



Northampton Unitarian News

Number 4, April - June 2004

OUR FAITH (taken from our website)

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 and freedom 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.



SERVICE TAKERS FOR APRIL TO JUNE 2004

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

11 April*	Michael Dadson, MU District Minister
25 April	Sue Woolley
9 May	Rev. George Sarmezey Anglican chaplain
23 May	Tony Roberts
13 June	Becky Woolley
27 June	Jon Small

*11 APRIL: 10:00 AM START

All are very welcome!

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

At the moment, looking out of the window, the sky is a beautiful, clear blue. But sitting on the horizon in the opposite direction is an enormous big, black, classic April-shower type cloud.

OK, I know it sounds corny, but it is quite stunning and a reference to some form of atmospheric phenomenon appears to be becoming a bit of a habit of mine. As they often say: lifetime, habits, why change, or something along those lines? (!). So here goes.

With the current security situation, particularly following the recent events in Madrid, it is actually very difficult to avoid references to looming black clouds. I do not know about you, but I get the feeling there seems to be need for us to brace ourselves for what is perceived as the inevitable. Therefore we need to keep working hard on maintaining a sense of perspective and balance, and I can only hope that we can all continue to find our

association with Unitarianism of on-going benefit. Particularly if and when any reactions and recriminations start..... I am sorry to sound so negative, but this is really where it will count.

On a more cheerful note, I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of our early start on Easter Day, April 11th. We will be starting at 10:00am, as there will be a get together after the service for people who currently lead services, or are possibly planning to at some time in the future Hopefully Michael will be bringing along his wife and daughter. So I hope everyone will make them welcome. If you intend to stay on then PLEASE remember to bring some food, because all the shops will be closed on Easter Day.

Hope you all keep well and happy,

Lots of Love
Fiona



LAST PEACE

It's to spirit we'll
Return in our ending
To an older creation
Than Genesis
And a gentler cradle
Than Earth

To the end of the way
Of the Nativity Star
And to God's peace
That lies beyond words

Where our souls will await new birth.

Jenny Ryan



INTERCONNECTEDNESS, THE DREAMSCAPE AND GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS

During the last few months, a common theme seems to have started to appear in some of our services. Therefore I felt it might be interesting to bring together some of these ideas.

The basic thread revolves around ideas such as: all life is deeply interconnected; mind may be extended over time and space; consciousness is non-local. The possibility has been raised that we may be scanning, and, as a consequence, responding to, our future emotional states. Also there may be a type of coherent mass consciousness that emerges when millions of minds are being focused on one set of events. Television, but now accompanied by the Internet and mobile phones, continues to act as the main focus point for such events. Only in recent days have we seen millions of Spaniards take to the streets following the bombs in Madrid.

The implications of this increasing awareness are enormous. It is something we may all be participating in and responding to, however unconsciously and relatively unaware at the moment.

However isn't this type of expanded awareness similar to what mystics all around the world and throughout history have always alluded to? By removing the sense of an isolated "me" in the immediate "here and now", the common core of methods embedded in most forms of spirituality expands our awareness out into areas out and beyond. Rather than "the Christ", what would it mean if we all became a "Christ " or a Buddhist Bodhisattva?

I believe this awareness is being reflected in modern secular mythology. Even being a Vampire Slayer became a collective endeavour in the last-ever episode of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer". The fear of assimilation and becoming an automaton, in other words the dark side, is addressed through The Borg in Star Trek

If all this sounds far fetched then there is an entry point to which we all have access. Dreaming is something we all do, again, even if we are completely unaware of exactly to what extent. Therefore here is an area in which anyone can participate and make their own observations. You can start tonight and write down what you find tomorrow morning.

Also I have recently discovered that a serious researcher in the general field of parapsychology, Richard Broughton, is now working at University College, Northampton. He is literally “just up our street”. His recent lecture at the Society of Psychical Research was effectively a re-run of a paper available on the Internet. It is a good entry point to the whole subject area. [Please see the reference below]

OK, I accept raising these issues is controversial and challenging. Now your immediate response may be to turn around and say “What a load of old rubbish”. There are very valid questions concerning what is the loopy fringe and what is the genuine leading edge. It is for us all to determine for ourselves. But isn't such questioning and the development of skills to discriminate between different arguments all part of exactly what we're supposed to be about? Therefore to be able to participate, we need to keep up with the arguments and the thinking.

