, and outdoors in the grounds. Also the Old Chapel in Great Hucklow is just a few steps away, where the children plan and lead the Sunday morning service. For families without a nearby congregation this may be their only contact with a Unitarian church. There are lots of opportunities for fun in the Peak District and recent trips have included visits to an underground mine, a climbing centre, two theme parks, Eyam "plague village" and exclusive hire of an outdoor swimming pool.

It's wonderful to see the current *UniYouth* continue to enjoy long-standing Hucklow traditions such as pretend "baptisms" in the village trough, long walks in the countryside, and lantern walks round the dark village.

What do the kids think? They love everything - the food at the Nightingale Centre, the playground, visiting the chapel full of teddies, forest school, singing every day, football on the field, the day trips, bedtime stories with hot chocolate, but, most of all, seeing their friends. It's important that our children have access to a reliable (and affordable) programme of Unitarian experiences: two *UniYouth* weekends per year now provide a solid base of provision for our 7-14 year-olds, on which we can build more youth programming in our congregations and districts. Maximising their opportunities to meet up with their Unitarian friends will help keep our young people within the movement.

Twenty Questions for Katherine Phillips

In conversation with Catherine Robinson

Katherine, who lives in west Oxford, began attending our Sunday services during the Covid lockdown, mostly via Zoom. She is a member of our Radical Film and Theatre Group.

What was your childhood ambition? – Aged 8, I wanted to be a nun; then I was crazy about Egyptology; and a few years later I began volunteering in the local children's library and aspired to be a librarian. I was also keen on acting and became involved in the local youth theatre, but that wasn't practical, because I had a condition that I now know to be Essential Tremor.

In fact, what did you end up doing? – I achieved my ambition to become a librarian.

How did your childhood shape your adult self? – I grew up in a small town where I had a feeling that everywhere I went there was someone who could report back to my parents what I was up to. So, after getting more O levels and my A levels at night school while working as a Library Assistant, I escaped as far away as I could: to Brighton Polytechnic to study Librarianship and French.

Katherine Phillips

How do you relax? – I like gardening. I mostly grow herbs to use in cooking and put in *maté*. I don't read as much as I used to do, thanks to a streaming-content addiction, but I recently joined a book group for the first time: a U3A sci-fi book club. I've only liked one of the books so far: Kaliane Bradley's *Ministry of Time*, which I recommend. Learning Persian has been a long-term hobby, since 2010. And I do some sewing and decorating.

Favourite book? – No single favourite, but among those that I admire for the beauty of their style and content is Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America*; and a book that I re-read every few years is *Jane Eyre*. My most recent readings changed my attitude to Jane's aunt, Mrs Reed. That woman really had no choice but to favour her son over her niece, as she probably knew that one day she would be entirely financially dependent on him! Oh, of course I should also mention the prequel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys.

Favourite film or play? – *Lawrence of Arabia* on wide screen, for the landscape and the soundtrack.

Favourite piece of music? – Impossible question; but for a cathartic cry I listen to "J'ai perdue mon Eurydice" from Gluck's *Orpheus and Euridice*, which I saw at Covent Garden, featuring Juan Diego Flórez. And I often listen to Peter Maxwell Davies' "Farewell to Stromness", which I found on a CD among my mum's belongings.

Favourite works of art? – Ancient sculptures such as a Nataraja statue of the Hindu god Shiva; some classical Greek statues (so far only seen in museums); and the petroglyphs of Naqsh-e Rajab in Iran.

If you could acquire one particular talent or skill, what would it be? – Apart from a magical ability to feed the world and bring about world peace, I would love to speak Farsi fluently. I've visited Iran twice on archaeological tours. A memorable encounter with an old lady and her cow by a service station prompted me to learn some basics. That was over ten years ago, and I got hooked because it's a very beautiful language. I was fascinated by the script, and my teachers have really encouraged my efforts. It has greatly enriched my life. I'm pretty rubbish at it still, but comfortingly I find that Iranians appreciate my feeble efforts to string a few words together.

What is your most treasured possession? – My mother's musical jewellery box. I was occasionally allowed to wind it up, and now it's mine for a while.

