



# Northampton Unitarian News

Number 2, October to December 2003

As the nights are drawing in (although at the time of writing the weather is continuing fine and warm) we are looking forward to another busy few months here at Northampton. This second issue of *Northampton Unitarian News* includes a report of our 'Walk in the Woods' service in Salcey Forest, and an article by Frank Field about the role of the United Nations in our troubled world.

Please send any contributions to me, Sue Woolley, via our e-mail contact form. Or see me in church!



## SERVICE TAKERS FOR OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2003

We meet on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, at 10.30 a.m. Except where indicated, service takers are members of the congregation.

**Please note change of date of 2<sup>nd</sup> service in December from 28<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>. This is so we can enjoy the services of our organist, who is going home to Lytham St Anne's for Christmas.**

<b>12 October</b>	Sherie Snaith (Baha'i)
<b>26 October</b>	Three Shires Fellowship
<b>9 November</b>	Tony Roberts
<b>23 November</b>	Tom Marriott (MU President)
<b>14 December</b>	Sue Woolley
<b>21 December</b>	Jon Small
<b>25 December</b>	Christmas service at Frank & Marie's house

**All are very welcome!**



## 'A WALK IN THE WOODS' CONGREGATIONAL SERVICE ON 24<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2003

We met at the Church, and then proceeded in various cars to Salcey Forest. The weather was kind, and was warm and sunny.

For anyone who doesn't know, Salcey Forest is a few miles south of Northampton, is owned by the Forestry Commission, and is centuries old. It is delightful at all times of the year, and we all felt the peaceful atmosphere as we walked among the trees, talking and enjoying the fresh air.

Two of us, Penny and Sue, brought readings, and we all agreed that hearing them outside made a very different impact.

Walk over, we adjourned to a picnic table and shared a delicious alfresco meal, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all concerned.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Welcome to our second newsletter.

Hope you all managed to make the most of the superb weather over the summer, even if the poor old grass is looking a bit the worse for the lack of rain. And it looks like it might go on for a little longer yet.

Mind you, by the time you read this it will probably be pouring down.

Over the next few months, we will be paying host to a fair number of visitors, three of whom will be taking their first services with us. So it looks like being a very interesting time. I hope you will be able to support them.

Look forward to seeing you all around,

Love Fiona

### **PRAY FOR THE UN**

When I was a boy we used to pray in Church (Anglican) each Sunday for the king and his ministers. Old Unitarian service books contained similar prayers. They are still of course part of the Anglican prayer book, but are, I suspect, almost unknown among present day Unitarians. Is this a loss? or an unfortunate omission? Perhaps a little of both. In a world in which the United Kingdom plays only a minor role and in a country in which the monarchy has long lost most of its power, does it really matter? I believe it does; but have no wish to return to the old prayer. In its day, it served to remind us of the wider world, of peoples less fortunate than ourselves, to whose wellbeing our government's policies might perhaps contribute or undermine. This is still the case, though to a much more limited extent, as the record of the last few years so clearly shows.

We need something more extensive, something global, something more relevant to the 21st century. It is so easy to be depressed by the present international situation. Perhaps like me, you have seen the hopes of even the recent past, threatened almost to extinction. Since 1989 superpower domination in every field, from trade and the environment, to international security and peacekeeping, has become the accepted norm.

For the past five months the U.S.-led security forces in Iraq have made a hopelessly inadequate response to the basic needs of the Iraqi people. Shortly after the end of the war, Sir Richard

Branson sent one of his Virgin jets, laden with food and medical supplies, to Basra, saying "there needs to be another Berlin style airlift." But of course, the political will wasn't there.

The United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDRO) has vast experience, including co-operation with many non-governmental organisations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Oxfam, and Doctors without Frontiers, but like other U.N. Agencies, for reasons of narrow national prestige, it has not been used. Since 1956 the United Nations itself has gained similarly wide experience in the field of Peacekeeping, a task which requires specialist training, but it too has been ignored for the same reason. Soldiers wearing the U.N. blue beret do pay with their lives, as their graves testify, but they are less confrontational than troops trained only in warfare and wearing national uniforms.

The least that we can do is to pray for the United Nations and its Secretary-General, Kofi Anan, for all its agencies and for all the voluntary organisations involved. May they be given opportunities to serve humanity on our behalf, to the very utmost.

**Frank Field**

### **CHURCH IMPROVEMENTS**

Visitors to the Church will have noticed that we have "lost" the ugly canopy which defaced the front of the building. It all looks much neater and cleaner now. We have also had the roof repaired, and have installed a big new noticeboard in the Worship Room.

### **LISTEN WELL: VISIT BY MIDLAND UNION DISTRICT MINISTER**

On September 14<sup>th</sup>, we were pleased to welcome Michael Dadson, who gave the service on the fascinating subject of conversation. He explained that listening was by far the most important part of any conversation, and that it was our duty as good Unitarians to be receptive to new ideas. So listen more, and talk less!