



# Northampton Unitarian News

Number 9, July - September 2005

## 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 JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2005

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.

10 <sup>th</sup> July	Mark Beaumont
24 <sup>th</sup> July	Tony Roberts
14 <sup>th</sup> August	Congregational Service: A Walk in the Woods
28 <sup>th</sup> August	Penny Collins
11 <sup>th</sup> September	Frank Field
25 <sup>th</sup> September	Sue Woolley

**All are very welcome!**

## KINDNESS WAS NOT FORGOTTEN

The beginning of April marked the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Great Lisbon Earthquake. What has this got to do with us and why did Radio 4 devote a whole thirty minutes to this seemingly unimportant piece of history? My ears pricked at the mention of the earthquake, of which I had only known because Voltaire had included a reference to it, in his last masterly work, *Candide*, and the fact that the Pope had claimed it was a punishment for human wickedness. It was, I also knew the greatest earthquake of modern times and had wondered what the people of Lisbon had done to deserve such a terrible punishment: why not Paris, or Vienna or London? Soon after our daughter began her geology studies at London University, over 25 years ago, (oh dear! another reminder of my old age!) she taught me about the wonders of plate tectonics and suddenly I had a scientific explanation, to support my instinctive reaction to a mid-eighteenth century Pope.

But what is the significance of this great disaster now, just after an even greater earthquake, tsunami, and a truly historic response in aid from peoples and governments throughout the world? The programme quickly gave the answer: December's tsunami and the Lisbon earthquake were linked not only geologically, but also by human generosity. Lisbon ranked among the highest in the world, on a per capita basis, for contributions to the Tsunami Appeal. In 1755 our King George II asked Parliament to send aid to Lisbon. The King himself, the government, the business world and ordinary citizens contributed well over £900, 000 to help the people of the crippled city. Goods and gold were quickly sent by ship direct from the Port of London to Lisbon. It should not be forgotten, of course, that Britain had strong business links with Portugal and that there was an element of self-interest in helping a valued trading partner to recover from this terrible disaster. Contemporary records however, apparently show that there was more to the response, than the prospect of future profits: there was also compassion.

For two hundred and fifty years Portuguese schoolchildren, the programme told us, have been taught about this aid from Britain, as well as from other countries. The organiser of the Tsunami Appeal spoke towards the end of the broadcast and felt strongly that the collective memory of 1755 had played a vital part in determining the outstanding generosity of her city in 2005. Kindness was not forgotten.

**F.F. 9.4.05**

## CONGREGATIONAL SERVICE: A WALK IN THE WOODS

This year's Walk in the Woods will again be taking place in Salcey Forest, near Hartwell, on **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August**. We will be meeting in the main car park at 10.30 am, will enjoy a short (approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour) walk through the forest, pausing along the way to share readings and prayers, and will then share a picnic lunch. The theme for this year's walk will be Our Precious World.

So please join us – bring something to eat and drink, and your thoughts on Our Precious World.



The obituary notice below was passed to my father, who edits the Unitarian New Meeting Church in Birmingham's calendar, by an Anglican minister with a sense of humour. I liked it so much that I wanted to share it with you.

**Sue Woolley, Editor**

***Obituary Notice :***

Today we mourn the passing of an old friend by the name of **Common Sense**. **Common Sense** lived a long life. No one really knows how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He selflessly devoted his life to service in schools, hospitals, homes and factories, helping people to get jobs done without fanfare or foolishness. For decades, petty rules, silly laws and frivolous law-suits held no power over **Common Sense**. He was credited with cultivating such valued lessons as to know when to come in out of the rain, why the early bird gets the worm, and why life isn't always fair.

**Common Sense** lived by simple sound financial policies (don't spend more than you earn), reliable parenting strategies (the adults are in charge, not the kids), and it's okay to come second. A veteran of the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression and the Technological Revolution, **Common Sense** survived numerous cultural and educational trends including body-piercing, whole language and 'new maths'.

His health started to decline when he became infected with 'if-it-only-helps-one-person' virus. In recent decades his waning strength proved no match against the ravages of well intentioned but overbearing regulations. He watched in pain as good people became ruled by self-seeking lawyers. And his health deteriorated when schools endlessly implemented zero-tolerance policies. Reports of a six year old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate, and of a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly pupil, all worsened his condition. It declined even further when schools had to obtain parental consent before administering aspirin to a pupil, but were not allowed to inform parents if their daughter was pregnant or wanted an abortion.

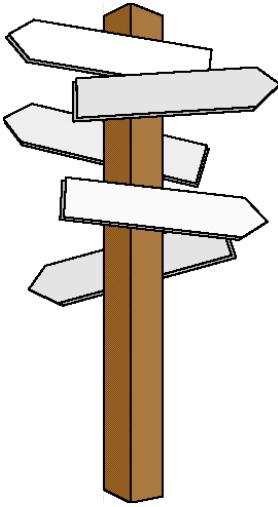
**Common Sense** lost his will to live when the Ten Commandments became contraband, when churches became businesses, and when people too stupid to realise that a steaming cup of coffee was hot were awarded huge damages.

**Common Sense** was preceded in death by his parents Truth and Trust, his wife Discretion, his daughter Responsibility and his son Reason. He is survived by two stepbrothers, Ino My Rights and Ima Winer.

## **WEBSITE DEVELOPMENTS**

Our Signposts Book Group and Meditation Group (see next page for details) now have their own dedicated pages on our website. We are currently investigating the possibility of posting on-line book reviews on the Book Group page – watch this space! Our website address is: [www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk](http://www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk)

## SIGNPOSTS BOOK GROUP



Are you on a spiritual journey?  
Are you looking for companions along the way?  
Would you like to share ideas and insights?

Come along to the Signposts Book Group,

WHERE: 31 Hazelwood Road, Northampton  
WHEN: 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month, 7 pm to 9 pm

### BOOKS FOR JULY TO SEPTEMBER MEETINGS

July: *Pilgrim's Regress* by C.S. Lewis

August: *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

September: *A Backdoor to Heaven* by Rabbi Lionel Blue

For further information, please ring Sue Woolley on  
01604 870746



## MEDITATION GROUP

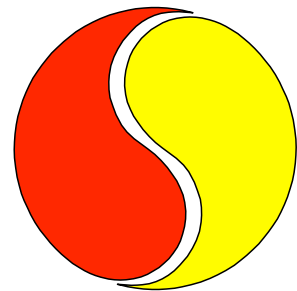
There is more than one way of making a spiritual  
journey

Come along to the Meditation Group  
Led by Northampton Unitarians

WHERE: 31 Hazelwood Road, Northampton

WHEN: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month, 7 pm to 9 pm

For further information, please ring Sue Woolley on  
01604 870746



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