



# GLASGOW UNITARIANS

SEPTEMBER 2021

## NEWS & VIEWS



## *Welcome Back!*

Glasgow Unitarian Church  
will be resuming  
normal services on  
**Sunday 12th September  
11am.**

*‘The church's task must be  
to place truth above any  
tradition, spirit above any  
scripture, freedom above  
authority, and progress  
above all reaction.’*

Rev. Norbert Capek

There will be a warm welcome  
waiting for all our members,  
friends and visitors. Our service  
will take the form of a **Flower  
Communion** honouring the  
memory of Norbert Capek 1870 –  
1942 who was a Unitarian  
minister of extraordinary vision  
and courage. He built a vigorous  
new Unitarian movement across  
his native land of Czechoslovakia.



# Programme and notices

## Sunday Services

**5th September 7pm** (via Zoom) Ruth Gregory - The Four Riders of the Apocalypse

**12th September 11am** (in the church and via Zoom) Sheena Bluer and Iain Brown - you are invited to bring a flower which represents yourself within our Fellowship. Our combined bouquet will be a celebration of who we are with all our differences. This will be a special celebration - being together again!

*NB - Although those attending in person may wish to take a Lateral Flow Test the day before - no evidence is required that they have done so.*

Our first chance to meet in person, we will be able to meet for tea and coffee afterwards downstairs. We will require to wear masks and follow a one-way route through the church, along the corridor and then downstairs, leaving by the door which leads to the stairs to the street. Table service, stay in your seat and wait to be served. Ruth Gregory needs 2 more volunteers as waiters/waitresses, who will wear masks when serving.

**19th September 7pm** (via Zoom) Rev. Rob Whiteman - an 'Interfaith Service', first delivered at the Dundee Church on 22nd August, and graciously brought to Glasgow due to popular demand

**26th September 7pm** (via Zoom) Rev. Peter Fairbrother - theme to be arranged

## Wednesday Meetings at 7pm (via Zoom)

**1st** Trees in the Bible illustrated with many pictures by Donald Jacobs

**8th** "What are Unitarian Christians?" - introduced by Rev. Julian Smith from Brixton Unitarian Church and Keith Anderson, a Christian and a new Unitarian

**15th** Discussion about archaeological discoveries - bring any recent related news stories

**22nd** Discussion about misogyny prompted by recent news stories

**29th** Will COP26 be a success?

## Social Meeting

**Saturday 2nd October at 12.30 pm:** you are cordially invited to Ruth's house and garden in West Kilbride for a Bring and Share Lunch after which those who wish to do so can enjoy a guided tour of historic mediaeval Portencross Castle in its beautiful coastal setting. Spouses and children welcome. Car-sharing from Glasgow can hopefully be arranged or you can travel to West Kilbride from Glasgow by train (both under an hour). The intention is to eat outside if possible. If not, in well-ventilated parts of the house! (Or garage—if Ruth can get it tidied in time!). Further details later and Ruth will need to know numbers attending. Contact:

[rlgregory1765@gmail.com](mailto:rlgregory1765@gmail.com) or tel [01294 822544](tel:01294822544) or [07380 278325](tel:07380278325)

## Committee Meetings

**6th September 7.30pm** - Ministry Subcommittee (via Zoom)

**13th September 7.30pm** - Management Committee (via Zoom)

And don't forget **Tea and Coffee meetings** on (via Zoom) every **Tuesday at 11am!**

**All GUC Zoom meetings are accessed through the following link:**

<https://zoom.us/j/5291141523?pwd=YjdhaFgxakY0TWJHWENZMW1PYjhoZz09>

**Saturday 4th September Scottish Unitarian Association AGM** (via Zoom) (See the proposed resolution from Glasgow Unitarian Church on page 11)

Rev. Peter Fairbrother's first online **Heart Circle** is on **Thursday 9th September at 7pm**

No prior registration required, the Zoom link is on Peter's website:

<https://www.revpeterfairbrother.uk/community.html>

## Two poems

which featured in the service  
'*Lifting the Spirit*'  
by Lyanne Mitchell

Sunday 1st August



### *In the Morning of my Life*

Words by Gordon Oliver

Set to music by the late David Dawson

In the morning of my life  
I shall look to the sunrise  
at a moment in my life when the world is new.  
And the blessing I shall ask  
is that God will grant me;  
to be brave, and strong and true,  
and to fill the world with love  
my whole life through,  
my whole life through.

