

WEEKEND GREETINGS FROM EMMANUEL ROAD, JULY 2020

Posted on July 18, 2020 by Andrew Brown



The Cambridge Unitarian Church, Emmanuel Road

Greetings to you all from Emmanuel Road.

As in all previous weeks I trust this message finds you well (enough). Please feel free to call me at any time if that is not the case and/or you feel the need to have a natter about about anything at all, whether of great or lesser import. Im always very happy to talk.

This week various things have conspired to make the writing of a new piece for you impossible. My apologies. However, three interesting conversations I had during the week with members of the congregation have allowed me to string together two earlier addresses and one liturgy that Ive written/put together for you over the years.

Needing to write these greetings in this fashion has, once again, served to remind me of both the richness and depth of experience and insight that exists within the local congregation and also of my long-term dream that we might become a ‘ministry-led,’ rather than a ‘minister-led’ church. Yes, ministers can (and sometimes even do) have an appropriate and healthy role in the life of a community by bringing to it important and valuable insights/skills which can help us steer safely between the ever-present dangers of [Scylla](#) and [Charybdis](#) but, in truth, we all know ministers are, in the end, and as one of our hymns puts it, but a single gem on a string of beads.

So, let’s now turn to three other gems . . .

My first conversation was had by email (and then briefly on Zoom) with Celia James who, many of you will know, is a fine artist and teacher who studied, amongst other places, at the Camberwell School of Art. In the email Celia kindly sent me a beautiful, inspiring and poignant short film about one of her favourite potters, [Richard Batterham](#) about whose work I did not know. Watching the film reminded me that over the years Ive had many encounters and friendships with potters (amateur and professional) which, whilst not inspiring me to become one myself, has left me with both a genuine love of their work and a particular appreciation of a potting-related religious/philosophical metaphor used George Kimmich Beach about how we, ourselves, come to be ‘bowls’ or ‘pitchers’ – that is to say, unique examples of human being-in-the-world. You can watch the film here:

[Richard Batterham - Independent Potter](#)

You can read the address here:

This life can only be what it must be –a meditation for the first Sunday in Lent

Thank you, Celia!

The second conversation was had with Joy Magezis. I've known Joy off-and-on for a long while now but, in the last couple of years, it's been a pleasure to get to know her even better thanks to her regular attendance at the evening service of mindful meditation which, as you now all know, is our congregation's current morning spiritual practice. Joy, a writer, teacher and peace activist, is a long-standing member of the Buddhist community (sangha) that has gathered around the Vietnamese monk and peace activist, Thich Nhat Hanh. As those of you who have taken part in our mindful meditation will know, one of his prayers has a prominent place in our service. Given her long experience in the practice of meditation I'm delighted to let you know that Joy has kindly offered to lead our mindful meditation service in collaboration with other members of the congregation while Susanna and I take a much needed break during August.

You can listen to Joy lead an Earth Meditation for Silent Rebellion, which is based on Thich Nhat Hanh's Love Letter to Mother Earth here.

Thank you, Joy!

As per our Chairman Andrew Bethune's email to the congregation earlier today, you can join this Sunday's meditation (led by me until August and then from September onwards) on Zoom. If you would like to join us and do not have the necessary link then please contact our Church Secretary, Brendan Boyle, via the contact page of our website. Look through the dropdown tabs to find "Secretary":

<https://www.cambridgeunitarian.org/contact/>

Please log in between 9.45 and 10am. The meditation starts at 10am sharp, and finishes about 10.50. There will then be a short break to allow you to stretch your legs, compose your thoughts, or put the kettle on. The 'Time for Conversation' will start about 11am, and if you aren't taking part in the meditation, feel free to sign in during the break for the conversation.

To get the most from the meditation, you will find it helpful to either print out the order of service, or display it in a second window. Here is the link:

[Order of Service for the Mindful Meditation](#)

You might also wish to have a small candle or tea light to hand to light at a certain point during the meditation.

If you can't come to the live Zoom meditation, at the following link, you can download an mp3 of the service I made for you back at the beginning of lockdown:

[MP3 of the Service of Mindful Meditation](#)

And, lastly, just a day ago, I had a conversation with Stephen Watson, a mathematician, musician and teacher (as well as our congregation's treasurer), about the difficulty of knowing how best to describe one's own 'religious' or 'spiritual' way of being in the world when traditional, monotheistic religious belief is no longer possible; a situation that obtains (to varying degrees, I realise) for most of us who attend this congregation. Naturally, each of us has to find their own ways to work through this question and find appropriate ways to describe their own way of being-in-the-world but my very interesting conversation with Stephen prompted me to draw his, and now your, attention to an address I gave at the beginning of December 2018. You can find this at the following link:

[The case for an Ecstatic Humanism being skeptics with naturally religious minds' or open-minded reverent humanists](#)

Thank you, Stephen!

I look forward to seeing some of you on Sunday morning and to talking with still others of you during the coming week.

With love and best wishes as always,

Andrew