



Northampton Unitarian News

Number 18, July to September 2007

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 26th August**. We will be meeting in the main car park at 10.30 am, will enjoy a short (approximately ¾ hour) walk through the forest (including the new Tree Top Walk, from which amazing views of Northamptonshire may be seen), pausing along the way to share readings and prayers, We will then share lunch at the new café, which does very nice sandwiches as well as hot food and drinks. The theme for this year's walk will be Developing Spirituality.

So please join us – bring your family, and your thoughts on Developing Spirituality.



SERVICE TAKERS FOR JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2007

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

8 th July	Sue Woolley
22 rd July	Congregational service on theme: My religious / spiritual hero(ine) or inspiration
29 th July	FIFTH SUNDAY: visit to Boughton Green [see article p.3]
12 th August	Sue Woolley
26 th August	A Walk in the Woods including Tree Top Walk, Salcey Forest
9 th September	Sue Woolley
23 rd September	Northampton Unitarians 180 th Anniversary Service Sandy Ellis, Midland Union Treasurer

All are very welcome!

ANNIVERSARY SERVICE ON 23rd SEPTEMBER

This is to give you all advance warning of our special anniversary service on 23rd September. Sandy Ellis, Treasurer of the Midland Union, will be leading the service, which will be followed by a shared lunch and a cake. An advert will be appearing in the August issue of *MU Now*, inviting our Midland Union friends.

We would very much like this to be an "All Present" service, so put the date in your diary now!

GOODBYE MAUD, HELLO SUE!

At our service on 24th June, we said goodbye to Maud Robinson, who has been our part-time student pastor since October 2006. Her final service for us was conducted jointly with Sue Woolley on the theme *Keeping Our Chalice Flame Alight*.

She was then presented with a Celtic blessings locket and a copper chalice, hand-made by Jon Small for the occasion, with the engraved inscription "Northampton Unitarians October 2006 – June 2007".

Maud has an exciting time ahead of her – she is going to be spending the next year or so over in Boston, Massachusetts, as pastor to one of the many Unitarian Universalist churches there. After that, she may come back here to take up a ministerial post in this country, or who knows?

Her service-taking slot is being taken over by Sue Woolley, our Secretary and Newsletter editor. Sue will be leading our services on the second Sunday (i.e. our first service) of every month. We wish her well.

Jon Small



CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS: REPORT

The report from Rev. John Clifford and Martin Gienke, our CAP assessors, was received at the beginning of June.

After a discussion at the Management Committee meeting, the report was presented to the congregation after the service on 24th June. All present were given a copy of the report. The main points to be brought out were as follows:

- Membership issues need reviewing
- Better publicity is very important – ideas put forward by the assessors included overhauling the website, external signage, making better use of the window, distributing Unitarian leaflets, and using press releases to make ourselves better known
- Rev. John Clifford strongly recommended reviewing the constitution
- 31 Hazelwood Road – are we staying here, and if so, what do we need to do?
If not, what else do we need to do?
- Finance issues and pastoral issues were also raised

The report included a very helpful Action Plan, which we need to examine carefully and decide which parts we are going to take up, in what order of priority. As there are so few of us, we need to share the work out between all members of the congregation, with each person contributing according to his or her particular areas of expertise. Our assessors recommended a return visit in 6 – 8 months.

The report's conclusion was very positive: "The challenges are indeed immense, but not insurmountable – the congregation though small has many strengths; the finances are stable; the building is usable and has some potential for development as a community resource; and there are some simple things in the way of publicity that could be done quickly."

A VISIT TO BOUGHTON GREEN, SUNDAY JULY 29th 2007

29th July is a "Fifth Sunday" and, weather permitting we will be going to visit this interesting and ancient area.

The Green proper lies to the northwest of Moulton Park and ¾ mile east of Boughton village. It is triangular in shape, where three roads come together. By the north side on a slope by a small wood lies the remains of the Church of St John the Baptist sharing the same dedication as the church in the village. When I first visited Boughton sometime in the 1960s, I was told that the ruined church was all that was left of the old village that was abandoned after the Great Plague. I observed that there were no signs of occupation here. Further research showed that the Green was actually the site of an ancient Fair that had ceased in 1915 and the Green had become a field during the Second World War as part of the "Dig for Victory" campaign and never reverted back to a green. Until a few years ago the field, after ploughing, yielded up a mass of clay pipe fragments, pieces of post-medieval pottery, coins, buttons and other signs of activity. This was material broken, dropped or lost during the yearly three-day fairs that had gone on for centuries. Since the advent of metal detectors most of this material has been lifted and lost.

