

KEEP THE FAITH?

It is a crisp Sunday morning in a large hall in London and a man with a bushy beard and a goatee is making around 200 people in their 20s and 30s giggle infectious. It's impossible to tell what any members of the audience do – there are no name badges, no signifiers of wealth and status, just a bit of laughing. As well as being capped in a gothic format, these 300 strangers are here to listen to sermons, contemplate in silence and sing – loudly and in unison – upbeat songs with life-affirming messages. In one of the back rooms, tea and cake is being prepared so no-one slips back into the cold London streets without some fortifying refreshment.



But these people are not in church. They're at Sunday Assembly, a weekly, non-profit gathering which takes place in cities around the world (it's constantly growing), which, according to founder and comedian Sanderson Jones (left), aims to provide "the best bits of church but without the God bit". As such, sermons are on subjects like mindfulness (the art of living in the now), the congregation comes from all faiths, and the songs are more likely to include Queen's Don't Stop Me Now than hymns.

GROWING TREND
While it might be one of the first gatherings of its kind, Sunday Assembly is not alone in its embracing of spirituality but its reinvention of religion. It's a social movement. The last census found that the number of people in Britain who say they have no religion has almost doubled in the last 10 years (from 14.2% to 23.1%). Since then a YouGov survey has found that of the non-religious 36% are women compared to 42% of men. Christianity, the UK's largest religion, women were found to be more religious than men – 59% of women compared to 52% of men, yet the proportion of more organised religion is a growing trend – just over half of 18-24 year olds considered themselves

to be non-religious, compared to 41% of the 35-44 bracket. Arguments for organised religion, the census also found that we over half of us still believe there's some greater universal power governing us all. Whether that's gods or fate, fear or simply the fact that it's nice to feel that a great 'al' out when we die can be debated, but the result is a society searching for spirituality, though not necessarily traditional faiths. It's something theologians are calling 'post-religious Britain' – the need to have a spiritual life without a god figure.

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GODLESS GATHERINGS

With the motto "Live better, help other wanderers!" Sunday Assembly (unofficially) aims to give members a space to complete new journeys. It's to be done – not also a community who'll support you when that doesn't lead. The gatherings attract hundreds of people and, having begun in London, are now springing up in different venues around the world – from Soho to San Francisco. "It seems it's what people have been looking for, a place to belong," says Sanderson Jones. "We want to help you live – but we'll try and help you do it better than you can." Other godless groups include One Love Get Real – their ethos is that we're all spiritual beings on a human journey not the other way round. "You, that's like, like a more authentic way to live," says Louise Aitken. "It's about the best attitude and care worker from Surrey. "I'm finding it important that things go well for me."

CHANGE COURSES

Not a quick fix, and definitely not a wellness course (it's intensive self-analysis), but "change courses" is a thing. The Hoffman Process (hohoffmanprocess.com) or newcomer the Path of Love (thepathoflove.com) aim to help you change the way you think, so you can, in turn, change the way you behave and "realise your full human and spiritual potential". The Hoffman Process moves clients away from dogmatic religious ideas and into a place that cultivates self-love, and that they should listen to their inner voice for advice and insight. The two figures behind the Path of Love, Tanya Horowitz and Taha Morgan are trained in an ancient Sanskrit ceremony, karmic consultation (looking at dreams that happened in

WISDOM 2.0

previous family generations and how they can be used to help the current generation) and is committed to a deep spiritual awareness. Both use health experts, therapists and spiritual leaders to reach the same aim: to help you look at what's not working in your life and connect with your true self.

SHAMANISM

The approach itself may be thousands of years old, but traditionally practitioners entered an altered state of consciousness to communicate with spirits and bring their guidance into our world, but it's not a mystery in the west. Kate Moss reportedly had her shamanic ceremony in 2012, while Kelly Brook has posted a picture on Instagram. Anna Hart, aka "The Shaman in Silkettes" (@annahart), is a

"KATE MOSS HAD HER HOUSE SHAMANICALLY CLEANED AND KELLY BROOK HAS POSTED VERSES FROM HER SHAMAN"

new of new movement. She explains that physical or emotional problems are often caused by blockages in our internal energy. "Shamans can see and move energy – and if you can move energy you can alter it." Hart, who works from the London clinic, explains that the uses techniques like analysis, crystals, visualization, and, as her Shaman retreats, a hallucinogenic cactus called San Pedro (banned for consumption in the US, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Germany,

STRAIGHT-TALKING SELF-HELPERS

Providing enlightenment for the price of a paperback, the new self-help authors use spiritual techniques like visualization or meditation, but it's all in a. "There's a wave of people with a spiritual depth – but who are, in fact, articulate and can explain how to integrate spiritual ideas into a modern lifestyle," says Michelle Riley. MD at spiritual publisher Hay House. One name to add to your

STYLIST'S SPIRITUAL HOME

Six members of team *Stylist* share the places they feel most at peace

INTUITIVE MENTORING
Intuitive mentors aim to help you make decisions by reading you (like a psychic, although many don't like that word, believing that psychic isn't your specific things, whereas intuitives help you work out the your problems yourself) and looking at areas of your life you should work on. They don't tell you specifics, but where to look in your life to make change. "When I read someone, I often have no idea why I'm saying what I'm saying," says Katie Winterbourne (katiewinterbourne.com), one of London's top mentors. "I might see areas of blocked energy in the body or I might see scenes from your life. But when I read (the blocked energy), I see someone actually split from me!" she says. "Once the intuitive identifies where you might have issues, you then explore the issue and why." "It really gave me the confidence to know I was doing what was right for me," says advertising executive Ali Wright. "I ended up leaving that job and starting my own advertising company."

LOCH MORRICH
"I have never experienced peace like this. It's so calm and it's a place where I feel safe. I'm watching the sea set."

HORNIMAN MUSEUM
"I've never found a place so incredible. It's so calm and it's a place where I feel safe. I'm watching the sea set."

ESQUARING
The hottest self-help book of the moment, *Esquaring* (£22.99 Hay House), is an updated take on the law of attraction. This theory – also known as cosmic ordering – says that you can attract what you desire in the if you just open up your thoughts accordingly. "It sounds like house-painting, but it's grounded in science," says author Fern Grant. "Everything in life is made up of energy – and what we focus on magnetises what we're thinking about. Drawing it into our energy field. So sure is what the science is that the book is designed like an equilateral with 48-hour tests (involving reciting a mantra that Grant says prove the principle work. Once you believe them, you can use them anywhere in your life."

THE NORTH YORK MOORS
"A walk on the moorland is bliss and wild but peaceful. When I'm in the valley, I feel like I'm on the moorland. It's incredible."

THE LEA VALLEY
"The Lea Valley is an old London area where I feel most at peace. It's so calm and it's a place where I feel safe. I'm watching the sea set."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Religion is an entirely personal experience. We know it is an emotive subject, but what do you think? Is there still a place for organised religion? Or do you favour a new school of faith? Share your thoughts @StylistMagazine and at Facebook.com/StylistMagazine