Twenty Questions for Katherine Phillips - continued

Who has been the most important spiritual influence in your life? – There have been so many. I have worked with lovely people whose gentle professionalism shaped my own attitude to work. Many faiths have inspired me. I was brought up in the Church of England and discovered Liberation Theology when I worked in Paraguay for a development NGO in the 1980s. My brother married a Catholic, and I was very struck by their love for Mary the mother of Jesus. I have Hindu relations and close friends who are Muslim. I think I was a Unitarian before I even knew of their existence. My mother was very close to her Muslim neighbours in Lancashire, and several of those families attended her funeral at her local parish church.

Do you have a personal sacred place? – My garden is the place where I go when I need peace or distraction. There's always something to do, and I imagine that I'm communing with the Earth Goddess there.

Which half a dozen individuals, dead or alive, do you most admire? – The young Mary Tudor fascinates me. I saw her in a different light after reading a letter in which her younger brother (above her in the pecking order) ticked her off for dancing and playing cards … Chris Packham, for his brave stance on cruelty to animals and on environmental issues … Greta Thunberg for her stance on the environment and Palestine … José Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia (1766–1840), who kicked the exploitative Europeans out of Paraguay; he raised literacy levels to the highest in the continent and tried an interesting experiment to get rid of the European elite by restricting legal marriage to couples of different ethnicities. Not much fun at a dinner party though, because he lived an extremely austere life … Glenda Jackson, for being a great actor and then bravely pursuing a career in politics … Teachers: all my teachers at Brighton Poly, Birkbeck, King's College London, and the School of Oriental and African Studies whose courses have enriched my life.

What good causes are closest to your heart? – Too many to list.

How did you become aware of Unitarianism? – My father talked to me a lot in later life about his pagan beliefs; so, when he died, an Anglican funeral seemed a bit wide of the mark. I remember googling around and finding references to Unitarianism and Paganism. But approaching a totally new church seemed too stressful, given all the other pressures at the time. Now I wish I had.

What do you value most about the Unitarian faith? – I love its acceptance of diversity, because like many people today I have friends and relations of different faiths and sexual orientations.

What aspects of the denomination would you like to change? – I wish that the "candles" ritual was observed more frequently. It's wonderfully communal.

What is your favourite hymn? –"Bread of Heaven", sung to the tune *Cwm Rhonda*. The power of that music can make me cry. My parents had it at their wedding, and we had it at my mum's funeral. It seems a bit dramatic for my own funeral – but who knows?

What are you most grateful for? – My parents, for never censoring my reading. We were mad about books, and mealtimes were occasionally silent as we all read our library books at the dining table.

What are your remaining ambitions or aspirations? – A bit more travelling perhaps, mostly by train. I hope to carry on working for several years to come. Working in Oxfordshire Libraries, I feel part of a wonderful public institution that we should be rightly proud of.

Bahá'i Connections - Peter Hewis

In December 2003 a unique marriage took place in the chapel of Harris Manchester College, for two members of the Bahá'i faith, Seena Fazel and Jasmin Enayati-Kachani. Seena's sister Mina arranged the service and our then minister, Rev Peter Hewis carried out all the legal requirements as the college's Authorised Person. On that day many of the guests were delighted to see the photo of Abdu'l Bahá that hangs in the college's library.

In May 2025, we had another link with the Bahá'i community when Payvand Agahi, who is a DPhil student in the Faculty of Theology and Religion (and a member of HMC), brought her father Cyrus to see the chapel and college. As you can see in the photo, Seena Fazel, who is now the Professor of Forensic Psychiatry, also joined us. That weekend they were attending a Bahá'i history conference in Oxford, where Payvand presented her DPhil research.

Prof Seena Fazel, Peter Hewis & Payvand Agahi

Then in November 2025, Prof Mina Fazel took part in an Oxford Unitarians' service and spoke of her faith:

> *The Bahá'í community of Oxford deeply values its long association with the Unitarian community, especially at Harris Manchester College. It was this college that, in 1912, welcomed 'Abdu'l-Bahá - the son of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith - to speak during his visit to the United Kingdom.*
>
> *His address to the college reflected on the harmony of science and religion, affirming that both are essential paths to truth and progress. We remain profoundly grateful for that historic invitation, which made it possible for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit Oxford; his portrait now hangs in the college library as a reminder of that moment of fellowship and shared vision. Today, the Oxford Bahá'í community numbers around seventy members, including a number of undergraduate and graduate students, one of whom recently completed her studies at Harris Manchester College, continuing a link of friendship that began more than a century ago.*

