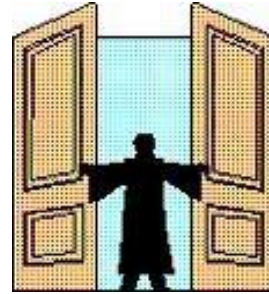


THE OPEN DOOR



NEWS AND VIEWS OF CROYDON UNITARIANS

OCTOBER 2019

***Our minister Rev. Art Lester is pleased to
welcome you to worship every Sunday from
10:30am for the Service at 11:00am and
afterwards for fellowship and refreshments***



Things They Didn't Tell You

Getting older could all have been so much easier. If only people had warned me about a few things. For example, I never knew that a man's ears get bigger as he ages. Now, I have to ask myself - why should that be? Is it a natural defiance against encroaching deafness? Or, with the genius of evolution, does it happen to make a more secure place to attach one's spectacles?

If someone had told me in my salad days that my rather attractive ears were going to begin to grow in perfect inverse proportion to the number of hairs on my head, I would have spent days measuring them in the shaving mirror, full of dread. So maybe it was a kindness that ear-explosion came as a surprise. And to all you younger men out there: I'm sorry if I've given you something new to worry about.

But there are some positive things that they never tell you as well. I'm as afflicted as anyone else with the early morning dread attacks. You know, when you wake up too early and then begin an inventory of all the ills that face you today or in the near future. Things like illness, loss, death and dentures. Things that make your memory foam mattress feel like a bed of nails. But as I have matured, I've learned a few things about those particular goblins.

One is that most of them don't happen. You get some good news at the doctor's surgery, say, or the dentist tells you it's not too late for that molar, after all. The bankruptcy that yawned so widely at 5 am is merely a little cash flow difficulty by teatime. It seems that after a while you learn to remember this even while the goblin attack is underway. So, I wish someone had told me that most of my darkest fears were going to work out to be groundless.

Of the other things you fear, the things that don't go away, you seem to learn something else: it's not as bad as you think it's going to be. "Yes, Mr Lester, that is a detached retina and we're going to have to operate this very day." Ask me how I would have felt about that in the pre-dawn hours; I would probably have just screamed. But in the moment, you know what? It was OK after all. I even got to brag about it afterwards.

Of course, there are some bad things, really bad things I haven't had to deal with yet. But something tells me that when the time comes to face them, that however bad they may be, they won't be as bad as they seemed under the morning bedclothes. That comes with age, with experience. I wish someone had told me that.

Which is why I just did.

--Art Lester

Service - Leaders

Art Lester (Our Minister), or Rev Steve Dick.

October Musicians

<i>16th Oct</i>	<i>Freda Lodge</i>
<i>13th Oct</i>	<i>Bill Higgins</i>
<i>20th Oct</i>	<i>Gill Stone</i>
<i>27th Oct</i>	<i>Gill Stone</i>

Events

<i>13 Oct</i>	Harvest service and Anniversary service
<i>20 Oct</i>	The service will be taken by Dr Jane Blackall, which will be her initial service. Also, the service will be attended by her tutor, Rev ANT Howe.
<i>17 Nov</i>	Anne Howe coming to visit
<i>15 Dec</i>	Carol Service

Pearl Diving for Beginners

It used to be a shameful thing to be in therapy. I mean psychotherapy and counselling - not the kind you get for sore joints.

I think the problem for most people has sprung from the image of the cigar biting Sigmund Freud peering beetle-browed at hysterical patients on a leather divan. Or it may have been the rash of films in the fifties, things like "Lillith" and "The Three Faces of Eve." Remember those? Oh, and don't forget "Psycho." The client or patient was always frighteningly insane underneath a calm exterior, and people

who needed psychiatrists were dangerous mutters. This sort of image came from the shallow uses to which psychology was being put: people either were psychotic, neurotic or “normal.” Everybody wanted to be the third, and went around dreading the second, pretending to be okay even when they weren’t.

