

Humanistically Speaking

April 2020

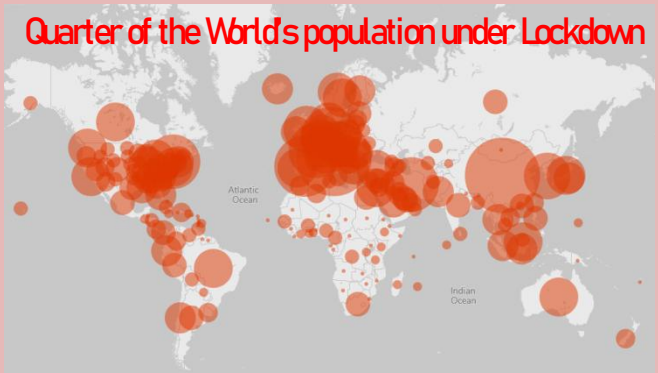
A local newsletter sharing a non-religious worldview

Humanity at War

World in a race against time to beat the coronavirus pandemic

Like a slow-motion tsunami, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic is overwhelming healthcare systems and shutting down the world economy.

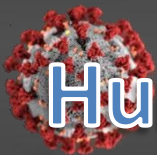
Quarter of the World's population under Lockdown



Our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents lived through world wars, bombing raids, rationing and economic turmoil in their fight against human enemies. We have, so far, lived through the threat of nuclear annihilation and survived financial crashes. We live in the shadow of many existential threats of varying probabilities including asteroid strikes, gamma ray bursts, rogue black holes, supervolcanoes, stellar explosions and climate change. Flu pandemics are infrequent but deadly. The 1918 H1N1 flu outbreak is estimated to have killed 50 million people worldwide, whilst the 1957 H2N2 killed 'only' 1.1 million.

We do not yet know how the 2020 pandemic will play out but we know how to 'flatten the curve' and treat those who fall victim to it. Human beings are resourceful and resilient. Doctors, nurses, and other essential workers are already putting their lives on the line to save as many people as possible. The virus is isolating us from each other but we are discovering new ways to stay connected. Above all, we are learning anew what really matters in the end: caring for each other, appreciating what each day brings and a sense of stoicism in the face of adversity. We will get through this together.

Contact us at: Humanistically.Speaking@gmail.com



Humanists undefeated

As the virus attempts to disrupt human civilisation, Humanists across the country have been working hard to keep members connected.

Central to most Humanist groups is the connection between people. Groups across the nation typically hold a monthly meeting of one sort or another, where they come together and chat, learn something new, enjoy each others' company and stimulate neurons with scientific and other forms of knowledge. With the virus upon us and movements restricted it does pose challenges, but we are not beaten. Groups everywhere are finding new and innovative ways to maintain that connection. For example, Liverpool Humanists held their first online 'pub social' in late March.



Virtual meetings are taking place instead of regular ones right across the network, with Café Philo switching to online chat, a Happiness Group having a Zoom discussion, and Dorset also hosting a coffee morning via the same app attracting 16 members. Outside our area, Liverpool hosted a social and Manchester has three upcoming online events: a book club, social and webinar.

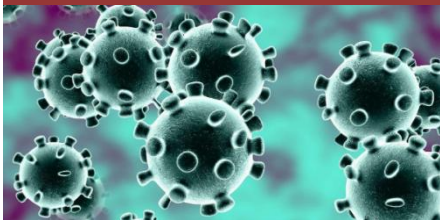


Virtual coffee morning



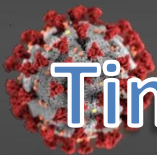
We could be defeated and hibernate for a number of weeks, or we could face the challenges posed to us and overcome them whilst continuing to keep the vital connection that our members need and deserve. What could your group do today to help stay connected?

The danger posed by emerging virus infections



Humanist groups have a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise, and in Dorset one such member has given a virtual presentation on line via the Zoom app.