In the noontime of my life  
I will look to the sunshine,  
at a moment in my life when the sky is blue.  
And the blessing I shall ask  
will remain unchanging;  
to be brave, and strong and true.  
And to fill the world with love  
my whole life through,  
my whole life through.

In the evening of my life  
I shall look to the sunset,  
at a moment of my life with the night is due.  
And the question I shall ask  
only I can answer,  
was I brave and strong and true?  
Did I fill the world with love  
my whole life through,  
my whole life through.

### *The Gift to Sing*

Sometimes the mist overhangs my path,  
And blackening clouds about me cling;  
But, oh, I have a magic way  
To turn the gloom to cheerful day—  
I softly sing.

And if the way grows darker still,  
Shadowed by Sorrow's sombre wing,  
With glad defiance in my throat,  
I pierce the darkness with a note,  
And sing, and sing.

I brood not over the broken past,  
Nor dread whatever time may bring;  
No nights are dark, no days are long,  
While in my heart there swells a song,  
And I can sing.

*James Weldon Johnson*



*Marina Vera - City of Music*

For a selection of original songs ,  
Google 'David Kent - Songs of Inspiration'. David is a  
talented musician and member of Leicester Unitarians.

# Empire—A Force for Good or Bad? (And Why It’s Difficult to Find Out)

During August we didn’t follow a programme for our Wednesday meetings and had impromptu discussions on various topics instead. During one meeting we discussed the merits and demerits of empire, from Rome down to the present. These issues have gained significance in recent weeks as the United States has withdrawn from Afghanistan. I thought I’d mention three books I’ve read that are relevant in evaluating the role of empire.

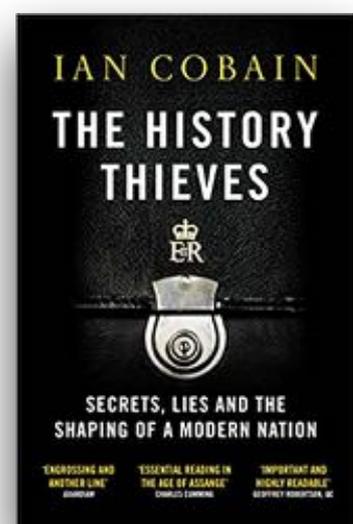
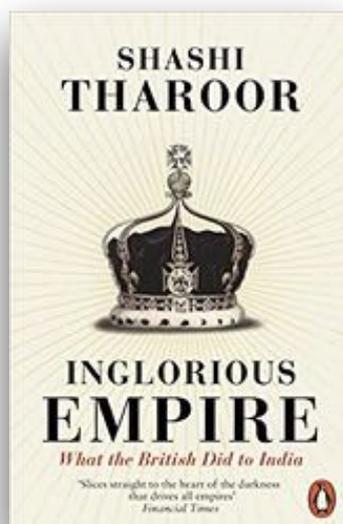
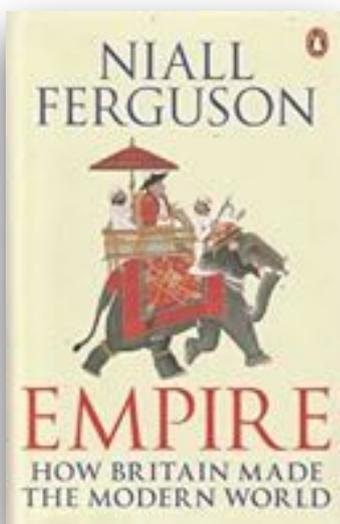
First is a defence of Britain’s role in global history by Scottish historian Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*. Published in 2003, its appearance at the time of the Iraq War, some reviewers noted, had as much to do with defending interventionist foreign policy in the present, as examining the ethics of empire in past centuries. Ferguson is a skilful communicator, on screen and in print, and his argument that the British Empire promoted good systems of education, law, and government around the world, presents an old-fashioned perspective in an engaging way.

