

IMPULSE

Promoting Unitarianism in London and the South East



AUTUMN edition 2022



Theme speaker chosen for FUSE



'Pitching a tent' at Lewes



'Vision into Action' 19th November





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IMPULSE

Promoting Uniterlation in Landon and the South East



COVER Autumn colour at Sheffield Park in Sussex #EveryoneNeedsNature

FUSE 2023 - Building Paradise

District Council News

org

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The London and South East Unitarian District is a constituent part of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, whose stated purpose (Object) is: "To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

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When courage is needed

Message from the District Minister Rev'd Jim Corrigall

"Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste death but once" Shakespeare - Julius Caesar

was reminded recently that the above quotation was a favourite of the late Nelson Mandela. The words seem to epitomise the life – and death – of that great South African: when you're brave and valiant, you meet the challenges of life head-on, and your only death comes at your end.

But if you're at all like me you may be thinking: I've often ducked the big challenges, and yes, I've often felt the 'inner death' of failure, and the self-contempt it seems to generate. I couldn't possibly be like Nelson Mandela! Yet this quotation speaks of a near-ideal person – a Nelson Mandela – whereas most of us, I fear, have to struggle on with our mixtures of courage and cowardice. But struggle on we must.

And surely valour is an ideal worth striving for? It may be precisely what's needed in our Unitarian congregations and District right now. We're emerging from over two years of pandemic and lockdowns, and looming ahead are financial hard times. We've lost members and many of us feel at a low ebb.

But we've survived ... yes, we're still here! Now we need to rebuild, to move

forward again, and with a certain boldness. I hope our District is providing inspiration for this: Rev'd Kate Dean has just been speaking about courage at the Autumn Quarterly (reported on page 7 of this edition). In November, Lizzie Kingston-Harrison will be giving guidance to congregations on how to

turn vision into action. FUSE next June

Working together

should be brimful of ideas.

Having courage doesn't mean rushing about trying to do many things; it's rather about thinking clearly, working together and trying out new activities (possibly just one at a time). Nor does courage mean being unrealistic or foolhardy. For me, bravery was shown in two contrasting decisions by congregations in our District recently: the Lewes congregation is re-launching while the Southend fellowship has closed, at least for now. At Southend they honestly faced their inability to keep the meeting house going, and a very good outcome was achieved. (Reports on both congregations appear on pages 8 and 16 in this edition).

So, let's go forward with courage!

JIM CORRIGALL

Our theme for FUSE 2023 'Building Paradise'

e're delighted to announce we have both a theme and theme speaker for the Festival of Unitarians in the South East next year (FUSE 2023), taking place from 2nd to 4th June at The Friars at Aylesford in Kent (pictured below).



Unitarian minister Stephen Lingwood has agreed to be the theme speaker on 'Building Paradise', a subject inspired by his recent book 'Seeking Paradise - A Unitarian Mission For Our Times'. The book not only sets out a future vision for our Unitarian denomination, but also suggests how congregations might move towards this goal. Apart from the theme talk, Stephen will also lead at least one of the workshops on offer. We chose this theme because we believe there's a compelling need, as the world emerges from Covid, for a vision to inspire our members, as well as for ideas on how to rebuild and re-energise

our congregations. Stephen Lingwood's book is full of this kind of wisdom.

So who is Stephen Lingwood? Well, he's been Pioneer Minister to an innercity area of Cardiff since 2017, while also serving as minister to the Unitarian congregation in the city. Before this, Stephen was minister at Bank Street Unitarian Chapel in Bolton, Lancashire, for nine years. He has degrees from universities in Birmingham and Manchester in the UK, and Boston in the US, and is considered the leading Unitarian theologian in Britain today.

Those planning to attend FUSE 2023 are encouraged to read 'Seeking Paradise: A Unitarian Mission For Our Times' by Stephen Lingwood (Lindsey Press for the GA, 2020), in advance. It can be purchased by emailing or phoning Unitarian headquarters at Essex Hall in London. It can also be ordered via online booksellers.

Yes! A children's programme!

