



*A spiritual fellowship, encouraging tolerance,  
reason and independent thought*

**Issue 51, January - March 2016**

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## Statement of Belief (taken from our website)

Unitarianism is a religious movement in which individuals are free to follow their reason and conscience; there is no pressure from creed or scripture. We are open to change in the light of new thought and discoveries.

### We believe that:

- everyone has the right to seek truth and meaning for themselves.
- the fundamental tools for doing this are your own life experience, your reflection upon it, your intuitive understanding and the promptings of your own conscience.
- the best place to do this is a community that welcomes you for who you are,
- complete with your beliefs, doubts, and questions.

### We offer:

- liberty of conscience from imposed creed, confessions, and dogmas.
- a fellowship where people come together to worship; to share times of celebration and trial; and to help each other in the quest for a faith to live by.

**We affirm** the universal values of love and compassion, peace, truth, and justice.

**We welcome** all who come to us in the spirit of goodwill and enquiry, regardless of ethnic or religious background, age, gender, or sexual orientation.

*Our thanks to the General Assembly Information Department, for extracts from 'A Faith Worth Thinking About' by Peter Sampson et al; and to Ipswich Unitarians for extracts from a leaflet by Rev. Cliff Reed.*

### Websites

[www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk](http://www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk)  
<https://www.facebook.com/northampton-unitarians-565662053498558>  
<http://sue-still-i-am-one.blogspot.co.uk>  
<http://www.midland-unitarian-association.org.uk>  
[www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk)  
[www.unitariansocieties.org.uk](http://www.unitariansocieties.org.uk)

## Calendar for January - March 2016

### January

Sunday 10th Worship service, led by Rev. Sue Woolley  
Sunday 24th Worship service, led by Dr. Mark Beaumont

### February

Sunday 14th Worship service, led by Rev. Sue Woolley  
Sunday 28th Worship service, led by Mr. Simon Hall

### March

Sunday 13th Worship Service, led by Rev. Sue Woolley\*  
Sunday 27th Worship Service, led by Mr. Jon Small (Easter)

**\*note that this service will be followed by our  
Annual General Meeting.**

### \*\*\*\*\*Tuesday Gatherings\*\*\*\*\*

Starting on **Tuesday 5th January 2016**, there will be regular Gatherings every Tuesday (except fifth Tuesdays) as follows:

**1st Tuesdays:** Discussion Group, on various topics

**2nd Tuesdays:** Happiness Project Group - based on Gretchen Rubin's book

**3rd Tuesdays:** Oasis of Calm Meditation Group

**4th Tuesdays:** Heart and Soul Group - for spiritual seekers (29th not 22nd March)

More details on our website: [www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk](http://www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk)

*All Worship Services and Gatherings are held at  
Northampton Unitarians Meeting House, St. Katherine's Terrace,  
Northampton NN1 2AX.*

*Worship Services start at 10.30 am, Gatherings at 7.30 pm  
ALL ARE WELCOME!*

## We're Here! Words from the Chair

Well, we've done it! After years of wishing, hoping, and looking, we've moved – finally we are in a building that is as near as perfect as you could get 'off the shelf' so to speak. There are lots of ideas and plans flying around as to how we are going to customise the building for our use. Some are practical and others fanciful, but we will eventually, I'm sure, come up with the best of solutions.

We also welcome, for a while at least, the Christian Scientists, who have moved with us from our old premises at Hazelwood Road.

The building as it stands has all the basics that we could want; it's all on one floor with an access ramp already provided, decent toilets, a proper kitchen, store room, a small room for meeting &c. and another we're using as a vestry. On top of that we have one huge room to use for worship which we are planning to fit a folding partition so we can hire out the outer part without compromising the worship space. We are hoping and planning to provide a space where local community activities can take place.

With a screen and projector the possibilities widen greatly, there is already interest in this. If you didn't make it to our first service last Sunday come along soon and see our new home!

We are also pleased to announce that Rev. Sue Woolley will be our quarter-time minister from 1st January 2016, and she has lots of ideas for our future in our new home. Finally congratulations to all who have laboured over the last few weeks to make this all happen – 'few weeks' - it seems to have happened so swiftly.

**Jon Small, 16th December 2015**

## 2016: A Brave New Year for Northampton Unitarians

At the end of 2015, our Chairman Jon Small wrote in our newsletter: " This year has seen some changes and not a little excitement! A little while ago we thought our collective prayers had been answered when the Christian Science Church came on the market ... but the Central Mosque further along the road got there first, so we are still at Hazelwood Road. This experience has led to a reinvigoration of our search for a more suitable home, who knows, by this time next year we may be in a new, better building." We did not know how prescient those words were!



31 Hazelwood Road, all packed up and ready to go



It is now "this time next year" and we are indeed in a new, better building. Less than three months after first viewing it, on a warm September evening, and thanks to the generosity of the Midland Unitarian Association, who gave us a short-term bridging loan, and to the hard work of all concerned, Northampton Unitarians moved into our new home, Northampton Unitarians Meeting House.

The move took place on Friday 11th December; the Saturday was spent getting organised and tidying round, and we met for

worship for the first time in our new home at 10.30 am on Sunday 13th December.

