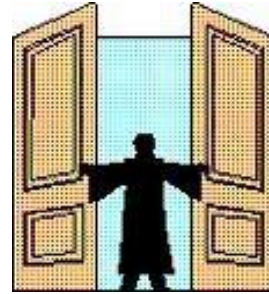


# ***THE OPEN DOOR***



## ***NEWS AND VIEWS OF CROYDON UNITARIANS***

***NOVEMBER 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***



# October Meditation

Once again, we sit on the growing edge of our lives, faced by mysteries we can hardly identify, let alone find answers for. Once again, the earth has turned with us, a year gone by since last we celebrated the life of this congregation, and we find ourselves arrived in a new season, with new challenges and delights. If there is in us a sense of uncertainty, let that certain turning guide us to acceptance. If there is in us a mood of anxiety, let the slow working of the year's plan soothe us. If there is a feeling of clinging to times past let the falling leaves inform and heal us. Let us know that nothing is forever, and that this too is a kindly guarantee.

Here in this season of dedication, let us hold the memory of those who are no longer among us close to our hearts. And then, as the grace of the turning world moves us onward, let us release them. Let us also touch the thoughts of days yet to come, times beyond hope or imagining... let us neither brace against nor rush foolishly to embrace them. Everything has its moment, and our time is now, this October morning.

Here in this October morning we may find that the table is set for a feast of understanding. That the feast is our birth right, but that it comes with one price, so small and yet so hard to pay. What we must exchange is our narrow scheming, our attempt to defy the years their passing. What we must offer is the simple trust of a childlike heart. What we must do is listen, through the din of traffic and the falling rain, through the strident demands of our pedestrian minds, even though the drumbeats of our hearts. If we listen, we shall hear what we need for this moment, this day, for all time. And we shall hear it is we are bold enough to go with openness and faith into that place from which all meaning emanates, the good silence...

For the sight of familiar faces, for the chance to be known, for the fond embrace of this church, for the touch of love in the dear, sweet balm of laughter: God of our hearts, we give thanks for these.

*--Art Lester*

# Service - Leaders

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

## November Musicians

<i>3<sup>rd</sup></i>	<i>Freda Lodge</i>
<i>10<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Gill Stone</i>
<i>17<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Freda Lodge</i>
<i>24<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Gill Stone</i>

## Events

<i>15 Dec</i>	Carol Service
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## From the combined Harvest and Membership Services, October 13<sup>th</sup>

When it was first decided that we would combine two of our annual services - in the interest of convenience - it didn't make much sense. Harvest, we know from childhood; it's got pumpkins and prayers, and - even though we don't know much about farms these days - is familiar. Our anniversary, too, has images that surround it: Re-commitment to the congregation, welcoming new members, placing a sort of bookmark in the year, and adding a feast - for the sheer joy of it.

But then a little story occurred to me. A century and a half ago, some people whose names are mostly now lost to us, engaged in what the fundamentalist denominations call "church planting." To stretch the metaphor, they planted seeds they could not be sure would germinate, like all farmers do, and waited for the harvest.

That's today. Oh, it's not the only one; there have been 148 so far. But the crop of Unitarians here this morning is the direct result of that act of faith and daring. We are the harvest, and we owe the sowers our gratitude...

When I look out at this room with all of your expectant faces, I can't help remembering back to when I first came here, 13 years ago. There were fewer of us then, and we weren't perhaps quite as diverse as now.

The emphasis would have been on the traditions of harvest. Maybe there was a pumpkin up here, perhaps a braided loaf of bread alongside the canned goods we used to save for Nightwatch. Even then, it was difficult to make a connection between our all-too-urban lives and the imagined life of the rural peasant, for whom this church holiday was designed.

Today, we have become aware of an environmental crisis, the real risk of famine in various parts of the world, the drying up of rivers and the flooding of farmland. It brings a chill to our reflections the way agricultural pests and foul weather once terrified our forebears.

So, let's do what people dependent upon the vicissitudes of weather and time have always done. Huddle together in hope. And in that huddle let a sense of gratitude that we are so far safe shine through.

True gratitude is one of the highest and purest emotions we possess. It is the basis of what I think of as real prayer. The fact that it is artificially generated in festivals like this doesn't change that. So, let's cut to the chase and see what gratitude really is, and where it may be found.

