



A spiritual fellowship, encouraging tolerance, reason and independent thought

Issue 55, January - March 2017

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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 & Social Media

www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk
[https://www.facebook.com/Northampton Unitarians](https://www.facebook.com/NorthamptonUnitarians)
<http://twitter.com/@NtonUnitarians>
<http://sue-still-i-am-one.blogspot.co.uk>
<http://www.midland-unitarian-association.org.uk>
www.unitarian.org.uk
www.unitariansocieties.org.uk

Calendar for January - March 2017

January

Sunday 1st Worship service, Simon Hall
Sunday 8th Worship service, Rev. Sue Woolley
Sunday 15th Soul Haven gathering, Simon Hall
Sunday 22nd Worship service, Dr. Mark Beaumont
Sunday 29th Congregational Service. Theme: Music of the Heart (75th Anniversary of *Desert Island Discs*)

February

Sunday 5th Worship service, Rev. Jeffrey Bowes (Coventry)
Sunday 12th Worship service, Rev. Sue Woolley
Sunday 19th Soul Haven gathering, Simon Hall
Sunday 26th Worship Service, Jon Small

March

Sunday 5th Worship Service, Gavin Lloyd (Oxford & MUA)
Sunday 12th Worship Service, Rev. Sue Woolley
Sunday 19th Soul Haven gathering, Simon Hall
Sunday 26th Worship Service, Dr. Mark Beaumont

*****Weekday Gatherings*****

There are regular Gatherings on 2nd Tuesdays:

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

We also meet on **Friday evenings, between 5.00 and 6.30 pm**, to **Walk Away the Cares of the Week** on our Labyrinth.

More details on our website: 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, Tuesday Gatherings at 7.30 pm
ALL ARE WELCOME!*

Chairman's Chat

Well here we are again, getting ready for Christmas – but this one's a bit different from last year because we're now settled in our new, wonderful building. It's taken the best part of this year to get things as we would like them and we still have some more changes and improvements to make like a disabled toilet and a decent-looking drive, but I think we're seeing the end of the tunnel.

I don't like the expression, but what we've got to look at over the next twelve months, I feel, is 'outreach' that is getting some of the people who live 'over the road' into our building. I'm not advocating an evangelistic approach to get people to join, that is most definitely not our style, but we can perhaps get our new facility used for community events like; clubs, societies, afternoon teas, table top sales &c &c.

Sue has tried several events mainly on Tuesdays and some have proved successful and the Friday Labyrinth walk continues to pull in a few, but on a pretty regular basis, but what we need is more involvement from other members in our congregation. I know we are small in number and time and distance are a factor, but we have to try to do what we can when we can, that way we might just get a few more members and if they live closer than some of us – perhaps over the road, they might be able to spend more time outside Sundays dropping round and helping out.

On a lighter note:

Four men of G-D were asked the same question: "When does life begin?" The Catholic priest answered, "At the moment of conception."

The Hindu stated, "At twelve weeks when the soul enters the fetus," The Anglican vicar replied, "When the child is born and

separate from its mother.” The Rabbi sighed and said quietly, “When the kids have left home and the mortgage is paid off.”

Many years ago I was in the vestry of the Kettering Road church when Peter was our minister and there was after the service a long and involved discussion going on that was really going nowhere. I ‘tuned out’ and sat there staring at the Chalice and the bright candle flame when I remembered something; that 80% of a candle’s energy was dissipated in heat – only 20% being light and thought to myself that’s what’s happening here – much heat and little light!

I look forward to 2017 when everything finally all comes together.

Jon Small

Some Thoughts at Christmas

There is a very neat meme doing the rounds on Facebook at the moment, which sums up the two spirits of Christmas for me. It is a Christmas Bucket List, with six items, partly crossed out, and substituted with other words, so I'll have to paraphrase for it to make sense:

1. Instead of buy presents, be present.
2. Instead of wrap gifts, wrap someone in a hug.
3. Instead of send gifts, send love.
4. Instead of shop for food, donate food.
5. Instead of make cookies, make memories.
6. Instead of see the light, be the Light.

And yes, I get it, but in my opinion, it should be both/and, rather than either/or. I have bought presents for the people I love, but welcome the reminder to be present in the moment, day by day, instead of getting lost in the busyness. I will be wrapping the gifts

I have bought next weekend, but will also be wrapping a lot of people in hugs, during the next few weeks (and being wrapped in hugs also, I hope!).

I will be sending gifts, but also sending love to all those people who make my life so blessed. Including you. I will be shopping for food, but not going overboard, and have already paid a visit to the Northampton Food Bank, with a donation. This Christmas, sadly, I won't be making or eating cookies, or mince pies or many other sweet Christmas treats, because most of them contain gluten, but I will surely be making memories, particularly on Boxing Day, when the whole extended Ellis family gets together at my parents, for what my mother insists on calling Christmas Day Two. And a very kind friend, who is also gluten-intolerant, has made me a beautiful little GF Christmas cake - so very kind. Finally, as well as seeing (and enjoying) all the beautiful, colourful Christmas lights, I will be striving to be the Light for those that I love.

It was a good reminder about the things which really matter at Christmas - not the tangible things one can buy, and consume, but the gifts of love and awareness, which cannot be bought, and always renew themselves. The things we can look back on with fondness, when the food has been eaten, the presents have been opened, the paper thrown away, and the decorations taken down.

I also want to acknowledge what I think should be the true spirit of Christmas, "the spirit of good will and peace, ... [the] spirit that bids us renew our hopes amid the gathering darkness, that kindles our generosity and our concerns, that attunes our ears to the ever-renewed angelic chorus" as Max Gaebel puts it. Because that is here too, in our minds, and in our hearts.

May you all have a peaceful and blessed Christmas, and start 2017 feeling renewed and energised. **Sue Woolley**

Regional Events

**MUA of Lay Preachers & Worship Leaders
Spring Training Day
How do Unitarians do communion?**

Workshop Leaders: Rev. Sue Woolley & Rev. Ant Howe

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

When: Saturday 18th February 2017

Times: 10.00 am - 4.15 pm (coffee/tea from 9.30 am)

Cost: FREE to MUA participants; £10 a head to others

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### **MUA Annual General Meeting**

**Guest Speaker:** Rev. Danny Crosby,  
minister at Altrincham and Urmston

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

**When:** Saturday 25th March 2017

**Times:** 10.30 for 11.00 am - c.4.00 pm

**All are welcome**

## Northampton Unitarians

**Northampton Unitarians Meeting House,  
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**Chairman & Treasurer:** Mr. Jon Small  
e-mail: [jonasmall@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jonasmall@hotmail.co.uk)

**Secretary & Organist:** Dr. Mark Beaumont  
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### **A Tale of Two Cities: London & Aleppo**

We are worried about train strikes; they are suffering from air strikes.

We are sending Christmas cards; they are sending farewell messages.

We are singing carols in the streets; they are dying in the streets.

We are stocking up for Christmas, they are packing up, fleeing their homes.

Their government is bombing their homes, our government is not doing enough.

God of our hearts, Spirit of Love and Compassion,  
May our horror at the situation in Aleppo  
be translated into action.

May we protest, donate, and pray for peace.

And when some refugees make it here,  
as they surely will,

may we welcome the stranger,  
in Your name. Amen