Journalistic responses to Ferguson’s defence of empire were immediate and somewhat sceptical. A decade later, Indian politician Shashi Tharoor went on the offensive, and argued that Britain owes reparations to India, in an Oxford Union debate in 2015. Tharoor’s resultant book, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, in 2017 was a strident response to idea that the British Empire had benefitted the subcontinent. Far from bringing improvement, British rule devastated the wealth and wellbeing of Indian society for the enrichment of the occupying power. Another edition carried the subtitle “an era of darkness”. While some reviewers welcomed the corrective, others noted figures that were based on outdated research and drew attention to Tharoor’s emotive language.

Iain Cobain’s *The History Thieves: Secrets, Lies and the Shaping of a Modern Nation* highlights a key difficulty in evaluating the British Empire—the deliberate policy and practice of document destruction during decolonisation. Given the code name “Operation Legacy”, this programme identified 8,800 files, in 23 countries, with potentially embarrassing information, for elimination. The files included documentation of torture during the Mau Mau uprising that was dumped at sea. The scale and scope of information lost to history is difficult to quantify.

As US forces withdraw from Afghanistan, news reports describe the hasty destruction of sensitive material in the face of unexpectedly rapid Taliban advances. In empires, and their retreat, considerations of security and reputation are not easily disentangled. Future historians will do their best to piece together, and argue over what remains.

Donald Jacobs



## WILDLIFE IN NEW ZEALAND

Until New Zealand was discovered by Europeans, it had no wild mammals, so many unknown species of birds were ground-dwelling, and some, like the iconic Kiwi, were flightless. Ships of the time carried rats, and subsequent settlers introduced stoats and possums, perhaps in an effort to control the rats. It is now reckoned that about a third of bird species have disappeared. Accordingly, an unlikely-sounding programme has been launched, to clear New Zealand of animal predators.

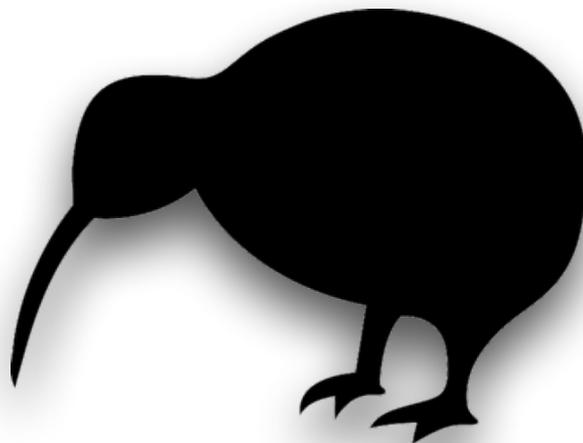
Kiwis are nocturnal. They live among mountain scrub and trees, in holes under tree roots, where they lay eggs and raise their chicks. Kiwis weigh about one and a half kilos, and have quite a strong smell. A kiwi is capable of defending itself against predators, but eggs and chicks are not. There are one or two wildlife parks, protected by fences or rivers, where predators have been eliminated. If possible, kiwis may be caught and transferred to one of these areas, in the hopes that their numbers can build up. Over the rest of the country, and in the towns, traps are being set, baited and monitored to eliminate the predators. Where the terrain is too rough, poisoned pellets may be dropped. Sometimes mayonnaise mixed with a long-lasting dye may be used as a bait. Autopsies on dead predators are carried out, and this dye can be traced for about six months. There is some possibility of using drugs to limit predator fertility.

A menagerie of predators is maintained, so that their habits can be studied. The behaviour of stoats in mazes is interesting. While most stoats learn to navigate a maze, at different rates, a few are unwilling, or unable to interact with the maze, or touch the foods offered in it. Weighing only about 350 grammes, a stoat is no match for an adult kiwi, but, attracted by the kiwi's strong smell, it is happy to feed on the eggs and chicks.