We are also pleased to announce that Jenny Canfield and Jim Blair (members at Bessels Green Meeting House in Sevenoaks, Kent) have agreed to run the children's programme at FUSE 2023.

They are developing exciting plans for children's activities for the weekend, and



ABOVE Our theme speaker is Stephen Lingwood, pictured here speaking at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff.

we are hoping for a good turnout of young Unitarians and their friends! They plan to cater for children aged 5 to 18.

Why The Friars? And practicalities

The Friars is a Carmelite monastery and large retreat centre in Aylesford, close to Maidstone in Kent. It has large and beautiful grounds and a deeply spiritual atmosphere. We have booked the whole conference centre for this weekend, with the programme starting the evening of Friday 2nd June and ending at lunchtime on Sunday 4th.

There are 68 bedrooms available, some in accommodation in historic buildings (some bedrooms allow for sharing) and there are also six meeting rooms in a relatively modern block. We will be able to use one of the beautiful chapels in the old buildings for our services.

First reports about this venue appeared in the Summer edition of IMPULSE, but it is worth stressing once again that The Friars is not a hotel. Although the rooms are relatively comfortable and the food is good, the centre does not meet hotel standards. Only one room is fully accessible for wheelchairs, and generally the centre will not be easy to navigate for people with mobility problems.



Oxford Awayday success

ixteen members of the Oxford Congregation attended the Chapel Society's Awayday on Saturday 27 August. It was held at the beautiful retreat of St Ethelwold's House in Abingdon.

The purpose was for the congregation to come together socially after two years of reduced engagement during the pandemic. It enabled us to discuss ideas for strengthening our religious community in a free-flowing but structured way.

BELOW Participants at the Awayday at St Ethelwold's House in Abingdon.

We were most fortunate in engaging our District Minister, the Rev'd Jim Corrigall, as the facilitator. His role greatly added to the success of the day. In-depth discussions included worship practices, spiritual development, social justice involvement and social activities.

The outcomes of the day will be considered by the Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society Committee, and a draft strategic plan will be circulated to congregational members and friends before the Annual General Meeting.

BERT CLOUGH

Chair of Oxford Unitarians



Circles of creativity



he highlight of our District's Autumn Quarterly at Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel in Hampstead on Saturday 15th October was the creative spiritual writing workshop run by the chapel's minister Rev'd Kate Dean. I was fortunate to be among those taking part, and we marvelled at how we managed to produce poetic-sounding passages almost spontaneously.

Rev'd Kate began the workshop by throwing out seemingly-random words and asking us to respond by building on the words through association. Further exercises followed, including writing a haiku, a short three-line poem based on the Japanese pattern. We were given only a short time for each exercise. Finally we broke into two 'circles of creativity' to compare our output and each to write a prayer. We impressed each other greatly!

ABOVE Rev'd Kate Dean (with back to camera) leads the creative spiritual writing workshop in the neo-Gothic splendour of Rosslyn Hill Chapel.

Earlier, Rev'd Kate led a welcoming service on 'The Courage to be Creative'. She revealed in her address that during the creative process she felt a strong connection to spirituality and said this became even stronger afterwards. She explained that, when returning to a piece of her own creative writing, she often finds it hard to recognise the work as her own. "It's as if some other hand is at work through me," she said, drawing a connection to words of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart: 'Every act reveals God and expands His Being'.

It was an inspiring day - we ended with a hearty tea - thanks to Rosslyn Hill.

JIM CORRIGALL

Southend transformation

he final service of Southend Unitarian Felllowship at its Meeting House in the town was held on Sunday 17th July. The service was led by the District Minister, Rev'd Jim Corrigall, on the theme of 'Transformations', with music provided by congregational stalwart Jen Hazel.

The gathering focused on beginnings rather than endings. The small Unitarian fellowship (of busy working people) felt it could no longer maintain the Meeting House. Members eventually learned that Southend United Community and Educational Trust (an offshoot of the town's football club) was keen to acquire the centrally-situated meeting house and grounds as a 'hub' for an ambitious outreach programme tackling social deprivation and youth unemployment in the town.

