

‘Discussion Service – Do we believe in the Afterlife’ led by Ann Kader

Opening music – Handel’s Pasacaglia

Find it here <https://youtu.be/AnAYFJY49hE>

Chalice lighting

Welcome and Opening Words

From ‘Fragments of holiness’ reading for October 28th

‘Study the religions of the world, hearten devoutly to the psalms of the East and to the songs of the West, kneel silently in the temple of the Buddhist, join in the worship of the Jewish synagogue, or listen to the prayers of the Christian church: in its essence all worship is one, for all religion is one: for all religions lead to God.’

Written by Gertrude Von Petzold 1876- 1952

She was a Unitarian and the first woman minister in any denomination . When looking at when she was born and died, I couldn’t get my head around it. Was that right. 1876 seems such an age ago.

1st hymn - purple book no. 142 ‘Shining through the Universe’

Shining through the universe
runs the golden thread;
woven in along with white,
black, yellow, green and red.

Cooling water, burning fire,
metal, wood and clay,
in the earth’s five elements
the gold thread marks the Way.

If we try to pick it out
from the fabric fair;
when the threads are pulled apart
the gold’s no longer there.

Under heaven, over earth,
north to southern pole,
If you trace the golden thread
The Way will calm your soul.

“Turn your feet along the Way”,
sages taught of old;
live life well and tread the path
marked by the thread of gold.

Music: © 'Golden Thread' David Dawson 2009. Used by permission

Words: © Roger Mason b. 1941 based on the Tao Te Chingl Used by permission

I know a lot of you are a bit wary of discussion services , so I have made this service a bit of both and hope you can take just one thing away from it that resonates with you. Most of you know how I came into the church, but for those who don't I'll tell you.

Be patient those who have heard it before.

I moved now to Plymouth after retiring. I'd been to my spiritualist church in London for about 15 years. Come to think of it, I've now been at this church even longer.

Anyways I digress, I couldn't find a church down here that I liked and I kept walking past our church and looking at the A- frame with the notice – 'Everybody welcome here'- and one day Sheila was outside and I said to her – 'Does this church really mean everyone welcome, I'm a spiritualist can I come?' and she said yes. I came to one of Christina's husband Richard's service and never left. At one of the church conferences I found out about the Unitarian psychical society and that was the icing on the cake so to speak. A church that gives me freedom in my beliefs, a chance to explore them and a caring community. What more can you want from a church .

I've always been a spiritualist even before knowing what that meant. I first saw spirit when I was 11 , I woke up and at the end of my bed was my cousin, I can't remember the time now but we were told the next morning that my cousin had died having her baby at that time. The baby was fine.

I told my mum I'd seen my cousin and she hit me all round the room and told me never to say it to anyone else. I think she was frightened. I did tell one of my Aunties though.

I've had a few different experiences since then. Not many but enough to make me believe in an afterlife and perhaps coming back earth or a different dimension many times in order to learn lessons.

I believe lots of us have these experiences , we may not always recognise them or acknowledge them and we often don't feel we can tell others.

The readings that will be discussed are from the Unitarian Psychical society, the Quakers study for the afterlife , extract from books.

There is also a Churches Fellowship for after life studies. Who would have thought the mainstream church is also interested in this.

I remember many years ago , some of you may remember Michael Colebrook and I was talking to him on this subject. He told me that Alistair Hardy, a Unitarian and zoologist , had set up the Alistair Hardy Religious Research Centre archives. This is now in Lampeter, Wales. At that time he had collected over 6,000 personal experiences .I'm

sure they have collected even more over the years. It used to be that you could only see by visiting but now there is a database you can access.

Reading from 'The Quiet Mind', Sayings of White Eagle who was the spirit guide of Grace Cooke who started White Eagle Lodge.

You are Divine

'In the spheres of light, all souls are tranquil, with shining faces.

Every piece of work is executed perfectly, and the effort of all is applied to further the happiness of the community.

Always, in your inner selves and in your quiet moments, you can rise into this perfect life, and receive from those who dwell there, the inspiration to live likewise on Earth.

Don't make the excuse that you are only human. With all the force of the truth that is in us, we say, we know, that you are divine.

Every day on awakening and many times during the day, particularly when you are being overwhelmed and harassed by the affairs of the physical life, pause and remember that it is the little self, the human personality which is being tried, and then understand that above you in the invisible realms is that greater self. Look into that form of glorious colour, that radiant life, and you will feel infinite power flowing into your personality. You will be conscious, above your personality, of a self which is limitless, which is living in the Divine.'

We'll now have our second hymn which some say raises the vibrations to spirit and this will lead us into our discussions.

2nd Hymn: Purple book no 167 'There is a place I call my own'

There is a place I call my own,
where I can stand by the sea,
and look beyond the things I've known
and dream that I might be free.
Like the bird above the trees,
gliding gently on the breeze,
I wish that all my life I'd be
without a care and flying free.

But life is not a distant sky
without a cloud, without rain,
and I can never hope that I can travel on without pain.
Time goes swiftly on its way;
All too soon we've lost today,
I cannot wait for skies of blue

Or dream so long
That life is through.

So life's a song that I must sing,
a gift of love I must share;
and when I see the joy it brings
my spirits soar through the air.
Like the bird up in the sky,
life has taught me how to fly..
For now I know what I can be
and now my heart is flying free.

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Tune: 'Flying Free'

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~ Break into groups- Poppy, Margaret, Steven and Edgar leading groups and Nick online~

Each group is given an example of the afterlife , near death experience etc to discuss.

And then to say if they have had any experiences.

I'm unable to print here the readings as they are copyright .

Please look up Unitarian Psychical Society for further information.

~ 15 mins discussion then feedback from groups ~

Final Hymn: 24 in 'Sing your Faith' (aka 'Purple Book')

'Come, sing a song with me'

Come, sing a song with me,
come, sing a song with me,
come, sing a song with me,
that I might know your mind.
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.

Come dream a dream with me,
come dream a dream with me,
come dream a dream with me,
that I might know your mind.
And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,

and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.

Come, walk in rain with me,
come, walk in rain with me,
come, walk in rain with me,
that I might know your mind.

And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.

Come, share a rose with me,
come, share a rose with me,
come, share a rose with me,
that I might know your mind.

And I'll bring you hope when hope is hard to find,
and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time.

Words and Music by Carolyn McDade b.1935 © Surtsey Publishing Company used with permission.

Closing Words: Just to finish up I take these two paragraphs from the 50th anniversary Unitarian Society for Psychological Studies. The leaflet is actually about the history of the society which started in 1965.

It states -

‘So is there such a thing as a Unitarian approach to psychical research? This is a tricky one to quantify. Unitarianism is a liberal and creedless faith, rooted in the Christian tradition, yet on a spiritual adventure in search of truth. Unitarians are a faith community for those in a spiritual journey, for those who believe there is still more to be discovered in religion. They believe in religious exploration- through the intellect and through the spirit. Unitarians are known for their liberal attitudes to spirituality and embrace many different world views. If anything, this is the strength of a Unitarian approach to psychical research. Lack of dogma means that psychic experiences are approached in a truly sceptical way - with an open mind, following where the evidence leads. And if you hold different views to other members, then that is fine too, in fact it is positively encouraged.

For many, science and religion cannot sit hand in hand, but in Unitarianism they can, neither is mutually exclusive, rather they are mutually inclusive.’

The leaflet was written by David Taylor who was editor for many years but has now had to step down through ill health.

Extinguish Chalice