The moment Coronavirus came to light, Dorset tapped into its pool of scientists and invited Greg Atkins to give us our very own briefing. Greg featured in the Science course of last year, in which he delivered a similar talk to the dedicated thirty or so who attended, but with Zoom, this played out to a larger audience.



Time to use your Time

So what could we be doing during this time of isolation?

Write an article

that requires your input. Either this news outlet will bring groups together or it will not so if you value this means of communication, please do support it. We are here for each other.

Humanistically Speaking is a bi-monthly magazine for you. It has a twelve month pilot period to succeed and

Exercise

You might be under 'house arrest' but you can still get your daily exercise by going outside, staying two metres away from others, and enjoying walking, running or cycling in less populated areas. If stuck at home you could do press ups, sit ups, weights or other improvised exercises in your home. The internet has a load of video tutorials for "no equipment" fitness, [try this one](#).

Stay Connected

You have a telephone, the internet, and apps that are great for keeping in touch. Phone someone you haven't spoken with in ages, hold a Skype, Google Duo, Hangout or Zoom video chat with a friend or family, or multiple friends and family at the same time. Try it, it's easier than you think. The simple act of talking physically to someone can lift morale and make you feel better.

Social Media

Social Media has gained a bad reputation in recent years for occupying too much of people's daily time, but now it has become an essential life tool for interconnectivity. If used in the right way it's great for sharing information, posting stories, uploading a photo of something fun you did that day, or recording a video for people to follow on Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube.

Start a project

Ever felt like writing a book, practising poetry, singing, building something in the shed, making an origami sculpture or something that you just had the urge to try but never had time for? Well now is the time! YouTube is filled with inspired ideas of people replanting their gardens, tidying the shed, or doing home improvements. Time to get those paint brushes out perhaps?

Box-set heaven time?

Modern day living can be so busy that all those TV series people have been ranting about - maybe now is the time to watch some. Maybe you're inspired by reality TV, such as Masterchef, where you can learn to create a new culinary experience. Or perhaps with other life expenses on hold you want to invest in Netflix for a bit, and catch up on some of the many TV series that are available.

This doesn't have to be a bad time of life, you don't have to be totally without outside connection, you can use this time productively. Tell us what you choose to do, email us below.



A New Dawn Arrives for Winchester Humanists!

Winchester Humanists beat freezing rain, Coronavirus and a staffing failure at the bar to triumph against the odds ...

It seemed that there was nothing that could keep Humanists away from the launch at Winchester on the 5th March, and when the catering service at the local Discovery Centre collapsed through staff sickness, Ruth Chase and her friends simply rolled up their sleeves and purchased bottles of wine, fruit juice and savoury nibbles to get the show on the road.

Ruth and her colleague Janet Powell are both working celebrants who have long wanted to establish a Humanist Group in their area that can help foster ongoing links between the two great strands of local Humanist activity – groups and ceremonies.

After such a successful launch it was with some disappointment that the little bug grew into a pandemic before the month was out, postponing the follow up meeting that was planned to officially pull members together and outline their future together.

Watch this space!





Winchester Launch

Continued from previous page

They planned a simple drop-in style event, and it worked a treat, with a steady stream of folk popping in to chat about Humanism and about the possibility of setting up a Humanist Group in Winchester before leaving their contact details.

Did it work? Ruth and Janet have gathered 37 names and addresses already, including three local councillors (one of whom is the city Mayor) who are determined to put Humanism on the local map - and there were numerous more people who have asked to be kept in touch of developments - and that included not just offers to join, but also help organise the fledgling group. And with *that* many names on their contacts list, they couldn't have had a better start! Well done, Ruth and Janet. And everyone else who helped on the night!



The Chair's Interview

Maggie Hall

Maggie lives with her partner, Malcolm, and cats, Eddie and Freddie, in their comfortable home in Steyning, West Sussex. It is several miles away from Brighton, but still within easy driving distance – albeit along pretty, but winding country roads. “We are hidden away here”, she told me when I was on my



way to interview her “... even the Jehovah’s Witnesses can’t find us!” (That would be a blessing for some, I thought). Maggie’s home is comfortable and well-furnished, and the walls are lined with some very fine paintings created by Malcolm, who is a talented professional artist, and the photograph you see was taken in his studio.