Is it simply a quid pro quo acknowledgement for something received? That makes it like the automatic "Thank you," that all really nice children are taught to say. If you piously fold your hands and say with humble insincerity, "Ta very much, God," will the author of the universe feel somehow mollified, and - even better - give you the same good fortune again?

When I think about the times I have felt really grateful, not about the things I "should" be grateful for, what I remember is a feeling of warmth, and a desire to bless someone or something. When the results from the doctor come back good, when the juggernaut that jumps the centre median doesn't quite hit you, or when a day just dawns so beautifully that it makes you gasp, what follows is far from a perfunctory acknowledgement of good news. What follows is praise. If you asked me who I wanted to praise, I wouldn't know what to say, except, yes, God.

But praise - real praise - is what you would bestow on someone you really respect or love. Stripped of its ulterior motive of getting what you want by means of flattery, it is almost certainly a purer form of spontaneous prayer than that of asking for something, because it indicates a genuine feeling for its object. This is more difficult to sham or cultivate

than saying please and thank you. In order to praise, really praise someone, you must have access to a feeling of connection within. And that, of course, is the real purpose of prayer.

It seems to me that the times I have felt like giving vent to praise did not come to me alone and then make me go out and gather my friends together. To the contrary, it was in their company that I found the love and appreciation to praise in the first place. However cynically one might view the tradition of harvest, and however much we might listen with suspicion while the preacher goads us to prayer, we might find in this ancient time another kind of harvest.

This harvest would be less about pumpkins and more about the person sitting next to you at table. If this is the season for counting one's blessings, then we needn't look very far to see them. They are you and he and she and them and me. It is we who are safely gathered in, and the looming winter remains for tomorrow, not for today.

Today we can get more than belly-ache from the groaning tables of our feast. We can leave aside the mealy-mouthed "thank you's" that I'm sure God pays no attention to whatever. We can allow ourselves such an experience of warmth and love for this small company of friends that the desire to praise and bless just springs as easily as the morsels of trifle from our spoons.

I'm pretty sure that's all the gratitude God wants - aren't you?

**--Art Lester**

## **Harvest Festival & Church Anniversary**

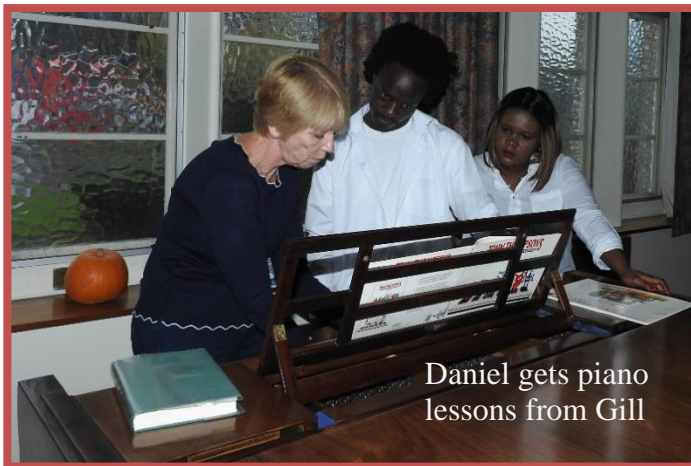
The service on Sunday 13th October was dedicated to the anniversary of our Church and also for our Harvest Festival. We were treated to two songs - "I fear home, No freedom home" and "Hate is a crime" – both written and composed by Daniel Ig from Rainbows Across Borders.

Here are some pictures of the event:





Food, Glorious Food



Daniel gets piano lessons from Gill



Daniel



# Some thoughts about you – You are not!

Offered by our Rev Steve Dick.

## Not.

by Erin Hanson

You are not your age,  
Nor the size of clothes you wear,  
You are not a weight,  
Or the colour of your hair.  
You are not your name,  
Or the dimples in your cheeks,  
You are all the books you read,  
And all the words you speak,  
You are your croaky morning voice,  
And the smiles you try to hide,  
You're the sweetness in your laughter,  
And every tear you've cried,  
You're the songs you sing so loudly,  
When you know you're all alone,  
You're the places that you've been to,  
And the one that you call home,  
You're the things that you believe in,  
And the people that you love,  
You're the photos in your bedroom,  
And the future you dream of,  
You're made of so much beauty,  
But it seems that you forgot,  
When you decided that you were defined,  
By all the things you're not.