The Bahá'í Faith is a modern world religion that began around 175 years ago in Iran. It teaches that humanity is one and that the world's great religions all come from the same divine source. The Faith emphasises both the cultivation of our inner spiritual life and our active contribution to the well-being of society. Through a pattern of collective decision-making and shared service, Bahá'ís believe that many of the challenges facing humanity – such as racial injustice, inequality between women and men, and social fragmentation – can best be addressed through a spirit of unity and cooperation. Around the world, and in Oxford, Bahá'í community life is centred on simple, grassroots activities that aim to build spiritual and social capacity: gatherings for prayer and reflection, study circles that explore spiritual principles and their application, and programmes that nurture the moral and intellectual development of children and young people. Together these form the framework of a community striving, alongside others, to contribute to a more peaceful and unified society.

The Bahá'i community will once again join us on 22nd February 2026 for a worship service led by Tebogo Khutsoane-Hinton, a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Oxford:
Oxford Bahá'i Community

"The intellect is good but until it becomes the servant of the heart, it is of little avail."
Abdu'l Bahá

Forthcoming Services and Service Leaders

Kevin Watson

Kevin is a member of Cheltenham and Gloucester Unitarians and joined the Unitarian movement in 2011 after a lifetime in Methodism. He has been leading worship since the late 1980s and has had a varied career spanning crime prevention and community safety, museums work, and teaching history. For the last decade Kevin has been Head of the Centre for Academic Development at Oxford Brookes University. He is married to Tracey, a lecturer in Education at the University of Gloucestershire and lives in Cheltenham.

Kevin Watson

Kevin leads our service on Sunday 11th January

Sacha Mouzin

Sacha Mouzin

Sacha is a Franco-Lebanese part-time PhD candidate in anthropology at the University of Oxford. Her thesis focuses on pastoralism in Lebanon, based on ethnographic work where she lived and stayed with a herding family in the Mount Lebanon mountain range from 2023-2024. Outside of her thesis, she works on a farm in north Oxfordshire taking care of a herd of heritage Cotswolds sheep, doing farmers markets and milking a small herd of Ayrshire cows for the micro dairy several times a week. She loves working with animals, speaking and thinking about regenerative agriculture, pastoral-nomadism and the future of our food system, photography, good food, singing, dancing and laughing.

Sacha leads our service together with Edith Darin on Sunday 1st February

Edith Darin

Edith arrived from France eight years ago and moved to Oxford four years ago to start a doctorate in demography (the maths behind demographics) studying populations in areas affected by crises. In her free time she supports a UK-wide housing cooperative network and lives in one in Oxford.

She was brought up in a family with Jewish and Christian heritage but what her parents shared was more a distrust for any type of religious belief. It is therefore quite a journey to be now leading a service in front of you. Exciting times!

Edith Darin

Edith leads our service together with Sacha Mouzin on Sunday 1st February

Michael Garner

Michael Garner

Michael writes: I am an artist who has had a diverse career. 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.

I grew up Unitarian Universalist and come from a Jewish background, and have taken an interest in Buddhism and secular humanism. I received an MA from the Royal College of Art in London, where I was fortunate to be awarded the President and Vice-Chancellor's International Scholarship. I live in London and speak Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, some French and a little Russian.

Michael leads our service on Sunday 8th February

Carol Chambers

Carol Chambers

Carol writes: I have been a member, worship leader and celebrant at Horsham Unitarians since 2001. I was also involved with Horsham Interfaith for twelve years, ending up as Chair for a couple of years before it was disbanded. My career has been in beauty/holistic therapy with my own business in Horsham for forty years, and I now work part-time. I am also involved with the Rotary Organisation and am the President of the Angmering South Downs Club. I am passionate about the community and the Rotary, for me, fulfills the need to help raise money for local charities and other good causes.

Carol leads our service on Sunday 15th February

Rev CJ McGregor

CJ

CJ became the LDPA District Minister in August 2024. He comes to this post with some twenty years of ministry experience in a variety of roles. Most recently CJ served as the minister with New Unity in London. Before settling in the UK he held leadership roles in non-profit organisations in New York and Massachusetts, and served as the minister for two Florida, two Massachusetts and one Rhode Island congregation in the United States. He served as Director of Religious Education for eight years in a Massachusetts congregation.