Although she was not brought up in a particularly religious household, Maggie was converted to Christianity at an early age. At 16 she had the whole total immersion baptism ceremony - and she became an enthusiastic evangeliser. She smiled wistfully as she described herself then as a ‘pain in the arse’. But after some years, she began to become aware of inconsistencies that eventually became so fundamental that her whole faith system began not to feel right. As a result, she began to review things, cast her net wider, and explore alternative philosophies.

She thinks she possibly became aware of Humanism as far back as the mid 1960s, although many more years would pass before she began to explore it properly. But when she did, she decided that Humanism made much more sense to her. However, the process of becoming a Humanist was far from easy and untroubled, and it took more years of reflection and heart searching before she finally turned away from her faith. “You’ve got to remember, I thought I would go to Hell if I didn’t believe in God ...” she said, before adding, “... but at the same time I knew I could be a good person without believing in a deity, so it no longer made any sense to me”.

Maggie joined Humanists UK about 15 years ago, and she started attending talks organised by the then Brighton and Hove Humanists Society. She enjoyed the meetings very much, and became involved in organising events herself when she joined the Committee in 2012. She reflects that one reason why Humanism has been so successful in recent years is because they are more ‘on the ground’ with the community. “Of course the recent rebranding helped ...” she said “... but declining

religious affiliation, social media, celebrant services, pastoral carers and Humanist school visitors have all played their part.” And as a school visitor herself, Maggie is very concerned that children have an opportunity at least to discover alternative ideas through Humanism.

She thinks that increasing awareness of Humanism in today’s society is more urgent than ever. Not just because society so badly needs to be offered alternatives to the worst of religious dogma (some of which does much to divide society) but because religious organisations are fighting back. They are establishing faith schools at every opportunity and are becoming increasingly active. Evangelicals are coming in large numbers from the USA and Africa and are establishing footholds in the cities. They are also gaining access at schools where some teachers don’t feel confident about the subject and are quite keen to hand over responsibility to evangelisers, who are. So whilst the Humanist movement is growing fast, it is confronted by many threats and she was very clear where she stood.

“We should not give up on challenging the 26 unelected bishops in the House of Lords ... and the BBC’s stubborn refusal to broadcast any Humanist Thoughts for the Day are injustices that we should not let pass ... and the media’s continuing deference to religious organisations are also a ongoing concern”, she said.

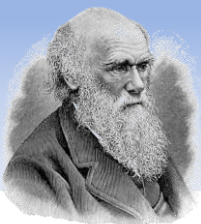
And when I asked her, what does the humanist movement need most? Maggie didn’t hesitate. “More school speakers”, she said.

I agree with her. Children are the most vulnerable people in our society and they need protection from being conditioned and railroaded into a particular religion before they are in a position to use their own judgement. It’s not that they shouldn’t be exposed to faith ideas, but they should *never* be exposed to just one faith before they are able to choose for themselves what their faith or worldview is.

David Brittain
Executive Editor



Humanists working together:
Maggie Hall (Brighton)
David Warden (Dorset)



Charles Darwin.

Dear Darwin

Ask us your questions on Humanism

Dear Darwin

I have two young children aged 3 and 6, I'm a dedicated Humanist and want to raise them with critical thinking, science and Humanism. I want to take them to talks, especially the older one, as there are some he can understand. Is this okay to do? I know when I see my religious friends taking their kids to church I am horrified at the indoctrination. Would I be doing exactly that?

Dear Dedicated Humanist, the best thing you can do for your young children is send them to school, which you have to do anyway. Humanists are passionate about the value of education, critical thinking and science and this should all be happening in school. By all means bring them along to a Humanist event when they are ready, and no, they won't be indoctrinated, except to think for themselves.

