

## **Blog 10**

### **Take a break!**

**(Or, a change is as good as a rest.)**

Are you tired of the lockdown? Indeed, exhausted. I know I am. I also feel that that is a totally inadequate attitude when it is those who are at the front line – the health workers and key people in the food chain who are *really* tired. But for almost all of us enforced complete or semi-isolation takes its toll.

I was impressed by a recent newspaper article in which the writer had tried to replicate the holiday feeling by setting up a deckchair in her garden and trying to pretend that she was on the beach. I could actually walk the five minutes from my house to the beach but somehow it does not seem right. The lockdown is not a holiday. But some change to the new “normal” routine does seem called for. After all, some type of social distancing is likely to continue for some months. The government says it is aware that people can only be persuaded to self-distance for a limited time, though how long that time is is not clear.

So next week I am going to try some new approaches. I am not going to watch the daily coronavirus briefings. All the important points are covered in the television news anyway. I will be taking part (by Zoom) in a church management committee meeting at which I hope we can start to trace a path back to re-opening the Church, even if only for limited purposes, when this may become possible in early July. I am going to consider whether I am brave enough to start to use social media. And I am going to give readers a week’s break from these blogs! I will be with you again in a fortnight’s time, hopefully re-energised.

I hope you have a pleasant, and perhaps different, week. I hope you enjoy the extended edition of *News & Views*, which will be with you shortly.

*Nick Saunders*

rnssaunders@outlook.com

## Blog 9

### Where have all the good times gone?

So sang the Kinks in 1965. You can still listen to the song on YouTube (at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgrwsGrfv7M> ) if you don't have it on vinyl or CD. That was not so long after Harold Macmillan had said "You've never had it so good". And they were supposed to be the "Swinging 60s", weren't they?

It was ever thus. The Romans had a phrase for it – *Sic transit gloria mundi* - so pass the glories of the world. But was the world pre-covid so very glorious? Financially, for some people, yes. But for many it was a struggle for existence against a backdrop of uncertainty for the future, overshadowed by climate change and plagued by a culture of extreme individualism, declining respect for any permanent values and a fragmentation of society.

Just as glories pass, so will the pains of the pandemic. But we must learn from it. I do not believe that the pandemic is a punishment meted out by an all powerful Supreme Being for all our sinful ways. But I do think that to some extent mankind has made the occurrence of such disasters more likely, with global trade and travel, population growth and man- created or at least intensified global warming. And I also think that the only way we can make recompense for all the lives being lost is to do all we can to make a better future, learning from the experience and creating new glories.

The next issue of *News & Views* will contain an article by Michael Dadson in which he invites us all to take stock and ask what are those things that make us truly ourselves. If we all use the lockdown to do this we will surely be doing our bit, not to retrieve past glories but to create new, and hopefully more appropriate, ones.

*Nick Saunders*

rnssaunders@outlook.com

## **Blog 7**

### **Time to swallow our pride?**

Is it possible to find a more individualistic set of people than a Unitarian congregation or fellowship? We pride ourselves on our inclusiveness and diversity. But the covid pandemic has shown us all (or at least most of us) how much fundamentally we have in common. Perhaps, too, we may have to accept that if Unitarianism is to survive and flourish there will need to be a good deal more solidarity and readiness to help one another than we have shown in the past.

Unitarians are generally pretty loyal to their Individual congregations and groups. But we all know how friction can develop between such groups, given the extent of the range of approaches to faith within the movement. But, when pressed, most Unitarians would accept that no one group has the monopoly of wisdom. Certainly few if any groups have all the resources that will be needed to see the movement through the current crisis and into the new “normal”, whatever that may turn out to be.

The district associations should surely be a key forum for identifying needs and relevant resources, both within individual congregations and the associations themselves.

The GA has a key leadership role. However, it is not able to nor would want to dictate to congregations, associations and affiliated groups. Its resources are valuable but limited. Simon Bland cannot be everywhere!

International links are always important and perhaps have not been cultivated enough. But there is unlikely to be an overseas saviour in the way that some British football clubs have been rescued (if that is the right word) by an overseas billionaire. They should be an avenue for comparing experiences and possible new approaches and for helping to stem the nationalistic tide flowing so strongly across the world.

Likewise our links with other faiths should be deepened and strengthened but do not offer a “magic bullet”.

I should like to start a discussion going and return to this theme in the Winter edition of News & Views. Let me know what you think!

*Nick Saunders*

rnssaunders@outlook.com

## Once A Tree Trunk

Thin textured section  
of an OS sheet,  
its annual rings  
bar code the oak,  
curve around knots,  
form the crowded  
contours of a hill.  
From a raised spot  
crevices creep,  
beget dry rivers  
that flow, divide.  
Aged door post,  
cool to the touch,  
grey to the eye,  
maps its past.

*Liz Brownhill 2019*

## Blog 6 – w/c 4 May

### Where have all the swallows gone?

So Easter has come and gone and still the covid-19 death toll rises. As it happens, Easter Day coincided with my birthday. I am not likely ever to forget that day. Amidst the sorrow for the victims of the pandemic one small detail will stay with me. Every year I look forward to seeing the first swallow of the summer on or around 12 April. Here on the South Devon coast we are used to annual visits from swallows, swifts and house martins. But on 12 April, apart from a few house martins, neither swallows nor swifts were to be seen. The position has not changed two weeks later as I write this piece. Of course better bird watchers than I may have seen the odd swallow, and swifts are in decline any way. The migrant birds were delayed for a while by strong adverse winds in France and Spain, but these have been gone some time. Do the birds somehow know that things are seriously amiss in Europe?

That may be fanciful, but maybe not. Most of us, I suspect, find comfort in the fact that so much of nature seems to go on regardless of the pandemic. The pandemic itself is a natural phenomenon, though perhaps made more likely by global warming. I do not subscribe to the view that the recent good weather makes things worse. Frustrating as it is to have very limited opportunities to go out and enjoy the sun, it is surely more encouraging to see the sun shining in at one's window than to have pouring rain. The good weather may increase the chances of some people ignoring the social distancing rules (for they are rules not just guidance). But that means that all of us will have to go on exercising patience for just a bit longer until it is clear that the peak of the pandemic has passed and no second wave will follow if the rules are relaxed. It will be interesting to see if the swallows start to return just as the lockdown starts to be eased.

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Soon after writing the above (28 April) I saw my first swallow (two in fact). So perhaps nature may be telling us something...

*Nick Saunders*

rnssaunders@outlook.com