Things began to change with the work of Carl Gustav Jung. Dissatisfied with the model of the human psyche that Freud had stamped on the new discipline, Jung began to develop a new picture of the mind that went beyond mere cause-and-effect phenomena of the workings of the brain. During a lifetime of personal experimentation, he evolved within the pseudo-scientific discipline of psychology a theory that opened a new door for 20th century thinkers. You might sum it up this way: when he went looking for the causes and cures of neurosis, he bumped into that old and nearly discarded idea - the soul.

Jung saw the human psyche as being much vaster than the limited theory of Freud had allowed for. There was what is called the conscious mind, which, simply put, is everything that we are aware of. That left the unconscious, which, of course is just everything we are not aware of. His version of the unconscious was not like that of Freud - a kind of swamp of pre-verbal experiences - it was more like a giant sea of a parallel reality, the bottom of which is never found. What is more, Jung found that if you explore deeply enough in the unconscious, you find a place that is *collective*. That is, where each of us touches everything else in the Universe. He spent years investigating this “collective unconscious”, including journeys to China, Africa and Native American communities in the Southwestern US, where he looked for links in myth and story between completely unconnected cultures. He was on the trail of *archetypes* - the basic building blocks of human consciousness, which figure heavily in the symbols, legends and - yes - the *dreams* of people everywhere.

At the time, Jung was marginalized in a profession that wanted above all to become a respected science like physics or chemistry. On the far opposite end of psychological research, PhD’s were inserting electrodes into the brains of cats and dogs and perfecting the horror of electro-shock treatment for mental patients. While they were trying to establish and then enforce a norm for human behaviour, Jung was sailing toward the edge of the world, trying to find the meaning of life.

After his death, other thinkers came forward, psychologists with goals other than the elusive search for the “normal.” And they began to combine with an astonishing range of voices from other disciplines, past and present: poets and mystics like Rumi, the founder of Sufi dance, philosophers like William James, physicists like Fitzjoff Capra and even Albert Einstein. They began to re-investigate

astrology as a tool for typing personality, worked alongside shamans and tribal medicine men and re-connected with the mystical traditions of the great world religions. Their bookshelves were just as likely to have a copy of the Bhagavad Gita as a text of quantum mechanics. The discipline was so new that it didn't have a name, but generally one term began to stick: *transpersonal psychology*.

What brought them together was – to put it very simply – the search for God. After the old white guy with the beard fell off his perch, he left a very big hole in human thinking. Early scientists had ground lenses to peep at him off in space, where Heaven was thought to lie. But they couldn't find him there. Now, when we can gaze on the trillions of galaxies that comprise the universe, he is even less visible to the physical eye. The new wave of thinkers began to listen to older voices which said that God, or the Kingdom of Heaven lay not “out there” but “in here.” And suddenly it seemed that what had begun as a way to control the behaviour of crazy people had evolved into a point of resolution of truths from every direction. That was the beginning of “sacred” psychology.

Once you have got the idea that God is to be found within, then the whole approach to sacred experience takes on a new form. One definition of the divine is *infinite consciousness*. Sacred psychology turns itself to the gradual unfolding of consciousness from the limited, personal and individual to the infinite, transpersonal and universal. Because none of us are separate from the divine, there must be a route through the consciousness of each of us to the source. And yes, there is a route, but there are no shortcuts.

Sacred psychology would have us re-examine the stories of the ancients, see with new eyes the words of poets and mystics from everywhere in the world and begin a new approach to ritual and ceremony. It would be a mistake to view sacred psychology as a new theory of life. Rather, it is a window through which all the various - sometimes even contrasting - experiences of humanity may be reconciled.

There is an old Sufi metaphor that helps me understand all this. It is the image of the diver who wishes to find the perfect pearl. There are various sorts of divers, according to this image. There are those who stand on the beach and gaze longingly at the sea, wishing they had the courage to dive. There are those who actually put their feet into the ocean, but the cold water and strong tides keep them paddling in the shallows. And there are those few, whose longing for the pearl of great price makes them dive deeply, abandoning the safety of dry land.