Dear Darwin

'The right to die' has been campaigned for by Humanists for many years for those with terminally ill conditions. As compassionate and caring human beings we don't wish to see others suffer in pain when nothing can be done. In coming years (as the law changes) their lives will be ended. What about those struggling with life who wish to die? What denotes "pain"? Is suffering not suffering no matter what? If a human being requests to die, who are we to say no?

Dear Anonymous,

you seem to be hinting at what psychotherapists call 'suicidal ideation' but you are also posing this as a philosophical question about the right to die. Humanists believe that we can make autonomous choices about our lives, including the decision to end it. But at the same time we always hope that people can be helped to see their situation from a more positive and hopeful perspective. If you or anyone you know is in this situation, we urge them to contact their GP in the first instance.

Dear Humanistically Speaking,

in page 3 of your last issue you raised the question of whether Humanism should have a permanent Humanist House somewhere outside London? I think perhaps it should and in the North – Manchester perhaps. We certainly don't need a Humanist church. Thinking of a physical Humanist home, I am a member of Amnesty, FOCUS (mental health users' group) and volunteer to help our Vulnerable Syrian Refugees. I meet each group in three different churches in Guildford. Each church has focused on community use, nothing to do with religion. The church has invested in property, and property offers the opportunity to provide community use and some income. Makes sense.

Sue S - Farnham

Thought for the Day

How should Humanists react to the global crisis?

“You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment. Fools stand on their island of opportunities and look toward another land. There is no other land; there is no other life but this.” – Henry David Thoreau

A Christian friend recently asked his two young daughters, aged seven and nine, for their thoughts about the coronavirus pandemic. They reassured him that they weren't worried. They knew that some people were going to die but if anything happened to *them* it would be sad but they would carry on living with God in Heaven. Needless to say, he approved of their answer. As he told me about this, I felt a Humanist response forming in my gut. Humanists do not, of course, believe in life after death. So for us, the best way to respond to the current crisis is to reflect on the great existential question posed by the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau. Famously, he wrote, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” So what are the essential facts of life which make the difference between living and not living, between living and merely existing? One memorable answer was provided by the fictional housewife Shirley Valentine in the play of the same name by Willy Russell. Lamenting the reality of her ‘unlived life’

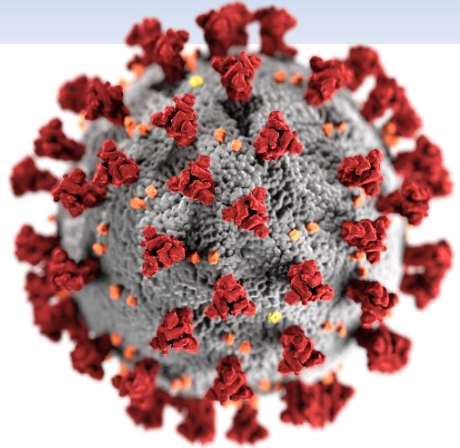


Illustration of coronavirus by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Wikipedia public domain)

she longed simply to ‘drink a glass of wine in a country where the grape is grown.’ In the play, after her escape to Greece, she got rather more than she bargained for, including an intimate encounter with a Greek boatman.

Travel and close encounters may be off the agenda for the time being, but there are many simple ways in which we can take pleasure in the business of living and ‘front only the essential facts of life’. We can be grateful for the food on our table, stop and listen to the song of a blackbird, welcome the return of sunshine and flowers, appreciate the kindness of strangers and the heroism of doctors, nurses, and other essential workers. We live on a dangerous planet, but it is still a beautiful world.

*David Warden,
Dorset Humanists*



Network News

Groups getting together



A Local Voice in Humanist Affairs?

It has been suggested by one of the editors of *HS*, that it might be a good idea to organise an open, 'whole day' conference in the centre of our network in Winchester at a weekend sometime in the late summer this year, (or - more likely thanks to coronavirus - spring 2021). All members and friends of groups within the South Central England region can attend, with the object of facilitating the opportunity to meet and greet and share information and ideas relating to Humanism at every level. But it would be a workshop, rather than a talkshop. The idea is an exercise in Humanist 'democracy in action', and actions agreed would be actively supported and promoted from the centre.