CJ leads our service on Sunday 22nd March

Rev Edie Campbell

Edie Campbell

Edie is a friend of Meadrow 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 US, where her two step-children and three grandchildren live.

Edie leads our service on Sunday 12th April

Rev Feargus O'Connor

Feargus O'Connor

Feargus is a member of the Executive Committee of the Gandhi Foundation, of the World Congress of Faiths, which he served as Honorary Secretary from 2006 to 2023, and of the Animal Interfaith Alliance, which he served as founding Chair from 2014 to 2022. Feargus has also founded appeals for vitally needed funds for the British Red Cross, Save the Children and Animal Free Research UK and successfully proposed several General Assembly resolutions to promote these lifesaving appeals. He currently serves on the LDPA Council and the board of *The Inquirer* and is Minister emeritus of Golders Green Unitarians.

Feargus trained for the Unitarian ministry at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, where Rev Peter Hewis was his ministerial tutor, and has an MA in Death and Immortality from the University of Wales. Since 2004, inspired by the ethos of Dr Albert Schweitzer's philosophy of Reverence for Life and the Jain ethic of *ahimsa*, which Mahatma Gandhi embraced, Feargus has led interfaith celebrations of animals and related activities to promote that compassionate ethic in any way he can among Unitarians, Quakers and others.

Feargus leads our service on Sunday 26th April

A new volunteer

If you arrive early at chapel before Easter, look out for Joseph Page setting up our Zoom equipment. Joseph is the 15-year-old son of Chapel Society members Ian and Julie Page, and he attended our children's group until 2013. Joseph is completing the Volunteering section of his Duke of Edinburgh bronze award, for which he has to volunteer once a week for 13 weeks – and our congregation is the lucky recipient of his labour!

Joseph Page

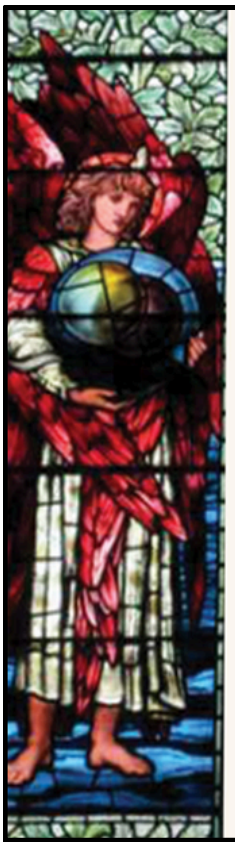
The DofE award is 70 years old this year – and thriving – under the patronage of the current Duke of Edinburgh (Prince Edward) who has taken over from his late father, Prince Philip.
Their website DofE - The Duke of Edinburgh's Award reports:

"Since 1956, millions have taken on the DofE challenge: building confidence, resilience and skills that last a lifetime. From character-building expeditions to community volunteering, these experiences don't just change individual lives – they ripple out, strengthening families, schools, communities and society as a whole."

Save the date!

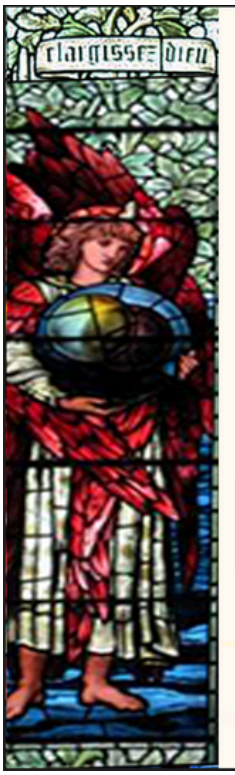
The next **PocketFuse** on Saturday 21st February (10.30 am - 3pm) is to be held at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, London NW3 1NG led by **Dr Stephen Backhouse**, a prominent figure in the fields of political philosophy and social theology. He has spent many years writing about and resisting religious nationalism and is well placed to help us understand the dangers it poses and to find a coherent, effective response.

For more information on PocketFuse:
www.ldpaunitarians.org/pocket-fuse



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.



College Oxford Chapel Society Manchester
136 Years

Oxford Unitarians

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Deadline for next newsletter: Sunday 15th March 2026
The newsletter is compiled by volunteers of the Chapel Society and contributions from members and friends are welcomed. Please email: newsletter@OxfordUnitarians.org
The Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society committee exercises final editorial control.