



Northampton Unitarian News

Number 25, April to June 2009

GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT VISITS NORTHAMPTON

We were delighted to welcome Mrs. Joyce Ashworth, 80th President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, pictured below, who led our service on Sunday 22nd March 2009, which was also Mothering Sunday.

Joyce is Chair at Rochdale Unitarian Church, and is also involved at national level (quite apart from the Presidency). She is a member of the Denominational Support Commission, coordinator of facilitators for the Congregational Assessment Process, which we undertook here at Northampton a couple of years ago, and a member of the Support for Organisational Leadership and fm (future ministry) Panels. In her spare time (!) she enjoys rambling, music and going to the theatre.

Her theme was 'Circles of Caring', and she pointed out that you did not need to be a mother (or indeed a parent) to be nurturing and caring about your fellow human beings. As a spiritual community, we are also our own Circle of Caring.



After the service, Northampton member Penny Collins shared her experience of attending an International Conference of Unitarian Women in the United States, which sounded like a fascinating and inspiring occasion. There were about 2,000 caring, committed Unitarian women present, all of whom wanted to make a difference to their denomination, their society and their planet.

(Penny: this sounds like it could be turned into a wonderful and inspiring service!! Ed.)



SERVICE TAKERS FOR APRIL TO JUNE 2009

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

12 th April	Sue Woolley (Easter Sunday)
26 th April	Kath Riley (Evesham & Cheltenham)
10 th May	Fiona Boyle
24 th May	Joanne McGeehan
14 th June	Jon Small
28 th June	Mark Beaumont
31 st May	Fifth Sunday – activity to be confirmed

All are very welcome!



NORTHAMPTON UNITARIANS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

When: Sunday 12th April 2009

Where: 31, Hazelwood Road, Northampton

Time: after the service (please bring a packed lunch)

This is your opportunity to comment on what your Committee has done in the past 12 months, and to suggest what they should be doing in the year to come.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF UNITARIAN & FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ANNUAL MEETINGS

These are at Chester this year, from 15th to 18th April 2009, and Joanne McGeehan will be attending as our delegate. After the service on 22nd March, we discussed the motions. Sue Woolley will be attending too, in her capacity as Midland Unitarian Association District Facilitator. We look forward to their reports!



NEW NAME FOR OUR DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

On Saturday 21st March, Sue, Jon and Joanne attended the Midland Union (as it then was) AGM at The Great Meeting House Unitarian Church, Coventry. One of the items on the agenda was a suggestion that the MU be renamed, so that it could be recognised as a Unitarian organisation (its full name Midland Union of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches is rarely used). After a spirited discussion, and a closely contested vote, the new name is **Midland Unitarian Association (MUA)**.

Humour from the Internet (courtesy of Mark Beaumont)

Noah and the Ark

In 2007, the Lord came unto Noah, who was now living in England and said, "Once again, the Earth has become wicked and over-populated, and I see the end of all flesh before me. Build another Ark and save two of every living thing, along with a few good humans." He gave the CAD drawings, saying, "You have six months to build the Ark before I start the unending rain of forty days and forty nights."

Six months later, the Lord returned unto Noah and found him weeping in his yard, but of the Ark, there was no sign. "Noah!" the Lord roared, "I am about to start the rain, Where is the Ark?" "Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah, "but things have changed. I needed Building Regulations approval because the Ark was to be over 50 metres. I've been arguing with the Fire Brigade who insist that it is fitted with a sprinkler system and fireproof doors and my neighbours claim that I should have obtained planning permission prior to building the Ark in my garden because it is a development of the site - even though in my view it is a temporary structure, but the roof is too high. I had to appeal to the Secretary of State for a decision. The Local Area Access Group complained that my ramp was going to be too steep and the inside of the Ark was not fully accessible to the disabled and that there were not disabled toilets or the gangways were too narrow for wheelchairs. Then the Department of Transport demanded a bond to be posted for the future costs of moving power lines and overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the Ark's move to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they wouldn't listen to me.

Getting the wood was another problem.. All of the decent trees have Tree Preservation Orders upon them and we live in an area of Special Scientific Interest, set up in order to preserve the spotted owl that lives around here. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls - but again, they wouldn't listen.

When I started to gather the animals, the RSPCA threatened me with prosecution. They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued that the accommodation was too restrictive, and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space. The gay rights activists threatened to hold a demo in my garden as they learned that I was planning on only taking on a female and male of each species - they said that was homophobic and was against the Civil Liberties Act.

Then the County Council, The Environment Agency and The Rivers Authority ruled that I couldn't build the Ark until they had conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood. I'm still trying to resolve a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission on how many ethnic minorities I'm supposed to hire for the building team. The Trade Unions say that I cannot use my sons as they insist that I have to hire only CSCS accredited workers with Ark-building experience. To make matters worse. Customs & Excise have seized all of my assets, claiming that I'm trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species.

So forgive me, my Lord, but it would take me at least another ten years to finish this Ark." Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you are not about to destroy the world, Lord?" "No, Noah" said the Lord, "The Government has already beaten me to it."



DISCUSSION GROUP

Explore current / spiritual issues in our Discussion Group

WHERE: 31 Hazelwood Road, Northampton

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

THEMES FOR APRIL TO JUNE MEETINGS

April: *Is the Shroud of Turin genuine?*

May: *Are there limits to tolerance?*

June: *An alternative look at spirituality*

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

Springtime Prayer by Judith L. Quarles

Spirit of life, bring to us beauty -- the beauty of snowdrops and tulip shoots.

Bring to us strength -- the strength of torrents of spring streams and the quiet strength of roots pushing deep into the ground for nourishment.

Bring to us pleasure -- the pleasures of maple syrup sticky and sweet on our tongues and the wind grabbing a kite and taking it high -- if only we could go too!

Bring to us wisdom -- the knowledge that new life springs up without help. In spite of everything we do or don't, green shoots will bring in the spring; grass and weeds and dandelions will appear.

Bring to us love -- springtime love has magic in it. The children look cherubic, the parents look eager, the lovers look lost, the seniors look satisfied. Let springtime love be a part of our lives. Spirit of life, come to us that all the energy and power of spring will make us tall and smiling and expectant. Amen



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