We have even come up with a rough draft plan for such an event, and an edited version is listed below. But it is important to bear in mind that this is not in any way a definitive version, so it will be subject to change and possibly even a complete rewrite depending on what you, our readers, say – so do please feel free to tell us what you think.

Send your comments to: humanistically-speaking@gmail.com and we will respond to you and try to take all your thoughts on board.

PROGRAMME

- Register
- Introduction (Network Chairman)
- Humanist meditation session
- First guest speaker
- Break
- Groups chat / table discussion
- Feedback interval
- Lunch
- Headline speaker
- Break / stretch legs
- Star Trek Humanism
- Closing words - Chair
- Groups to mingle
- End

UN Global Goals and Humanism
Healthy Humanists

Exploring the Living Humanism chart
Climate change - a Humanist's responsibility?



Equality & Diversity

Aaron and Ronnie discuss trans issues



Aaron Darkwood

*Humanistically Speaking
Design Editor*

With pride events cancelled all over the world, we decided to explore a topical LGBT issue in this edition of Humanistically Speaking.

Dear Ronnie,

I recently watched an episode of the Julia Hartley-Brewer Show in which she interviewed Posie Parker (also known as Kellie-Jay Keen) who is one of the most prominent voices of the “gender-critical feminism” movement. To be honest, I was left confused about how we should assign a gender to new-born babies. Is it wrong to declare that a baby with male parts is a ‘boy’ and a baby with female parts is a ‘girl’? After all, the ‘boy’ may grow up and decide to be a girl, and the ‘girl’ may grow up and decide to be a boy. I’m also unclear as to when pronouns should be changed later on. For example, if a boy decides at some point down the line to identify as a girl, does the pronoun change from ‘he’ to ‘she’ at the beginning of their trans journey or only after medical intervention and surgery? And what about the vexed issue of changing rooms? Is it really acceptable for a biological man who now identifies as a woman to have access to women’s only spaces like changing rooms? I’m confused and I hope you can help.



Ronnie Barr *Young Humanists*

*Ambassador for Dorset and Diversity
Representative for Dorset Humanists*

Dear Aaron,

When a child is growing up you use the pronouns they were assigned at birth as determined by their physiological sex. If at any point you are asked to use a different set of pronouns then that is what you use. No trans person has ever found it insulting or rude to call a baby by its birth gender. On your second point, you don’t have to have a full transition to be classed as the gender you identify as. In UK law you need to be living as your ‘acquired’ gender for at least two years and be diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Surgery and hormones don’t come in to it. Generally you are considered to be whatever gender you identify as, as soon as you do so. I’m considered male by the healthcare system, education system, friends/family etc. On your third point, there have never been any cases of trans women going into changing rooms to take advantage of women. The argument that men are pretending to be women in an attempt to take advantage of people in changing rooms is entirely bogus and it demonises trans women. Trans people go into changing rooms to change.

Humanists UK has an LGBT Humanists section which promotes Humanism and LGBT equality, working to combat prejudice and discrimination.

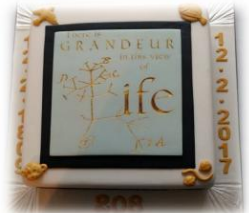
Those were the days

A Humanist 208th Birthday for Charles Darwin!

(A report on a special visit to Down House that was originally written on 12th February 2017)

Charles Darwin's birthday at his home at Down House was always going to be special. Indeed, it had been an ambition of mine that I never thought would be realised. But it was - and in the end the event was even more memorable than I expected.