There are several other features that command interest. There is a holy spring in the churchyard said to have healing properties and the ghost of the highwayman Captain Slash is said to haunt the wood behind the church.

Until the army dug up the Green for exercises in the First World War there was an ancient turf maze called the Shepherd's Maze here; unfortunately although we have a drawing of it, we don't know where it was. Here is an opportunity for the Spiritual Development Circle to try out their skills at dowsing its location. As there almost certainly will be a crop on the site in July, we would have to confine ourselves to map dowsing, but there is no reason why that can't be done on the day with a large map. Perhaps later, with the permission of the farmer when the crop has been cleared we could go back and try to confirm our findings in the field so as to speak!

Nearby is Boughton Park and around this area are several "follies" which if time permits we could visit. Some are within the Park itself and private, but one or two e.g. Holly Lodge, The Spectacle and Bunkers Hill Farm could all be visited on a short run in a car.

Holly Lodge was built for Philadelphus Jeyes around 1860 by a local architect, Alexander Milne. Philadelphus Jeyes opened a "chymist" shop in the drapery in Northampton in 1810 and many locals will remember it. Interestingly, the shop, which is still there, is fronted with "Kingsthorpe Rottenstone" a white sandstone that weathers rather badly. The Obelisk, one of the Boughton follies, which we probably won't visit, was also built from the same material, I wonder if there is a connection here? Philadelphus' younger brother John, founded Jeyes Sanitary Compounds and developed the world famous Jeyes Fluid.

The Spectacle lies just a few hundred yards away at the edge of a field. It is a copy of the gateway to Holly Lodge but leads nowhere. During the 1960s local rock climbers fixed pitons into this structure so it could be used for training and as far as I know this is the only registered climb in the county!

Bunkers Hill Farm is another castellated building like Holly Lodge, built in commemoration of the Battle of Bunkers Hill in 1775, the first major engagement of the American War of Independence. The British line was led by General Sir William Howe who had this pile erected

However, not a folly, but probably the most interesting building is the Church. The ivy covered sandstone walls partly in ruins and peaceful calm of the overgrown churchyard have an atmosphere all their own I have seldom found such a tranquil spot. I recommend this visit to anyone. So please come along, bring a bite to eat, and if you wish, a reading or prayer to share, perhaps along the theme of *Timelessness?*

Jon Small



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

There is more than one way of making a spiritual journey

Come along to the Spiritual Development Circle led by Northampton Unitarians

WHERE: 31 Hazelwood Road, Northampton

WHEN: 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7 pm to 9 pm

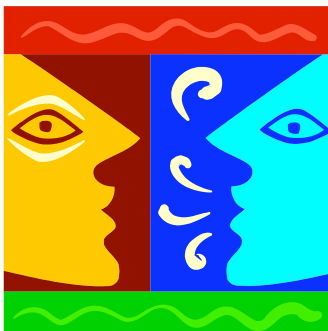
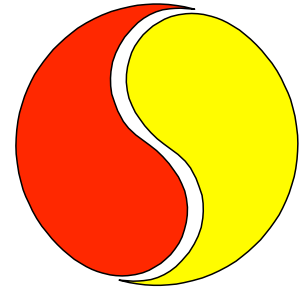
THEMES FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER MEETINGS

July: no meeting

August: no meeting

September: *Numerology*

For further information, please contact Jon Small at jon.small@ntlworld.com



DISCUSSION GROUP

Explore current / spiritual issues in our new Discussion Group, relaunching in September

WHERE: 31 Hazelwood Road, Northampton

WHEN: 1st Tuesday of the month, 7 pm to 9 pm

THEMES FOR JULY – SEPTEMBER MEETINGS

July: no meeting

August: no meeting

September: *Do animals have souls?*

For further information, please contact Sue Woolley at sue.woolley@virgin.net

Please send any contributions to Sue Woolley, 5 Martins Road, Piddington, Northampton NN7 2DN or via e-mail to sue.woolley@virgin.net