As well as the two main rooms, the Manfield Room, which will be our main worship space, and the Weiss Room, which will be used for other-than-Sunday gatherings and committee meetings, we also have a sizeable kitchen, an office / Vestry for our new quarter-time minister, and a storage room. There are ladies and gents toilets, and we intend to convert the gents into a disabled toilet during 2016. The Weiss Room chairs were a kindly gift from the Black Country Group of Unitarians, based at Old Meeting House Dudley.

Rev. Sue Woolley, whom we have called to a quarter-time ministry from 1st January 2016, led our first service, on the theme of Hope. She shared a quote by Goethe, which a Unitarian friend had sent to her:

"The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents ... and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now."

Sue commented "I am still finding it hard to believe that we are here, *less than three months* since Simon, David, and I first viewed this place, and instantly knew that it was ideal for us. It has felt like a long journey, with a few twists and turns along the way, but actually the speed at which everything has fallen into place has been dizzying. There has been an amazing grace about it all." 2016 is our new beginning as a congregation. We have hopes and dreams and a vision, and are moving towards making them come true.



The Manfield Room - our main worship space



Another view of the Manfield Room  
taken just before our first service on Sunday 13th December



The Weiss Room, named after our late, beloved Treasurer,  
Martin Weiss. This room will be used for other-than-Sunday groups and  
committee meetings.



A view of the kitchen before moving in



The partly unpacked Vestry



## Between Present and Future: a blogpost

In this deep breath between Christmas and the New Year, I would like to share some words by Patience Strong: "It is good to throw away the old calendar with its all too familiar picture, and to hang something fresh on the wall. How clean and bright the new calendar looks! It seems to symbolise the high hopes of this ... new year. But as I flick through the crisp new pages of the months, I am suddenly aware of the strange mystery of the future. These pages with their neat rows of dates represent un-lived time, the promise of seasons not yet come to fulfilment."

This time of year is full of new promise.



During the last year, all of us have fallen short, and been less than the best people we can be. But we have also done some things well, and lived up to our potential as human beings. Many world religions have a special time of year, during which adherents "reflect on and evaluate their thoughts, words, and actions over the past year [and] acknowledge their prejudices, negative behaviours, and bad habits, so that they may begin the process of transforming themselves." The Hindu festival of Diwali is one, and the ten-day period leading up to the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur is another. It is a time "to celebrate and appreciate life and

to look forward to the coming year with a renewed sense of purpose and passion." For Christians, it is the period of Lent, but for the vast majority of people in Britain, who do not follow any particular faith tradition. New Year is the time for reflecting on the past, and making resolutions for the future.

The process of self-examination is not an easy one. One of my favourite theologians is the wonderful Rabbi Lionel Blue, who I have been listening to on Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* for more years than I care to remember. I have most of his books, which I have read and re-read, and was lucky enough to go and see him live at the Derngate Theatre in Northampton a few years ago. Over the years, he has taught me that the only thing that God wants from us is for us to be more kind, more generous to everyone (including ourselves) and more honest, both with ourselves, and with our fellow travellers in the world. It is about listening to that inner voice, whether we call it God, or the light within, or our conscience, and about doing the right thing, rather than the easy one.

My resolution for the coming year, as our congregation sets out on a new adventure in our lovely new building, is to follow the advice of Lyman Abbott (born 1835):

**"Put all your ambition, all your enthusiasm, into the work of service. make it the aim of your life to leave the world better and happier because you have lived in it, and take without greed or grasping what the world will give you of service in return."**

We have achieved an enormous amount in 2015, and I really hope that we can build on this foundation, and spread the Unitarian word through Northampton and beyond, in 2016.

**Sue Woolley**

## Regional Events

### Midland Unitarian Association of Lay Preachers And Service Leaders: Worship Studies Course Foundation Step

**Led by:** Winnie Gordon, Ant Howe, Stephen Lingwood,  
Jane Russell, and Sue Woolley

**When:** Saturdays 23rd April, 14th May, 11th June 2016

**Where:** Kingswood Meeting House, Packhorse Lane,  
Hollywood, Worcs B47 5DQ

**Time:** 10.00 am – 4.15 pm (coffee/tea available from 9.30 am)

**Cost:** £39 to MUA participants / £48 to others



### Midland Unitarian Association Annual General Meeting

**When:** Saturday 26th March 2016

**Where:** Kidderminster New Meeting House,  
Church St, Kidderminster DY10 2AR

**Time:** 10.30 am for 11.00 am

**Guest Speaker:** Rev. Ant Howe,  
Minister of Kingswood Meeting House

**Cost:** £5.00 a head for lunch

*More details about these events from Sue Woolley (see p.12)*

## Northampton Unitarians

Northampton Unitarians Meeting House,  
St. Katherine's Terrace, Northampton NN1 2AX  
website: [www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk](http://www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk)

**Chairman:** Jon Small

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### Song of the Angels

When the song of the angels is stilled;  
When the star in the sky is gone;  
When the kings and princes are home;  
When the shepherds are back with their flocks;  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost;  
To heal the broken;  
To feed the hungry;  
To release the prisoner;  
To rebuild the nations;  
To bring peace among people;  
To make music in the heart.

**Howard Thurman**