Darwin is one of many heroes along the path to the scientific respectability of Natural Selection. But he is the one we remember most, because *The Origin of Species* was Darwin's book that - in the 19th Century - exploded ideas about divine creation throughout the civilized world. He lived at Down House from 1842 until his death in 1882, and his widow, Emma, remained there until her death in 1896. It was soon offered for rental, and in 1900 leased to a Mr Whitehead who stayed there until 1906, after which it became a girls' school until it was bought, in 1927, for the British Association for the Advancement of Science as a memorial to Darwin. It was only in May 1954 after the property had been donated to the Royal College of Surgeons that it was designated as a Grade 1 listed building. Its current owners, English Heritage, acquired the House as recently as 1996 and opened it to the public two years later.



It has proved very popular ever since, with visitors from all over the world, so the idea of a small Humanist group actually holding a private event there to celebrate the great man's birthday seemed impossible. If Humanists UK hadn't organised an event there, how on earth could little Basingstoke Humanists?

I mentioned it at a committee meeting around March as a passing pipe dream of mine, and it was other Committee members, not me, who insisted that exploring the possibilities might be worthwhile. And so it was that in April we contacted the Manager of Down House to suggest a private Humanist event there – and I think we were all very excited when they expressed their interest. We later met, and they offered us the exclusive use of a private room the day before his birthday, plus a full buffet, and a guided tour of the gardens including Darwin's famous Sandwalk.

It would not be cheap, but it was do-able. Moreover, Humanist UK's advice on prices to charge for places proved invaluable, and enabled us to lay on extras for food, a bespoke Happy Birthday cake for Darwin (decorated with his famous 'tree of life' sketch), and champagne to toast the



great man. The only problem was to find a Humanist with the appropriate profile and gravitas to offer a talk and offer a toast to Darwin. Enter Professor A C Grayling, who, when I asked him in June, immediately agreed to come along! A kind and generous response that was very much appreciated by everyone.

Down House is just a few miles from Orpington, but nevertheless set in the middle of some beautiful Kentish Countryside. However, on February 11th, the snow lay deep and crisp and even, changing the scenery into a beautiful winter wonderland!

The Garden Walk came first, and as there were nearly 30 of us, our guide took us in two groups, one after the other, and spent time to give us nuggets of information that you just don't find in guidebooks. It's well known, for example, that Darwin lined up five stones on his Sandwalk circuit, and as he passed by he would kick one of the stones aside so that he knew when his daily exercise was over. Less well-known, is that his children often replaced the stones he kicked aside, and their absent-minded Dad, immersed into his own thoughts, would lose count and walk much further than he ever intended! And also his many experiments with plants



were explained in some detail in his large greenhouse, that still exists.

Then we toured the house with our radio headsets, before gathering for the buffet and Professor Grayling's talk entitled *Humanism, Darwin, and the Animal Kingdom* before calling the toast and cutting the cake.



Grayling's talk was instructive, thoughtful, wise and peppered with that gentle humour of his throughout. It was nothing short of inspiring and it ended with a champagne-style toast that everybody stood up for and enjoyed.

Then there was the ceremonial cutting of the cake, before everybody retired downstairs to the main bedroom, set out as it was in Darwin's day, for a group photograph.

For those present, it was an inspiring and fascinating day. For Humanism, it was the first ever event of its kind at Down House. And for me nothing less than a dream come true that I will remember for many years to come. It was a wonderful moment, and one that I know English Heritage would be very keen indeed to repeat.



This can only be done once every few years by any Humanist group, and Basingstoke Humanists won't return for a long time. But if you think your group might be interested in doing something similar in 2021, please do email us at humanistically.speaking@gmail.com and we'll give you all the information you need to get started yourself. It might be easier to arrange than you think!



David Brittain
Executive Editor

EVENTS CALENDAR

What's going on within the network

Divided by geography – united by technology

We encourage all Humanist groups to think of innovative ways to keep their events programmes going to ensure we don't lose the Humanist presence in these challenging times.

Humanist groups up and down the country including Liverpool and Greater Manchester Humanists are determined to keep their events programmes going using whatever technology is available. Dorset Humanists hosted a very successful talk event on 25th March with **Professor Greg Atkins** talking about viruses. Dorset Humanists committee purchased a reasonably-priced Zoom package which allows up to 100 participants and unlimited event duration. 31 people attended this online event, including two Humanists from Cardiff.