Southend United Community and Educational Trust

The Trust is now taking over the meeting house on a 25-year lease, and it plans to develop a centre for social activities and sport there. Yet this remains a Unitarian building and will revert to our denomination after 25 years. Moreover, the Trust has agreed that the Unitarian fellowship can still hold occasional meetings in the building by arrangement. Meanwhile, Unitarian fellowship members will continue to meet informally via Zoom.

Rev'd Jim told the final service that LDPA District officers had travelled to

"The Southend Trust is putting into practice the very principles of social justice and equality that Unitarians have for so long campaigned"

Southend to meet the Trust's CEO, and had been greatly impressed by the scale and commitment of the outreach work. "The Southend Trust is putting into practice the very principles of social justice and equality that Unitarians have for so long campaigned," he said.

The service was attended by members of other District congregations (mainly Stratford) and by District officers, particularly Bruce Bebington who played the key role in negotiating the legal agreement with the Trust and bringing it to fruition. Many messages of support came in, from District and national Unitarians, including: Rev'd Peter Godfrey who, as GA President, had officially opened the new Meeting House building in 1977, and later had been a strong supporter when he served as LDPA district minister; from Alan Ruston, Honorary LDPA Life Member and long-time supporter; as well as from the former District Minister, Rev'd Martin Whitell.



LEFT The Southend Meeting House, which the Southend United Community and Educational Trust have taken over for the next 25 years.

BELOW A major focus for the Trust is bringing sport to young people in Southend.



to supporting older people in their community for a number of years through their 'Senior Shrimpers' programme. Yes, you guessed it: Southend FC supporters are known as 'Shrimpers'!

LEFT 'Shrimpers' support the local foodbank.

Honouring the Queen

A personal tribute by Susie Courtault

ollowing the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I took a break from the more repetitive media coverage to watch spell-bound as a sober House of Commons delivered moving tributes and personal testimonies.

Labour MP Barry Gardiner referred to watching as a family each year at 3pm as the Queen made her Christmas speech to the nation. Gardiner said some had spoken of her life as a pattern of duty and service, but he wanted to stress that the virtues which her life displayed were 'what Christians call the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.'

MP Jess Philips was taken by surprise at the depth of emotion she felt at news of the Queen's death. The Queen, she said, was a member of 'every one of our families' – even a family like hers, a nontraditional non-monarchist home.

The MP Layla Moran said the Queen earned the respect and love of her people, despite and not because of her title. She recalled growing up abroad as a 'Brit': living in Ethiopia in the 1980s, people would gather as a community at British clubs or the embassy, where the Queen, glorious in oils, gazed down on festivities. The Queen was an icon who brought us together, she said.

These contributions led me to reflect on what the Queen meant to me. I was born in 1947, the year she married Prince Philip, and the footage of that time always takes me back to my childhood memories. I remember the Coronation and the excitement around it.

Fruits of the spirit

For me, what summed up the core of the Queen's humanity was this notion of the fruits of the spirit. Her service and her humility were born of her faith. Her faith sustained her in good times and bad.

The powers of leadership that she revealed as a child during the war were awesome. In her first broadcast to the children of the nation, she empathised with them about their separation from their families, and she quoted Julian of Norwich: 'All shall be well'. It was the children of her generation who would rebuild the country and make it a better place for all, she said.

Defender of the faith

She was the defender of the faith – her Christian faith, but also the defender of people of all faiths and none. The Christian teachings she identified with were those of generosity of spirit, respect for all and a genuine impulse to promote peace, as well as forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the end, what matters most is: 'How well did you live, how well did you let go?'

How seamlessly the Queen was able to take on her role. She became the head of the household and sovereign of the nation, a trailblazer for women as she modelled a new way of being family.

She was a strong young woman, determined and resolute, who took on the challenge of her destiny, transforming herself into a spiritual leader. She was an archetype, walking among us, holding our hands.

Queen Elizabeth was an icon, a role model. Seeing her grow old with dignity and grace – even through the last few painful months after the death of her beloved husband – gave women confirmation they do not have to become invisible after a certain age, that their wisdom is welcome.

I conclude my thoughts with a Buddhist saying: 'In the end, what matters most is: 'How well did you live, how well did you love, how well did you let go?'