The researchers estimate that by 2050, animal predators will be eliminated from New Zealand. It made me wonder whether small terriers are permitted as pets in New Zealand.

*Information gleaned from a half-hour programme on Al Jazeera.*

*Janet Briggs*



# HUMAN ENERGY

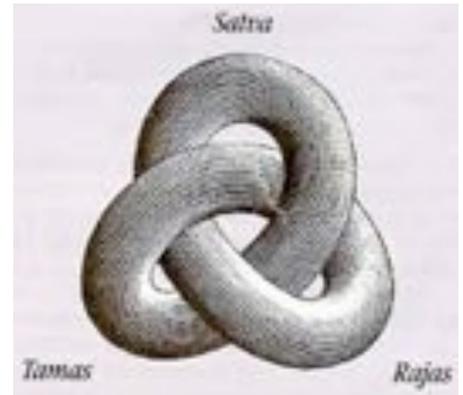
*Energy is a bit like money: if you have a positive balance, you can distribute it in various ways, but according to the classical laws that were believed at the beginning of the century, you weren't allowed to be overdrawn. Stephen Hawking*

I am tremendously interested in human energy - and how we use it in our lives. At the moment I am recovering from a nasty lung infection and it has left my energy levels at rock bottom. My 'get up and go' has got up and gone!

A few years ago I attended a course on philosophy and was fascinated to learn about 'the Gunas - **Threefold Energy** Satva / Rajas / Tamas.

This model is from the Indian Vedic tradition, found in the renowned philosophical text, the Bagavad Gita. The Sanskrit word for force or energy is 'guna'

According to this model, the environment in which we find ourselves is governed by these 3 fundamental energies .



*The word guna literally means "strand" or "fiber" and implies that, like strands of a rope, the gunas are woven together to form the objective universe.*

*Philosophically, the theory of the gunas explains what this universe is made of and how it came to manifest itself as mind and matter.*

SATVA qualities - HARMONY / BALANCE / LIGHT / ILLUMINATION / INTELLIGENCE / INSPIRATION / CLARITY / PEACE / STILLNESS / HIGHER SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL

RAJAS Qualities - POWER OF ENERGY / ACTION / CHANGE / MOVEMENT / DRIVE / GROWTH / CREATIVITY / LIFE POTENTIAL.

TAMAS qualities - DARKNESS / SLEEP / REST / DISSOLUTION / INERTIA / REGULATION / CONTROL / DISCIPLINE / MATERIAL POTENTIAL.

In every situation, all are present, but one predominates. What makes the difference is the *balance* of these energies. Usually, we spend our time oscillating between Rajas and Tamas - but we also need to develop Satva energy, through various spiritual practices such as meditation, stillness or prayer.

Once again we meet the mystical (magical?) number 3. Three is the first number to which the meaning "all" was given. It is The Triad, being the number of the whole as it contains the beginning, a middle and an end. The power of three is universal and reflects the nature of the world as heaven, earth, and waters. It is human as body, soul and spirit. And of course in the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It occurred to me to wonder if the ancient Vedic Threefold Energy could be reflected within the Christian Trinity model? Holy Spirit equates with SATVA - Higher spiritual light..... SON could equate with RAJAS - action in the physical world.....and FATHER could equate with TAMAS, the regulator.

Food for thought?

*Lyanne Mitchell*

# TAOISM

While reading Peter May's thriller, *The Fire Maker*, I came across the following explanation of Taoism, as one of the main characters was being introduced to one of the guiding principles of life in China.

"Taoism, from the word *tao*, literally meaning "the way", teaches us we must all find a place for ourselves in the natural way of things that does not disrupt the function of the whole. When we accept our place in the world, we become more concerned for the consequences of our actions, since for every action there is a reaction, and everything we do has consequences for others."

"The sublimation of the individual in favour of the collective good: the realisation that none of us is alone in the world, that we are all interdependent."

'No man is an island', is our Western equivalent.