Next online event – all welcome

Do Animals have a Theory of Mind?

Saturday, April 11, 2020

An online talk by Dr Juliane Kaminski

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/579005594>

Meeting ID: 579 005 594

Join us at 1.30pm to get settled in. Talk commences at 2pm.

For more online events visit:

<https://www.meetup.com/Dorset-Humanists/>

If your group is continuing to meet online please let us know and we will include your events.

"It was a really excellent and informative lecture and question session, and the technology seemed to work very well once lecturer and listeners had got their heads round how to manage it." Sally

Want to see what it looks like?

Here is the [recording link](#) for Greg's slide show starts properly at 8:20 (if you want to cut out all the preliminaries!).

LOCAL GROUPS

Participating Groups – a group near you?

 Basingstoke Humanists
 Brighton Humanists
 Bromley Humanists
 Chichester Humanists
 Dorset Humanists
 Farnham Humanists
 Guildford & Woking

 Horsham Humanists
 Isle of Wight Humanists
 Portsmouth Humanists
 Reading Humanists
 South Hants Humanists
 Humanists UK (National Org)
 Winchester (*to be confirmed*)

EVENTS CALENDAR

What's going on within the network

Coronavirus is changing the way we live our lives!!

...But it doesn't have to stop all Humanist Activity, says Humanistically Speaking

One by one, as the Crisis deepens, many Humanist Groups have begun shutting down. The usual meetings have been cancelled, events have been postponed and social activities curtailed. Closing down events for an unspecified period can be very dangerous for any group. No-one else is going to help keep things going, and it's vitally important to keep the local Humanist project alive.

... But it needn't be like that. Indeed, some groups have remained defiant in the face of Covid-19, and decided to hold their meetings through the internet via Facetime, Skype, or the latest, and very popular system, Zoom.

We know that Manchester, Liverpool and Dorset Humanists have all decided to go online. It is an easy and perfectly secure way to keep local Humanism alive, where everyone – including a speaker - can conduct a presentation from the comfort of their own homes. But far from being a second class alternative, presenting via the internet offers exciting opportunities. As you know, Dorset is a SCEHN member, and following their first ever meeting via Zoom recently, Chairperson David Warden had this to say ...

"This is a challenge all Humanist groups should rise to and SCEHN/HS should be at the forefront of helping to facilitate that. We had a very successful online event last night with 31 attendees including two people from Cardiff."

...

But this is just Dorset, and there may be other SCEHN groups who are doing the exactly same thing – and if you are, please do let us know, and share your successes. Also, tell us about any problems you experienced – your sister groups might well be able to help you!

... And do take note of David's last comment. The internet is not constrained by distance, and communication via the ether. In future, someone from Los Angeles might tune in to a talk delivered by a Humanist in Brighton, without either ever leaving their living rooms!

As has been said, however good or bad things get, all things must pass, and Covid-19 is no exception. But as with most other world-shifting events, the changes they bring about can be permanent.

In the long term, nothing with completely replace the handshake, the personal smile, the shared beer, the friendly kiss or the occasional hug, but this virus, for all it's terrible consequences, might change the nature of how we conduct many of our future events for the better.

And this might be a good time to usher some of those changes in ...

Special Note to All SCEHN Groups: If you are planning any online events, please do let us know. If there are several groups do that, we will circulate a table of events over the next few weeks to all groups.

Letters and Comments

Tell us what's going on in your head

"I was amused the other day by an article in the Guardian written by Jonathan Freedland. He commented something to the effect that there are no atheists on a sinking ship. If ever there was a time for rationality it is now. The virus is something that has been created by a strange mutation. Mankind has the knowledge and ability to be able to overcome it. All that is required is understanding of the science and cooperation across society. Humanists need to sing this out loud and clear.