Also I feel we need a challenging, wider perspective to get us out of many of the ruts we keep on falling into. Anyone interested in following up any of these ideas may find some of the following books and web sites of interest. Or you may already have a long list of your own!

If there is sufficient interest, perhaps we might buy some of the books and set up a discussion group?

Books

The following are the three I've found most helpful over the last year or so.

The Conscious Universe by Dean Radin
Conscious Dreaming by Robert Moss
An Experiment with Time by JW Dunne

Web Sites

Global Consciousness Project

If the focusing of millions of minds does trigger a type of coherence – a form of global consciousness – then a group of researchers believes there is an effect that can be detected. Here is where they explain their methods and results. There is fascinating stuff about September 11 2001. [Web site is www.noosphere.princeton.edu]

Scientific and Medical Network

This is where scientists and doctors talk about consciousness, non-locality and what it might all mean. [Web site is www.datadiwan.de/SciMedNet/]

Rupert Sheldrake

A bit of a personal hero of mine because he extends consciousness to include animals and birds. This is where to find out about N'kisi, the language using Grey Parrot, who also seems to know who is on the phone, before his owner picks it up. [Web site is www.sheldrake.org]

Robert Moss

Excellent on cross-cultural and precognitive dreaming. [Web site is www.mossdreams.com]

Jeremy Taylor

A Unitarian minister from California who is well-respected in the general field of dreamwork. [Web site is www.jeremytaylor.com]

Robert Broughton

Researcher at University College, Northampton. [Web site is www.rsrbroughton.com]

[Useful introductory paper: www.rsrbroughton.com/PDF/Bial2002.pdf]

Fiona Boyle



OUR FLAMING CHALICE

During a short report of a Midland Union meeting, our chairman, Fiona, mentioned the value of a symbol for our Unitarian community, which could say much more, than many words, occupying the same space. I was not sure at the time whether a new symbol other than the chalice was being proposed, but a thought quickly crossed my mind that if this were to be the case, everyone, or almost everyone, would need to know the significance of the symbol. "Do we know the meaning of the chalice?" was the obvious next thought.

Our beautiful little chalice made by John Small, is lit at the opening of every service, when the words used, often suggest that the flame represents the divine spirit, or enlightenment or inspiration. I wonder how much agreement there would be, if each member of a congregation were asked to write down what the chalice means to them. Probably it doesn't matter, but when we turn that chalice into a badge, or brooch, or print it on a tie, we are passing a message to others. A message that we hope might lead to another question "what does that mean?"

Many years ago, I was told that back in the fifties, the publicity department of Essex Hall, introduced the flaming chalice, as part of an effort to increase recognition of Unitarianism in the wider world. It caught on and there can be little doubt, that within the movement at least, it is widely recognised and has become something of a unifying force, giving a sense of identity and belonging. From an article published in 1986 in the Dutch Liberal Christian Magazine "Zwingli" and reproduced in the "Inquirer", I understand that the design resulted from the work of the "Unitarian Service Committee" which worked for refugees who had suffered under Nazi occupation. Many of these spoke little or no English, so there was a need for an identity mark, which was supplied by one Hans Deutsch, an Austrian, who was himself a refugee. The flame is said to symbolise the martyrdom of Jan Huss, who was burned at the stake in 1415, for giving both wine and bread to

the laity, during the mass.(only the clergy were entitled to receive the wine) The chalice symbolises both the wine and the unleavened bread, whilst the flame represents death at the stake. The author of the article which was translated from the Dutch, was one Dr. P.D. van Roijen, Secretary of the Netherlands Liberal Protestant and Unitarian Monthly "Zwingli". He clearly believed our chalice was more appropriate to the Hussite, than to the Unitarian cause. As an alternative he proposed removing the chalice, leaving the flame in memory of Michael Servetus and adding a sun, as a symbol of one God.

The article appears to have made no impact. Do we need a change? Would a clear memorial to Michael Servetus help us today? Judging by the Michael Servetus Conference held in Geneva November last year, there are at least some Unitarians (not myself) who believe that "we owe more to Calvin than to Servetus": so perhaps that would be divisive. Let us stay where we are and keep our flaming chalice, whilst proclaiming that it symbolises **the divine unifying spirit to be found in all faiths**

Frank Field

