



## Newsletter April 2023

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Spring! We hope you have all had a good Easter.

### **Soul Space: a meditation**

Aaaaand- relax!  
It's stop time,  
Divine me time,  
Just be.

Soul space,  
Sacred place,  
Holy ground,  
Just here.

Earthed,  
Rooted and reaching,  
Relearning - teaching,  
Just be.

Connection,  
No rejection,  
Accepted –held.  
Just as you are.

Make yourself comfy,  
Kick off your shoes,  
This is holy ground.

Meryl White 2020

### **In this issue:**

**1. The role of stories in our lives:** notes from our March Zoom Soul Space meeting

**2. Nichiren Buddhism**, a write up of our Soul Space meeting at the Old Library on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

**3. Poem by John O'Donohue**

**4. Upcoming programme**

### **The role of stories in our lives**

"The universe is made of stories, not of atoms."

Muriel Rukeyser) (See PCN website, Made of Stories film series)

Throughout history we have told ourselves stories to try and make sense of life, the universe and everything. Stories are the way we make sense of our own lives and the lives of others. Storytelling is the most powerful communications tool in history.

Linda asked us to explore the importance of narratives or storytelling and think about how this relates to the stories we grew up with, the fact that the stories about Jesus and the stories Jesus told were circulating orally for decades before they were written down, the fact that Jesus used stories to communicate a message (thankfully, PowerPoint hadn't been invented!), discrepancies between different stories about the same event, creation stories in different cultures, the stories we have been told to try to explain human suffering, and also perhaps the role of translation in transmitting and influencing stories.

How does it feel when a story you have relied on to give meaning to your life falls apart?

The gospel of John ends with the statement: .."there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

So, what did we miss? Does it matter? If the stories about Jesus and the stories attributed to Jesus had not survived beyond the first century, how different would the world be? What about stories from other faith traditions? Can you think of one that has been meaningful to you? What are the implications of the fact that the Qu'ran also contains "the stories of Adam and Eve and their fall from Heaven, Noah and the Ark, Abraham and his trials, Joseph, Moses and Pharaoh, and Mary and the miraculous birth of Jesus.

Linda gave this example: "Several years ago, I was one of three witnesses to a particular event. The case came to court more than a year later and the three of us, having been present, were all sure of what we had seen or experienced. It turned out that our recollections were each slightly different and this convinced the jury that we were lying. In fact, if we had been making it up, we would have got together beforehand and "got our story straight" – a word-perfect testimony would, in fact, have been indicative of collusion."

Editor's comment: Many of us have examples such as this. And in our daily lives, how

often does having a different 'story' affect our relationships and our perception of the world? The more I have thought about this the more important I realise that stories are. What do you think?

**Resources, notes and quotes to consider:**

**"Stories are memory aids, instruction manuals and moral compasses." (Aleks Krotoski)**

**Hilary Mantel Reith lectures** (available on BBC Sounds)

Many thanks to **Linda** for giving us this food for thought.

**Nichiren Buddhism** a write-up of our Soul Space meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

It was a joy to meet with Phil and Ian who shared a little of the history, philosophy and practice of Nichiren Buddhism. They reminded us that Buddhism is not a religion, they do not worship a deity, but it is a philosophy. To seek enlightenment is to seek the true nature and potential of life. The sense of morality roots out a respect for the dignity of all life and an awareness of the law of cause and effect. All things are seen as part of one wholeness; what affects one part affects all parts. Life is seen as eternal, repeating in a cycle which is sometimes seen and sometimes unseen. It enables people to see their potential and their ability to improve the quality of life of self and others.

Phil and Ian shared a little of their practice of chanting, 'Nam Myoho Renge Kyo'. Their founder, Nichiren Daishonin, taught that this can reveal a state of life filled with wisdom, courage and compassion; it can enable people to 'draw on limitless inner resources and actively contribute to a creative and peaceful society'.

There was only time for a brief snapshot of the wealth of their teaching. I could see many resonances with the teachings of Jesus. Personally, I was very moved to experience the chanting; I was aware of a sense of unity and common purpose seeking the best for self and others. It reminded me of experiences of singing Taize or Centering prayer chants; somehow the shared experience resonates at a deep, spiritual level, drawing the singers closer to oneself, one another and the ground of all being.

I was left with a question though, 'What would the philosophy of Jesus look like?'  
Answers on a postcard please!

Reference: <https://sgi-uk.org/>

<https://sgi-uk.org/shop/All/Books/Introductory/An-Introduction-to-Nichiren-Buddhism>

Resources mentioned during session:

Jesus: A story of enlightenment by Deepak Chopra. (2008) Harper Collins: New York. This novel is curious about the missing years between Jesus' childhood and the start of his ministry. It ponders on how Jesus became a teacher and a shining example of higher consciousness.

[https://youtu.be/tmKO5cBLP\\_c](https://youtu.be/tmKO5cBLP_c)

Also of interest - an article on the healing power of chanting in a Benedictine Monastery [www.newscientist.com/letter/mg16422156-400-wilting-monks/](http://www.newscientist.com/letter/mg16422156-400-wilting-monks/)

And a link to the writer referenced in the article [www.leemeestudies.com/intro.html](http://www.leemeestudies.com/intro.html)

Many thanks to **Meryl** for this write up and for the meditation at beginning of the newsletter.

### **Poem: A blessing for the senses**

May your body be blessed.

May you realise that your body is a faithful and beautiful friend of your soul.

And may you be peaceful and joyful and recognise that your senses are sacred thresholds.

May you realise that holiness is mindful gazing, feeling, hearing and touching.

May your senses gather you and bring you home.

May your senses always enable you to celebrate the universe and the mystery and possibilities in your presence here.

Maybe Eros\* of the Earth bless you.

\* life energy

**John O'Donoghue** Anam Cara, spiritual wisdom from the Celtic world

### **Upcoming programme**

Soul Space Zoom Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April **Pilgrimages** (link to be sent out soon)

Soul Space Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at the Old library. **"Focusing"**

Please note the date due to the coronation the previous weekend.

Soul Space Zoom Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May **Quantum theology**

Soul Space Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June at the Old Library **Clowning**

Sunday July 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Old Library, Muller Road **AGM** Annual report /elections

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter. Feedback always welcome.