**CE** collective . . .  
**EVOLUTION**



who are you, really?  
who are you,  
really?

you are not a name  
or a height, or a weight  
or a gender  
you are not an age  
and you are not where you  
are from  
you are your favorite books  
and the songs stuck in your head  
you are your thoughts  
and what you eat for breakfast  
on saturday mornings  
you are a thousand things  
but everyone chooses  
to see the million things  
you are not

you are not  
where you are from  
you are  
*where you're going*  
and i'd like  
to go there  
too

- Madisen Kuhn



## A Sermon on Leftovers

On 20th Oct Dr Jane Blackall conducted her first Croydon Sunday service in the absence of Rev. Art. She held our interest on the topic of coping with leftovers from our life experiences.



## Getting to Know You

*Pauline Peet Interviews David Scott*

- Q We all know you are an Art teacher David; have you always been interested in the Arts?
- A As a child I always enjoyed making things and I loved books. As a teenager my Art Teacher Eddie Snaith inspired me to draw.
- Q Did you always want to be a teacher or did you have other ambitions when you were young?
- A My parent's advice was that 'teaching art' would be the safest option for me in terms of providing career progression and secure work. I recall when I was sixteen a member of staff at my school pointing out to me that teaching was a 'petty profession'! In many respects she has been proven right! Looking back, I think I would have preferred to go to Art School and keep my options open!
- Q You and Sajid have been attending church for a few years now what is it that you like about it?

- A We like the range of services and the Church's 'Open Door' policy - our Church Community is very friendly and supportive.
- Q Do you have a favourite hymn?
- A For The Beauty of the Earth
- Q Has there been anyone in your life or have you any words that has inspired you?
- A Too many to name here! However, Chris McGovern (Historian and Chair of Campaign for Real Education) is one of my very good friends and Chris has counselled me wisely over the years.  
*Mark Twain has inspired me with many words! Here's just a few....*  
The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not'. – Mark Twain
- Q Do you have a favourite holiday destination?
- Barcelona is such good value – great food, culture, art and architecture
- Q I would imagine teaching is very stressful, so how do you like to relax?
- A I immerse myself in Art
- Q What are your favourite foods? Do you like to cook?
- A Thank goodness for eggs - I enjoy cooking when time permits
- Q If you could live part of your life again when or where would that be?
- A I have been very lucky and would not want to change anything about my life or live part of it again. I move forward without regrets.
- Q Finally, you are stranded on a desert island, what 3 things would you definitely want to have with you to help you survive, (excluding a mobile phone.)
- A My eyes to enjoy the beauty of the island, the ocean and the morning and evening skies. Skills and knowledge to sustain a healthy diet, build fires and construct and maintain a shelter. If I'm allowed a work of art it would be "Another Place" by Antony Gormley.

Thank you, David

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

## A letter from a visitor who came to the Harvest/Anniversary Service

Hi Art,

I wanted to thank you for the service on Sunday, and I'm sorry I had to disappear so quickly, but I had an arrangement to meet my Australian friends at the Station at 12.30.

I just wanted to give you feedback that this was one of most moving services I have EVER been to, and I wished you lived in Australia!! It combined many things I value: music, honouring history, inclusiveness, social justice, gratitude (I agree the richest kind of prayer: have you used *Gratefulness.org*.. a worthy site I use a lot myself!), and the involvement with gay refugees of colour is such a tribute to you all as a congregation.

I nearly didn't come... it required prizing myself away from my friends.. and I'm so glad I did.

If you ever visit Perth in Australia.. please get in touch!!! Who knows, I may be back one day, but right now we are packing to leave in two days.

All the very best.

... *Eversley*

Eversley Ruth Mortlock

UK Brexit Banter Travel Blog:

[eversleym.wordpress.com](http://eversleym.wordpress.com)



# The Senior Service Adventures of John Craske

*Continued from the October 2019 Newsletter*

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

### **From Hong Kong to Singapore and Sumatra then Suez**

I wrote what follows some ten or more years ago as one of my three times a year newsletter, whilst living in Brittany for 27 years, over 70 newsletters sent to 50 friends and relatives worldwide, complete with photographs and a cover design relating to content.