The Queen did all these things, and more. May she rest in peace.



SUSIE COURTAULT Interfaith Minister and Co-Chair of Brighton Unitarians



The long reign of HM Queen Elizabet II



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Changing guard at GGU

Departing words from Feargus O'Connor

warmly welcome Rev'd Michael Allured as my successor as minister of Golders Green Unitarians (GGU). Michael began his ministry the day after I retired on 30 September, following my 21 years of ministry at Golders Green.

May I take this opportunity to thank not only Jim Corrigall, our District Minister, for all his valued support but also Michael and members of GGU for all they've done for the congregation and our District over the past 21 years: in particular our GGU committee, Wade Miller-Knight, Andrew Tucker, Graham Jennings, Mary Craine, Angela Dobson, Christopher Mason and Paul Klog, and our administrator, Lyn Payne. Thank you for the sterling work!

My first GGU service, on 1 April 2001, was devoted to Dr Albert Schweitzer, whose ethic of 'Reverence for Life' and

religious thought have inspired me throughout my ministry. It was therefore appropriate that my valedictory service on 25 September was in the spirit of Dr Schweitzer and was devoted to "extending the Golden Rule to all Creation".

It also seemed fitting that the voluntary collection of £284 was donated to the British Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal, while a total of £643 was generously donated by GGU members and friends for humane cancer research to the charity Animal Free Research UK, among whose patrons are Judi Dench and Joanna Lumley.

On my last day as minister, we had a fundraising social for Macmillan Cancer Support and a lecture on philanthropy. Truly in the spirit of Dr Schweitzer and of Golders Green Unitarians.



ABOVE The gathering to bid a heartfelt thanks to Feargus O'Connor at Golders Green Unitarians on Friday 30 September. The event was also a fundraising social for Macmillan Cancer Support. Michael and Feargus stand together in the front row.

Inspirations for the way - Hopes for my GGU ministry by Michael Allured

have been collecting inspirational words to serve as a reminder of what belonging to a religious community and the role of its minister are about. Which two quotations shall I hang on the vestry walls at Golders Green Unitarians (GGU)? On one side, the Golden Rule: "Do as you would be done by". On the other side, words of American poet Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel".

One of a minister's roles in preparing services is to help those who gather feel better when they go out than when they arrived. Sermons, rituals and even special services will gradually be forgotten. But the feeling of receiving a warm welcome, of being included, of feeling valued and cared for, will be what we remember.

Following a Unitarian path is hard spiritual work. Our spectrum of beliefs is not always easy to navigate. What then am I called to do?

- Continue 'holding' a 'safe' space in which the community is able to deepen our spiritual soul journeys in times of joy and sorrow through reflection, music, silence and the sharing of food.
- Find ways together to deepen our explorations of matters of ultimate concern and practise living in right relationship with each other.
- Welcome like-minded seekers into a close, but not closed, community where they find friendship, encouragement and spiritual fulfilment.

Bold aspirations, I know, but surely worth pursuing?

WHO IS MICHAEL ALLURED?

ev'd Michael Allured began his half-time ministry with Golders Green Unitarians on 1 October 2022. Michael trained for the Unitarian ministry at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, from 2017 to 2020 and spent a happy 18 months as student minister with the Chapel Society there. He has been

an active Unitarian for more than 20 years. Currently chair of the LDPA Council, Michael is also a member of the Unitarian Summer School panel. For the other half of his time, Michael continues to work for the Civil Service, where he has had several roles since 1986. Michael and Feargus have been together for 38 years, and they married in 2015.

Minister for New Unity

he New Unity congregation in North London has a new minister ... he is Rev'd CJ McGregor, who arrived from the United States to take up the post in September. Rev'd CJ brings with him a distinguished record in ministry, having served as Minister for two Florida, one Rhode Island and two Massachusetts congregations. He's also served as a hospital and hospice chaplain, and was a Professor of Ministerial Formation at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago.

Rev'd CJ describes himself as a spiritual humanist, open to the mystery and filled with curiosity. He holds a worldview that reveres all spiritual traditions and all of humanity, beyond any particular tradition. He feels held by something greater and believes we can save ourselves if we are committed to love and justice. He holds freedom of belief dear and teaches that we all have a place at the table.