Sacred psychology is the milieu of the deep diver, those who are willing to go down where things seem dangerous and foreign, into their own inner being. The paddlers are those who have an experience of the sea, but are driven back in fear and reluctance. And those who stay on the beach... well, this is where most of us live our lives, wishing for meaning, knowing where it might lie, but just too timid to take the plunge. This would be all right – there is plenty to do here on the beach, after all - it would be all right except for one thing. Carl Jung said it, but so did teachers and poets and avatars from every age: there is an unquenchable impulse for consciousness to break through the shell of small self and to know itself finally as the one true Self in all. We have all been on a very long journey, longer than we can imagine. We are more conscious than the seashells at our feet, even more conscious than the gulls wheeling overhead, and there is something in us that urges us on, to bring out of the depths of unconsciousness the pearl of final self-awareness. And it just won't let us relax forever on the shore.

Sacred psychology isn't just about theory, though. It is about practice and that toughest task of all - what some call "soul work." For this reason, it doesn't ignore the apparently prosaic demands of ordinary life. In fact, the ordinariness of life is what gives soul work its authority. We can't all just sail off into the wild blue yonder - or, if you prefer, scuba dive straight out of sight. There are children to feed, houses to build, friends to meet, lovers to adore. And it is in just this ordinary arena that the opportunities for real pearl diving emerge.

It is becoming clear to many depth psychologists that symptoms of the mental and physical kind are not just annoyances to be got over. If we are anxious without cause, depressed, gripped by addiction, hobbled by backache, headache, obesity, anorexia, these are not just troubles, but signs from the unconscious part of ourselves. I don't mean to say that all physical symptoms are psychosomatic, far from it. But I do mean that there is something in our condition that is really a kind of soulful road sign that points in the direction of our growth. The way we deal with these things points to the differences between the beachcombers and the deep divers.

At a certain point in life, each of us begins to realise that we are not entirely whole. Why do we avoid certain situations and feel mysteriously fearful when confronted with them? Why does vague illness or fatigue hamper our best-laid plans? Why do we set up circles of collaborators who will tell us how wonderful we are, and wonder why our enemies don't understand us? Why do we set up routines of a magical kind and feel depressed when they are disrupted? Why didn't I write that novel, sail that boat, visit my grandmother in hospital?

I think that there is no one who doesn't have reason to believe that she or he is incomplete or even, in some way, lost. This is not because we are mad. Except, perhaps, as Wayne Dwyer says, the ego or limited mind is insane because it tries to insist that we are somebody we are not. And when this feeling of incompleteness grows strong enough, we turn our eyes toward the sea, where the pearl is submerged. We may "go to see someone" as the euphemism has it. I would prefer to think that the blessing of the symptom has forced us into the deep water, and we have begun to look for the pearl.

This is not an appeal for everyone to rush out and buy a paperback on pop psychology after the service. Nor to make an appointment with a counsellor tomorrow morning. Believe it or not, the British Association of Counsellors hasn't sent me a cheque. It is a suggestion that each of us begins to look more boldly at the life we have chosen for ourselves and to make an honest appraisal of our needs. And if we find that we are ready to begin to dive for the pearl, we might find someone to go with us, give us diving lessons, hold our hands. If we have begun to see that this journey leads us back to ourselves, not to some unknown destination, we may feel like braving the tall surf. And if we can see that this investigation of the soul is not a medical remedy but a different form of prayer, then we may feel that it is not so different, after all, from what we come to this place for.

I think God is pretty crafty. Muslims say he is as near as the neck of your own camel. Up to his old games of hide and seek -- but that's what makes the spiritual path so exciting.

Happy diving!

--*Art Lester*

Water Ceremony & Church Barbeque

Sunday 8th September was a bright sunny day with a slight breeze. An ideal day for the Church BBQ. But beforehand we all had the opportunity to join in the Gathering of the Waters and recount any holiday we had had during the summer months. Art explained how he had ventured to the dizzy heights of Crystal Palace for his contribution of liquid, then he starkly reminded us all of our luck to have pure water to hand.



The Gathering of the Waters Ceremony



RAB serenading the congregation at the Gathering of the Waters Ceremony



David serving at the Barbeque



The Barbeque



Enjoying the Barbeque



Food for thought at the Barbeque

Getting to Know You

This is a regular feature (but with custom -tailored questions) for anyone willing to participate. Please let us know.