Here is another thought that you might like to share with others in these difficult times. I was extremely fortunate to be cast in the part of Prospero in the Silchester Players May production of Shakespeare's "The Tempest." Sadly we have had to postpone, but if possible we will go ahead in the autumn. I have learnt over half of the lines which has been quite a considerable challenge.

Near the beginning of the play Prospero explains to his daughter, Miranda, how they came to be cast away alone on an island. Miranda says that she must have been a trouble to her father, to which Prospero replies:

"Oh, a cherubim thou wast, that did preserve me. Thou didst smile, infused with a fortitude from heaven, when I have decked the sea with drops full salt, under my burden groaned; which raised in me an undergoing stomach to bear up against what should ensue."

"There are no atheists on a sinking ship"



Image courtesy of Quick LOL

In other words the three-year-old child smiled when her father let his tears fall and he despaired at what they faced. But his daughter's smile and her innocent fortitude gave him the stomach to face up to the huge challenges ahead.

There is a lesson in this. We owe it to the younger generation to keep ourselves healthy, to come through difficulties and rebuild when the crisis is over. I have grandchildren and my desire to protect their future gives me an "undergoing stomach" to do all that is necessary to achieve that."

Stephen Bibby
Basingstoke Humanists

Humanistically Speaking

What does it mean to you?

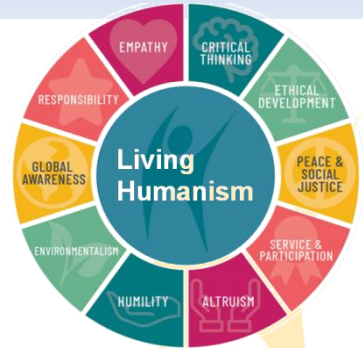
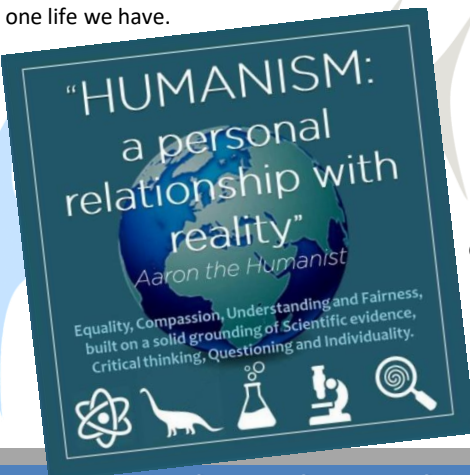


Aaron the Humanist

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Many often think

that a strong atheist stance is all that's involved in a Humanist worldview but they would be mistaken. We each perhaps have our own take on exactly what it means to be Humanist, but having manned a stand at Pride the past six years and speaking to literally hundreds of people, one needs to get the explanation down to a fine art. I explain that "Humanism is living an ethical life without religion, embracing values such as Equality, Fairness, Compassion and Understanding built upon science, rational thinking and questioning. In further discussion I would say that it also reflects on how we treat each other, that we are caretakers of the planet and should make the most of the one life we have.



Across the pond over in the States they developed a wheel of values which summed up their version of Humanism. They called it the "Ten Commitments" but being British, that didn't sit well here, so I have renamed it "Living Humanism" instead. We would hate to borrow or be prompted by anything from the Bible, and being Humanist is really more about individuality than being told what to do by a book or anything else.

The god thing has been done to death, I feel, within Humanist groups, I want to focus on what it means to be human, and really delve deep into the core values that we, and quite often other people, embrace, be they Humanist, religious or other. In Bournemouth we have a monthly discussion group called Café Philo, which often takes a life value or philosophical trait and explores it in real depth. It certainly stirs the brain and feeds the mind. We also have an interfaith dialogue group called "Out of the Box" which performs a similar role. I would encourage groups themselves to take on a value and really explore it deeply.

Let's be all we can be.

Humanism is about tolerance, kindness, knowledge and friendship, and although Humanistically Speaking is for Humanists, everyone is welcome to read and contribute, regardless of faith or belief.