He encourages Unitarians to walk the talk by welcoming everyone, regardless of beliefs.

Rev'd CJ (pictured) describes his ministry as pastoral, stating that he receives the greatest satisfaction from being in relationship with congregants and offering care, support, and guidance. Born and raised in the Adirondack Mountains in New York State, Rev'd CJ and his husband Richard now live in Islington. They have been partners for over 30 years and were married in 2004. They have two adult sons.

Rev'd CJ plans to help the New Unity congregation go deeper into their radical inclusiveness. In his shared ministry with the congregation, he hopes to make New Unity one of the centres in the lives of its members and friends, as well as a centre for justice, equity, and compassion in the community.

Service leaders needed!

Several chapels in our District report difficulties in filling pulpits on Sundays. Are you keen to help by leading worship in other congregations? If so, email administrator@ldpaunitarians.org giving your name and contacts, your congregation and experience in leading worship. Please state explicitly if you are willing for your contact details to be

shared with other Unitarians for this purpose, so that we comply with Data Protection law.

Meanwhile Hastings Unitarian Church has issued a plea for service leaders to visit on a Sunday at 11am to take a service there. Interested? Contact: Jennifer Sanders by email: info@hastingsunitarianchurch.org

QR codes explained

s our Unitarian chapels become more aware of the design and importance of their website information, it may be worth noting the value of QR Codes as a means of drawing attention to those websites.

The initials QR derives from 'Quick Response' and they are a pictorial matrix which, when scanned by a mobile, give immediate access to the websites specified within their designs - in similar manner to the way now-familiar barcodes enable rapid readout of product prices at retail checkouts.



This is a QR Code used by Horsham Unitarian Church to enable access to its website. As described below,

obtaining a code for your own church is a relatively simple and straightforward procedure. When included alongside text or images on your church's information or publicity material, the code will offer rapid access to your website to any reader motivated to seek further details.

PATRICK WYNNE-JONES

Chair of Horsham Unitarians

Generating simple QR codes from a web page URL

- 1. Open the web page for which you want a QR code
- 2. Highlight the URL at the top of the page, right click on it and copy (e.g. https://horshamunitarianchurch.com/)
- 3. Open a new window by searching for QR Code Monkey and clicking on it, or by entering grcode-monkey.com. This is a free QR Code Generator which creates custom QR codes.
- 4. Paste your URL into the line headed Your URL, replacing the URL that's there
- 5. Click on Create QR Code (green box)
- 6. Download the code either by clicking **Download.png** or, if you want it in a different format, click on .svg, .pdf or .eps
- 7. The downloaded file can be pasted into the document you require.

REV'D MARTIN WHITELL

In the Summer edition of IMPULSE, we reported that Rev'd Martin Whitell had retired from the post of District Minister in 2021. In fact, he stood down from the post but did not retire. Our apologies to Rev'd Martin for this mistake; we are happy to report he has not retired.



'Pitching a tent' at Lewes

he Unitarian and Free Christian congregation of Westgate Chapel in Lewes was relaunched on Sunday 16th October at a service led by the new Lay Pastor Stephen Crowther. This was followed by a meeting to reconstitute the committee.



ABOVE Stephen Crowther leading the relaunch service for Lewes congregation.

The congregation had unfortunately become moribund during the time of Covid, following the death of key office-holders. The idea of the re-launch was not 'to rebuild the Temple', Stephen told the service, but rather to 'pitch a tent in

the wilderness' and to invite others to sample the wares. The service, held at Cliffe Hall on the east side of Lewes, attracted 10 people (and a dog!) from Lewes itself and from nearby Brighton and Ditchling.

The District Minister, Rev'd Jim Corrigall, said in his address that the District was proud to support the venture, not because it was certain to succeed but rather because it was very much 'worth a try'. He commended the small group behind the launch for their courage.

After the service, a congregational meeting took place. Stephen Crowther was formally approved as Lay Pastor, while Francis Clark-Lowes was elected chairman of the committee and Lauren Gillman was re-elected secretary. Lauren also agreed to act as treasurer on a temporary basis.