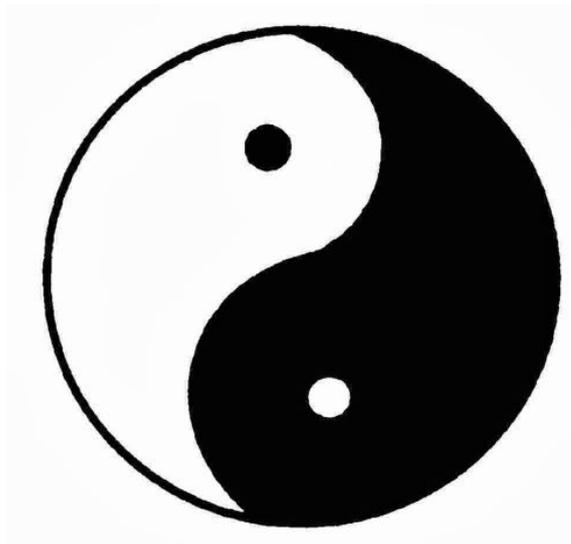
"The Chinese have, since the days of Confucius, emphasised the need for the individual to suppress personal ambition in favour of social harmony. The rights of society are given greater emphasis than the rights of the individual. 'The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.' And that idea, and the practice of it, was around three thousand years before the Communists ever came on the scene."

"And what about the rights of the individual in law?"

"The accused, in the Chinese constitution, has plenty of rights. The trouble is that in China, individual rights go hand in hand with a responsibility to society. There is no right without duty, so there is built-in conflict."

"According to Chinese law a defendant has the right to defend himself. But he also has a duty to co-operate with the police and the court in uncovering the truth about his case. You might think that the right to defend himself would lead automatically to the right to silence under interrogation, to protect himself. ... Only he has also a duty to the state, to society – to answer all questions faithfully and truthfully, even if that incriminates him."

*Janet Briggs*



## ***Decisions Decisions - Extract from a service led by Lyanne Mitchell***

Life is about decisions. You either make them or they're made for you, but you can't avoid them. When faced with two equally tough choices, most people choose the third choice: to not choose. Not to decide is to decide. Not to decide - is a decision! Mark Twain wrote - *"I must have a prodigious amount of mind; sometimes, it takes me as much as a week, to make it up!"*

We are defined by the decisions we make. What part do intellect and emotion play in our individual decision making? And how best can we make group and congregational decisions?

Toby Macdonald, Producer of the Horizon programme called - 'How You Really Make Decisions' writes the following :-

*'With every decision you take, every judgement you make, there is a battle in your mind - a battle between intuition and logic. And the intuitive part of your mind is a lot more powerful than you may think.'*

We actually have two systems of thinking. There's the deliberate, logical part of our mind that is capable of analysing a problem and coming up with a rational answer. This is the part of our mind that we are aware of. It's expert at solving problems, but it is slow, requires a great deal of energy, and is extremely lazy. Even the act of walking is enough to occupy most of your attentive mind.

But then there is another system in your mind that is intuitive, fast and automatic. This fast way of thinking is incredibly powerful, but totally hidden. It is so powerful, it is actually responsible for most of the things that we say, do, think and believe. And yet, we have no idea this is happening. This system is our hidden auto-pilot, and it has a mind of its own. It is sometimes known as *'the stranger within.'*

Most of the time, our fast, intuitive mind is in control, efficiently taking charge of all the thousands of decisions we make each day. The problem comes when we allow our fast, intuitive system to make decisions that we really should pass over to our slow, logical system. This is where the mistakes creep in.

Our thinking is riddled with systematic mistakes known to psychologists as cognitive biases. And they affect everything we do. They make us spend impulsively, and be overly influenced by what other people think. They affect our beliefs, our opinions, and our decisions, and we have no idea it is happening.

