



Northampton Unitarian News

Number 6, October - December 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 OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2004

We meet on 2nd and 4th Sundays, (**except 19 December**) at 10.30 a.m. Except where indicated, service takers are members of the congregation.

10 October	Michael Dadson (MU District Minister)
24 October	Malcolm Sadler Warwick
14 November	Fiona Boyle
28 November	Oxford Ministry Student
12 December	Congregational Service – Theme: My Hero
19 December*	Frank Field
25 December	Service at Frank & Marie's

All are very welcome!



CONGREGATIONAL CONSULTANCY PROJECT

Sue Woolley and Tony Roberts attended a one-day workshop at Harris Manchester College, on Saturday 26th June. As promised in the last issue of the Newsletter, here is our report.

The project is a process of working with individual congregations in order to help them find out their strengths and weaknesses and to plan for the future. The pilot study was last year, and involved 10 congregations. Now the Panel are seeking to spread the idea more widely, which was the purpose of the workshop.

Don and Linda Philips are the consultants who have facilitated the process. Next

February, there will be a two-day training course for other facilitators, so that the process can go on more widely.

The consultation process

Congregational meeting 1 with consultant – takes several hours (absolute minimum 3 hours) – the consultant goes through a series of questionnaires with the congregation to find out all about the church/fellowship, and to start planning changes/developments.

The consultants report to the Panel to develop the proposed plans.

Congregational meeting 2 with consultant – to review plans.

The consultants review the outcome of meeting 2 with the Panel.

Congregational meeting 3 with consultant – to review progress, to update and to create plans for next actions.

This is how the process worked with the 10 pilot congregations. District commitment (i.e. in our case Midland Union) was regarded as key to helping smaller congregations in the short term, but in the long term, all should be self-supporting. Confidentiality is stressed throughout the process.

From reviewing the pilot project, the Panel came to the following conclusions:

- The energy to carry out the process and move forward has to come from within the congregation.
- The questionnaire is a valuable resource.
- The audit process is useful for congregations.

The questionnaire

Is not really a questionnaire, but is a series of structured investigations, covering 12 areas of church life. The complete questionnaire can only be obtained from Essex Hall. The areas of church life covered are:

Worship, membership, publicity, location of church, non-worship activities, governance, finances, buildings, outreach, pastoral care, support from other Unitarians, how ministry is provided, and miscellaneous.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to translate the information gathered into plans for action. The questions bring out the facts, and then the meaning behind the facts and the implications for the congregation. The rest of the day was spent in going through three of the sections in groups to see for ourselves how the process worked.

Our committee would be interested to hear whether you think this process would be worth doing here at Northampton Unitarians. Let us know!



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness”

Ah, those magical 3rd and 4th weeks in September. There are the important religious festivals: the Autumnal Equinox, the Jewish High Holy Days. And the cats come in for the night. I don't know if anyone else has observed this piece of feline behaviour. All summer they treat the house as nothing but a walk-in snack stop. But come mid-September there seems to be a magic trigger which means they are now in all night, every night until next spring. Which is all well and good, until they decide they want to be fed before the alarm goes off and make their requirements known in no uncertain, and very loud, terms.

During this next quarter, we will be having another group of visitors coming to take services and all from within our local

Midland Union area. On October 10th, Michael Dadson will be making his last visit to us in his role as District Minister. His wife Julie is joining the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, as its Manager, which means they will be relocating there as a family. He leaves his post officially at the end of October.

Malcolm Sadler from Banbury and Warwick will be next along on October 24th. And finally on November 28th we will be the hosts to a ministry student from Harris Manchester College in Oxford. At the moment we don't know which one it will be. Also we may need to move the service start time to 11:00am to allow for travel arrangements. These details will be made known when they have been confirmed.

I hope you will all make our guests welcome during their visits.

Just remains for me to wish you all the best over the coming months.

Love
Fiona



HARVEST 2004: PINK WHEAT?

Fortunately, most of us in this congregation are unlikely to be adversely affected directly by the following facts and figures. However, these figures still raise big questions in my mind. We are used to "someone" "somewhere" just buying goods in from an alternative supply to plug any shortfalls. Also, so much of the food we eat relies on a completely oil-dependent, just-in-time supply chain. Remember the crisis in the supermarkets triggered by the fuel tax protests? But.....

his wife has become the manager of the Nig

What if we could not import from other countries with successful harvests?

What would happen if we were forced by circumstances to depend upon only our regional resources?

Here are some extracts from a briefing released by the East Midlands Region Office of the NFU on 8 September.

Northamptonshire recorded total rainfall of 169mm of rain during August, which is 276% the norm for the month. The sunshine and temperature were around or slightly above average. (source the Met Office)

Wheat harvest at 3 Sept

The wheat harvest across the region is variable from farm to farm. Some reporting it was all in, while one or two had not started.

These figures are generalisations across the counties:

Leicestershire	60	-	70%
	(lowest report 40%)		
Nottinghamshire	60%		
	(lowest report 0%)		
Lincolnshire	70%		
	(lowest report 50%)		
South Lincolnshire	43%		
	(lowest report 0%)		
Derbyshire	50%		
Northants	60	-	70%

Many farmers indicate that remaining areas to clear are badly lodged and in some instances the combine may not be able to pick it up. Others report that they are waiting for the contractor to arrive who is also delayed elsewhere, that adds to the frustration. Moisture levels will have reduced following the recent sunshine, however where crops were cut earlier many have outlined the exorbitant cost of drying grain. Fuel costs have risen by 25%

this year and figures of £10 a tonne drying cost have been quoted.

Wheat quality

At best quality is mediocre to poor with sprouting in lodged and standing crops. Most anticipate that they have a feed wheat crop only. **A particular problem is a pink staining of grain.** This is described as fusarium, although alternative view suggests it is a wet weather effect not seen before. The problem is prominent in fenland South Lincolnshire, although **we have odd reports of problems in Northamptonshire** and Nottinghamshire. Merchants are rejecting loads worried about mycotoxins and are testing more extensively.

Other crops

Potatoes

Growers have sprayed them off to stop them growing. Damage to fields as lifting second earlies. Blight was also getting bad; hence move to spray off haulm to reduce tuber damage. Standing water will be rotting some crops.



THE RAINBOW PILGRIMAGE

The above article was contributed by Fiona, and ties in very well with Sue's service on 26th September, which was on the subject of harvest and climate change.

It also ties in with an event which is taking place in Coventry on Saturday 9th October next. This is a conference organised by Operation Noah, a pressure group with the slogan 'Climate change. It's time for blue sky thinking'.

The conference starts at 9.45 am, and is being held at Methodist Central Hall, Bull Yard, Coventry. It is being followed by a procession through the city centre at 1.50 pm, and lastly by a service in Coventry Cathedral, at 2.30 pm.

If anyone is interested in attending, the details are on a poster in the Worship Room.

Sue Woolley, Editor

AND FINALLY ...

Saturday 7th August saw the naming of Alexander Franklin Brasher, son of Karen and Andy, and brother of Tom. Sue Woolley conducted the ceremony at the family home in Milton Keynes. In case you were wondering, Alex's middle name of Franklin was chosen because he was born on 4th July!

Please send any contributions to:
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