The Senior Service Adventures of John Craske

Continued from the August/September 2019 Newsletter

Chapter 2 - All aboard the "Whitesand Bay" by John Craske

From Hong Kong to Singapore and Sumatra then Suez

I arrived in Hong Kong and found HMS Whitesand Bay in the harbour, anchored in midstream, halfway between the Island City of Hong Kong and the mainland town of Kowloon and the New Territories. The land belonged to Britain because it had become part of the British Crown Colony. The town of Kowloon and the peninsula behind was leased for 99 years from China in 1860 and added to in 1898. Apart from the town and a small agricultural area, the rest was mountainous. The airport was on the mainland but the runway had been extended into the harbour in order to accommodate modern airliners.

I had already found my way around the city when on board HMS Tyne. Over the months that my new ship was based there, I found my way over

most of the mainland too, climbing the mountains and also the Peak on Hong Kong Island, and as far as the railway boarder with China. Kowloon was good for restaurants and the City for shopping and markets. There was already a refugee problem in Hong Kong and I used to help out with a group of refugee boat children beside the shore in Kowloon.

The Bay-Class frigates were escort ships, smaller than the destroyers, with a single gun turret on the foredeck, anti-aircraft guns at mid-ships, a mine layer and depth charges against submarines at the stern. They were built of welded armour plating instead of riveted steel sheets and in peace-time became the work-boats of the navy with a 120 ship's company and ready for any task or emergency - towing broken-down ships, policing foreign and British waters, "showing the flag" and providing escorts. We even did mid - ocean rescues in the typhoon season, for which salvage money was earned... You name it, we did it! We also visited other Ports in China, including Shanghai, The Philipines, Sumatra and Singapore.

The power of the ocean waves, driven by a typhoon, was sufficient to bend the metal supports of the safety rails on the foredeck. A rope hawser attached to our stern had to be between half a mile to a mile in length to prevent the tension on the rope breaking it or raising the bow above one wave, then crashing down in the trough before the next wave. The Bay-Class frigates were strong - and had to be.

My main duty on board was to man the radar plot cabin, which contained a metal cabinet the size of two American fridge freezers; these took an hour to warm up and, connected to the revolving aerial on our superstructure, with a repeater screen on the bridge. Not only could I identify land and rocks, but floating debris, fishing boats, larger ships and aircraft with their direction of travel, their distance and size to be reported with details before the Officer-of-the-Watch on duty had seen it on the repeater. The communication was by voice-tube from my funnel deck cabin and the Bridge. I also had to keep the sailing dinghy on the funnel deck clean, varnished and in good order. The radar plot was shift-work, day and night and necessary for the safety of the ship, especially in bad weather, fog and darkness.

I was also the seaman's mess caterer, responsible for the menu in consultation with the Ship's chef. This entailed often going ashore when in Port for fresh food supplies from local markets, with cash for payment. I collected the rum ration for our mess members. In those days it was issued as neat Navy rum on small ships, the quantity for all the members of our mess only just covered the bottom of the stainless metal billy can and divisible by 15.

Our trip to the Island of Sumatra was the highlight of our time based in Hong Kong. First, we visited Singapore, as "Whitsand Bay" needed to go into dry dock to have her below waterline cleaned of barnacles and repainted with antifouling paint. Exposure to the hot sun when in dry dock resulted in all our crew being billeted ashore, away from the dockyard and on the seafront itself. It was in what had once been the grandest of hotels before the war, but had been used by the Japanese invaders as accommodation for their troops, before being left abandoned, and only just cleaned up for us to use. Eventually Raffles Hotel was rebuilt in 5-Star splendour. At least we were near the shops and restaurants.

After two weeks, we set sail for Penang in Malaya, then to the far side of Sumatra to the most perfect tropical bay I have ever seen, with its sandy shores, a wooden jetty surrounded by jungle and to complete the picture, a small tropical island out in the bay.

To be Continued

Happy Birthday!

We wish

*Shirley Wright and Stephen Dick
a very happy birthday.*

The law now requires us to ask you if you would like us to send you emails. If you do not wish to receive emails from us, could you please let us know? -- ed.

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The Open - Door Newsletter

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COULD YOU PLEASE SEND US ANY CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER BY THE 17TH OCTOBER 2019