Prof Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University and Nobel Prize winner writes :- “

*It may seem hard to believe, but your logical, slow mind is a master at inventing a cover story. Most of the beliefs or opinions you have come from an automatic response. But then your logical mind invents a reason why you think or believe something.'*

I find myself in two minds about all this! (ha ha)

LM (Oct 2014)

## The Other Side

Many years ago, a new friend told me that we could contact the spirits of dead loved ones by setting up a 'séance' – a table with the letters of the Alphabet round the edges, and an upturned glass in the middle, on which those present should lightly rest a finger. Dubious, sceptical and a little scared, I agreed to try this, and settled my little girls around the table. She explained to us that we should always be polite to any entity who might come, while being prepared to be firm and dismissive should an angry or violent one be attracted.

Very soon, we felt movement of the glass, and it travelled to the letters P and N, visiting them many times over. My father's initials had been NP, so I quickly said, "Is that you Dad?" "Yes," came the reply, followed by assurances of his restored health and happiness. Then the glass began to drift slowly around the space, until I asked, "What is happening?" "VAL.." came the reply. "Valerie" I screamed. "Yes". Valerie was the name of my youngest daughter, who had died at 10 months, during a measles epidemic, a year or two before her Grandad. They had found each other, and at the first opportunity, he had come to set my mind at rest. The relief I felt was amazing and has lasted my whole life long.

The girls were intrigued, and they wanted to repeat the game, which we did, several times. At one such session a little friend was present, and she joined in. The response time was short, before a spirit came. He identified himself as her adoptive Great Grandfather, who had died only a year or two earlier. He said he had a message for each one of us around the table. He knew all our names, though we had not met him. The messages were all similar: "Be kind to Pamela", "Play with Pamela." And so on. We later understood that Pamela did not have a happy life, though she had never complained. She disappeared from our circle some ten years later, and we heard no more of her. What happened? We do not know. Was he worried for her?

The last time I set up a séance table was on my birthday that year. Only my husband and I were present. It was his first attempt. Perhaps it would not 'work'. Very soon an energetic spirit took over, identifying himself as a friend of my father's, with whose family I had spent holidays most years.

More recently, following a failed marriage, his only daughter and her two little boys had fallen on hard times, and they were now spending their holidays with us, by collecting free bus-tickets, as advertised on cereal packets, to travel from London to Scotland. He wanted us to persuade her to move in with us. I was moved to argue. "Would that work? Two women in the one kitchen?" His reply was instant. "You would go out to work, and she would run the house." Perhaps I wasn't keen enough, because I asked my husband to write to her, as he sometimes did, and she refused, and stayed on in the difficult environment, dressing the boys in thrift-shop clothes, and unable to let them take part in school activities. Aged eleven, her younger son picked up the phone to Social Work and asked them to get him out, which they did. At his request, they prevented all contact until he was of age. He went on to work on the Stock Market, only contacting his mother when he was able to support himself. This must have hurt her terribly, and indeed she developed Multiple Sclerosis and died before she was sixty.

*Only lately did it occur to me that these three incidences show clearly that our Spirits are able to stay with those we love, and may do their best to take care of us. In none of these cases did we hear again from our loved ones. In fact, I chose to discontinued the seances, wanting our children to give their attention to living and learning in the here and now.*

*Janet Briggs*

# Glasgow Botanics Rendezvous

On Wednesday, 4th September, 15 members and friends of the Church assembled in the Botanic Gardens on what turned out to be a gloriously sunny day, not too hot, a pleasant breeze and just ideal for sitting on a park bench and enjoying a good chat. It was great to see the pleasure which we all had in just meeting up with each other in the flesh as it were. So busy was everyone with these conversations that it proved impossible for your Convener to inject any organisation into the day and in the end we all went off to do what we wanted to do. I think everyone enjoyed that, silly Convener to think it would have been otherwise Some walked by the Kelvin, some toured the lovely flowerbeds, some went to investigate the cafe and/or the hothouses and some blethered the afternoon away! For myself, I just enjoyed seeing you all again and it made me look forward to the re-opening of the Church for the Flower Communion on Sunday 12th September at 11am.