Regular services are to be held in future at 3.30pm on the first Sunday of each month at Cliffe Hall, rather than at the congregation's historic home at Westgate Chapel. For further details contact Stephen Crowther by email srcrowther52@hotmail.com

LDPA website revised

We have revised aspects of our LDPA website, hopefully improving how we present our Unitarian and Free Christian faith. The new text can be found at: www.ldpaunitarians.org/whoarewe The revisions have also been incorporated into the District's congregational websites where appropriate.

'Vision into Action'

special workshop to help congregations in our District renew their vision and activities is to be led by the General Assembly's 'congregational connections lead' Lizzie Kingston-Harrison on Saturday 19th November. The workshop, entitled 'Turning Vision into Action', will be on Zoom, from 10.30am to 2pm, with an hour-long lunch break.

Lizzie has been doing excellent work with congregations nationally, and this is her first such programme at District level.

It's an exciting opportunity for Unitarians in the South East; we hope many of you sign up for this. Email your intentions to Helen White, District Administrator: administrator@ldpaunitarians.org

Tributes to Alan Larcombe

oving tributes have been paid to Alan Larcombe, a Unitarian known and loved throughout the London and South East District, who died on 13th August after a short illness. His funeral took place at Hastings Crematorium on 6th September and a memorial service was held for him at Hastings Unitarian Church on 16th October.

As well as being chair at Hastings Unitarian Church, Alan Larcombe was a trustee at Tenterden and a lay preacher of more than 20 years' standing, leading services at chapels such as Tenterden, Maidstone and Bessels Green, Sevenoaks.

Hastings Unitarians paid him this tribute: "Alan was one of those people who got on with things and had a very positive mindset. He was a forward thinker, instigating the installation of the internet

and purchase of technology for hybrid zoom services during the Covid lockdown. He organised maintenance projects in the church and also found time to produce a church magazine.

"He will be sorely missed by our congregation, not least for his endless energy and uplifting services, always delivered with a hint of humour. Our thoughts remain with his wife Lesley and all the family."



District Council News

earning of the Queen's death moments before we began our 8 August meeting was a reminder that, even when expected, change is unsettling. Yet if the ground is laid carefully for change, we can meet the opportunities.

As members of Council we are mindful of our role in supporting Jim as our District Minister and Helen, who as our administrator, supports our projects so efficiently: FUSE planning, communications, producing Council minutes and planning for continuity amidst changes by setting up a shared space on the Cloud so that current and future Council members have access to key documents and records of decisions.

Continuity planning is especially important as three experienced members of Council stand down at the 2023 AGM. We have a vibrant District, to which this edition of IMPULSE is testimony, but it is important to prepare the ground and cultivate it. We need you! Why not get in touch to find out more? I'd love to talk to you.

"it is important to prepare the ground and cultivate it. We need you!"

Here are three highlights from August's meeting:

- Thanks to the diligent work of Bruce Bebington in partnership with our solicitors, and Jen Hazel and Rob Gretton, who do sterling work caretaking the Southend building, and the B&FUA, we are very close to signing the 25-year lease agreement with Southend United Education Trust.
- The budget for the LDPA financial year 2022-23 (estimated expenditure of around £120,000) was agreed. Approximately £100,000 is for running costs. Income is significantly less by around £40,000. The shortfall is met by drawing down reserves. We need to generate more income.
- It was good to have Robert Ince, our link with the Executive Committee. talking about national developments, including two Zoom consultations on the new chalice logo.

These are times of change and opportunity. Please reach out to me about serving on Council so you can help shape our District's contribution to promoting our Unitarian faith.

Warmest wishes **REV'D MICHAEL ALLURED** Chair LDPA District Council

District Council



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Building Paradise

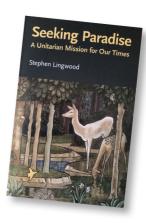
- Theme and Guest Speakers
- Workshops
- Worship and Morning Devotions
- Creativity & Music
- Meditation
- Nature Walks



Theme Speaker **Stephen Lingwood Author of "Seeking Paradise"**







Booking opens in January 2023