It was a relief to go to sea again, to feel the cooling breeze and to sleep on deck at night. By day, we painted the ship, as we cruised toward the south-western coast of Sumatra, not far from the town of Aceh. Aceh had seen major flooding, caused by the movement of tectonic plates, deep below the surface of the earth. Many people had been drowned, lost their homes and livelihoods.

Sumatra had been a Hindu Empire in the 8th Century and the then centuries later, the Portuguese were the first from Western Europe to trade with this, the largest of the Spice Islands. In the late 16th Century, Sumatra became part of the Dutch Empire and remained so until the British took over the Island following the wartime Japanese occupation. Shortly after our visit, it became part of Indonesia.

We headed for a small port, somewhat grandly named Emmahaven. All there was there was a single wooden jetty at the head of a small bay set in the middle of a tropical jungle, with pumping facilities for oil when unloading tankers. Pipes led to the storage tanks in the principal town some miles away, and was the main supply for the Island. Already the natives were in revolt, under cover, in the jungle, seeking to support the establishment of a new and independent Muslim country called Indonesia. There was a small island of tropical trees and yellow sandy beaches at the entrance to the bay, sheltering the landing stage from the waves of the Indian Ocean, but no people, huts or signs of habitation, just jungle.

We had been invited to visit the town and play rugby against the Army. They sent an open top lorry to fetch us, but no escort, just one civilian driver. Our team of 15 were sitting on the floor during the journey. We had no weapons except the revolver carried by the Ship's Captain. The match, which we won, was played throughout a very heavy tropical rain storm, which flooded the grass pitch with inches of water.

Several days later, we seamen ratings were lined up with our rifles with fixed bayonets as a guard of honour for important guests representing the Dutch Government and the British Army, who were to sign the document which returned Sumatra to the Dutch Authorities. I have a copy of the official photograph of the event.

The next day, we set sail again and travelled along the coast to the narrow channel that separates Sumatra from Java which normally required a pilot to navigate ships through the passage, known as the Soenda Straits. However, we relied on the Captain's navigational skills, using sonar and radar. We also had Admiralty Charts, which needed updating, for this was where Kakatoa was, and changing as it grew again, including the new volcano called Anak Krakatono (or Child of Krakatoa) and old rocks which were once the base of the mountain that blew-up in 1883.

We were able to sail through the middle of all this as steam bubbled and boiled along the Ship's sides. The new volcano blew hot ash, rocks and lava as it began to grow again in clouds of sulphuric steam rising from the bottom of the sea as we sailed over the huge crater in the earth's crust, many fathoms below.

There was one small and perfectly shaped cone with smoke and the occasional release of lava, a growing and threatening volcano. This new volcano has on one or two more occasions disappeared and then grown to sea level, only to be blown apart and now rising again as we witnessed from the ocean floor. Of the huge and catastrophic eruption of 1883, little remained. Six cubic miles of volcanic rock had simply vanished in the biggest bang that the world had seen and officially recorded. Either it had been blown into the sky or had collapsed into the caldera, a huge, very deep crated-like cavity in the ocean floor.

In the words of his book, Simon Winchester describes the scene thus:

"It was on a warm summer's evening in the 1970's as I stood in a palm plantation, high on a green hillside in Western Java, I saw for the first time, silhouetted against the faint blue hills far away Sumatra, the small gathering of islands that is all that remains of what was once a mountain."

There was a high peak to the left of the group, its pyramid shape cut off sharply by the vertical north cliff. A couple of low islands hugged the horizon to the right. In between them was a small, perfectly formed and absolutely symmetrical low cone, from which rose a thin whisper of smoke. " This as was as I had seen it in 1946.

Winchester explains that Anak Krakatoa had grown higher by 20 feet and 40 feet wider for each mount. Twenty-five years later it was a mountain again, fully five hundred feet taller. It had disappeared altogether in 1929, resurfacing again in 1930, erupted in 1935 and again in 1993. Day by day



this volcano continues to grow. It has grown from almost nothing when I saw it in 1946. One day, any day, sooner or later, it will blow its top again.

*To be Continued*

*Happy Birthday!*

*We wish*

*Bryn Craske, Audrey Waldren, Beatrice Maruguhe,  
Daní & Tim Adair-Stirling, and Carole Smith*

*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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*For Church bookings, contact Lol Benbow.*

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BY THE 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2019**