*Ruth Gregory*

(In order of appearance below, are: Stephen, George, Donald, Ruth J, Judy, Barry, Iain, Margaret P, Barbara, and Barry; offscreen credits: Sheena, Edith, Margaret Mc, Ruth G, and John)



## What banner should we display at the church for COP26?

A few suggestions:

**UNITE in LOVE for LIFE**

**LEAVE IT IN THE GROUND**

**RESTORE EACH OTHER - RESTORE OUR EARTH**

**WHAT WE SAVE - SAVES US**

**WE MUST ACT NOW** 🌍

Please send your feedback and suggestions!

And send pieces for October *News & Views* to **Lyanne, Donald** or **Janet** too, because we were short for contributions in September. We are grateful for the support so far! The ongoing vitality/viability of *News & Views* depends on reader contributions. Readers further afield than Glasgow—feel free to send pieces too.

**Resolution from GLASGOW UNITARIAN CHURCH** to be proposed and decided upon at the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the SCOTTISH UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION on Saturday 4th September 2021:

A little light relief 



"It is resolved that the SUA Executive Committee carry out a review of the current SUA Constitution to determine whether or not it sufficiently reflects both the current needs of Unitarians within Scotland and the opportunities for development offered by improved Information Technology".

Please note: This resolutions is for a REVIEW of the Constitution. It is not an attack on the present Executive. It may lead to proposed changes to the Constitution and it may not. We may find other answers but WE DO NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

## PERSONNEL

**MINISTER EMERITUS – Rev. John Clifford**

**LAY PREACHER – Iain Brown**

**WORSHIP LEADERS - Barry Bell, Barbara Clifford, Rev. John Clifford, Roddy Macpherson, Jim Millar, Lyanne Mitchell and Alastair Moodie**

### **WEDDING CELEBRANTS**

Iain Brown - [iain.brown13@gmail.com](mailto:iain.brown13@gmail.com)

0141 339 7815 or 07742 653 305

Rev. John Clifford - [revclifford@fastmail.com](mailto:revclifford@fastmail.com) 01355 235 324

**CHURCH CONVENER – Roddy Macpherson**

0141 632 2970 or 07802 349 898

[convener@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk](mailto:convener@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk)

**CHURCH SECRETARY – Iain Brown – 0141 339 7815 or 07742 653 305**

[secretary@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk](mailto:secretary@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk)

**CHURCH TREASURER – Charlie Dand – 0141 943 0819**

[treasurer@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk)

**CHURCH OFFICER – Alison Briggs - 07533 140612 or 0141 221 3154**

[churchofficer@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk](mailto:churchofficer@glasgowunitarians-scio.org.uk)

07533 140 612

**SAFEGUARDING – Barbara Clifford**

01355 235 324 – [barbaraclifford@fastmail.com](mailto:barbaraclifford@fastmail.com)

**MUSIC CO-ORDINATOR – Roddy Macpherson**

0141 632 2970 - [macphersonRA@aol.com](mailto:macphersonRA@aol.com)

**SOCIAL CONVENOR - Ruth Gregory**

01294 822 544 - [rlgregory1765@gmail.com](mailto:rlgregory1765@gmail.com)

**PROPERTY MANAGER – Charlie Dand**

0141 943 0819 - [crdand@kooked.co.uk](mailto:crdand@kooked.co.uk)

**FIRE & SAFETY OFFICER - Alison Briggs and Charlie Dand**

**NEWS & VIEWS - Lyanne Mitchell, Janet Briggs and Donald Jacobs**

[lyanne.mitchell.rothesay@gmail.com](mailto:lyanne.mitchell.rothesay@gmail.com), [j.briggs159@virginmedia.com](mailto:j.briggs159@virginmedia.com) and [donrayjay@aol.com](mailto:donrayjay@aol.com)

0141 571 2610 and 01475 732344

**NEWS & VIEWS LAYOUT / WEBSITE Lyanne Mitchell**

[lyanne.mitchell.rothesay@gmail.com](mailto:lyanne.mitchell.rothesay@gmail.com)

0170 050 4694

and John Wilkinson

**WEBSITE [www.glasgow-unitarians.org.uk/](http://www.glasgow-unitarians.org.uk/)**

**FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/GlasgowUnitarians/>**