



Northampton Unitarians News

*A spiritual fellowship, encouraging tolerance,
reason and independent thought*

Issue 84, June - August 2025

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Statement of Belief (taken from our website)

Unitarianism is a religious movement in which individuals are free to follow their reason and conscience; there is no pressure from creed or scripture. We are open to change in the light of new thought and discoveries.

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 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.

Our thanks to the General Assembly Information Department, for extracts from 'A Faith Worth Thinking About' by Peter Sampson et al; and to Ipswich Unitarians for extracts from a leaflet by Rev. Cliff Reed.

Websites & Social Media

www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/NorthamptonUnitarians>
<http://sue-still-i-am-one.blogspot.co.uk>
<http://www.midland-unitarian-association.org.uk>
www.unitarian.org.uk

Calendar for June to August 2025

June

- Sunday 1st Flower Communion service, Aleks Zglinska, 11.00 am
Sunday 15th Worship service, Jon Small, 11.00 am
Thurs. 26th Threads, craft and chat group 2.00 till 4.00 pm

July

- Sunday 6th Worship service, Heather Korbey, 11.00 am
Sunday 20th Congregational Circle Service.
Theme: Beauty, 11.00 am
Thurs. 24th Threads, craft and chat group 2.00 till 4.00 pm

August

- Sunday 3rd Worship service: Rev Sue Woolley, 11.00 am
followed by committee meeting.
Sunday 17th Worship service: Mark Beaumont
Thurs. 28th Threads, craft and chat group 2.00 till 4.00 pm



Beauty by Jon Small

What is beauty? What can seem beautiful to one can represent something different to another – it can be pretty, simple, plain or ugly – or any other degree of attractiveness/repulsiveness. How do we quantify Beauty? Can we? Could we invent some sort of scale so that one could look at a statue, a building, a tree or an animal for example and say, “Oh, that’s 8.7 on the Scale”. I think it is obvious that we are never, whilst we at least remain human, be going to be able to create a Beauty Scale.

Beauty is the eye of the beholder.

This statement seems to be true, but there are cases where the general consensus of opinion is that some particular object can be considered to be beautiful or ugly. I note that it is difficult to speak about beauty without involving ugliness – rather similar to talking about love without hate, hell without heaven and good without evil.

I have said in the previous paragraph “some particular object” as if only physical things can be beautiful, but of course this isn’t so – an idea, plan, theory &c. can also be beautiful [or ugly!]. There is a tendency to only consider art in its various manifestations; painting, sculpture, music, architecture, dance &c. to be subject to judgement, but other things can also be judged such as mathematics and geometry. The Theorem of Pythagoras, [the one about squares on triangles] when explained with a suitable diagram can be a positive pleasure to experience – it is *elegant*.

Now we are getting somewhere with the word *pleasure*, is it that the engendering of pleasure whilst experiencing something gives us our own estimation of that things beauty? If this is so then we must assume that it is displeasure that can trigger feelings of ugliness.

I have found that when discussing things with another and they find difficulty in explaining something to me, asking for a “ferinstance” often works. There is no reason why this should not work with me, so here goes.

Beautiful

The Brotherhood of Humanity.
Some classical music.
Victorian “Gothic” architecture.
Gilbert & Sullivan
The starry vault of heaven.
Flowers.
Dew on a spider’s web.
Weather.
Pythagoras’ Theorem.
People.

Ugly

Nazi Race “Theory”.
Rap.
Much of Milton Keynes.
Wagnerian Opera.
MacDonald’s.
Cars.
Graffiti.
Litter.
Ashtrays.
People.

These are, of course, personal ideas of beauty and ugliness and in some cases are generalisations. For example I don’t think all Victorian Gothic architecture is beautiful, some is quite hideous, but on the whole I find it pleasing to the eye. This is actually an interesting example as when I was a young man I found Northampton Town Hall, an example of Victorian Gothic architecture, ugly and irrelevant – now I find a pleasure in looking at it. I think this may be an example of the prejudice of youth, in that I was told by others that it was ugly and echoed their opinions without looking at it for myself.

How much of what we consider to be beautiful or otherwise is a matter of conditioning? Today in the West, we have been conditioned to believe that great rolling masses of fat on a woman are repulsive, but there are parts of the world that consider that the fatter a woman is the more attractive/desirable she is. From the point of view of survival, fat, large amounts of, is bad, but in

certain societies a fat wife is a sign of the husband’s ability to feed his family i.e. *his* successfulness. It may be that she’s not so much beautiful, but successful! In ancient Egypt rich young girls wore necklaces of gold flies as a sign of wealth. We consider the fly to be a sign of disease and filth and would not consider the fly to be a suitable subject for a jewellery design. Ancient Egyptians measured their wealth in cattle, the more you had, the wealthier you were and where you get cattle you get flies! To present your daughter with a fly necklace showed that she belonged to a wealthy family.

To repeat “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” – but how much is down to conditioning? We have all heard it when a child picks something up such as a worm or slug – or even worse! “Ugh! Dirty! Put it down – drop it and go and wash your hands!” I observed in a water meadow near where I used to live one day when the sun was very bright that even a dog turd glistening in the sun *can* look quite beautiful, perhaps as long as you don’t think too much about what it really is. As for our gastropod friends, if you actually *look* at a slug or snail as it moves along on its own business they are incredible things and, at least to me, beautiful.

I think it is “hard-wired” into us to see certain things are ugly such as the dog turd, as it is a very bad survival aspect to want to have anything to do with faeces because of disease. We avoid them. On the other hand certain things are “hard-wired” as being beautiful or desirable.

Discuss.



Awareness of Beauty by Sue Woolley

The Ancient Greek dramatist, Menander, once wrote, “The best thing in life is having an understanding for everything beautiful.”



This applies whether it is beautiful art, natural beauty, like the rose above, human beauty, or abstract beauty (such as we recognise in well-crafted words or music). And to recognise that, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, beauty is all around us. We can also use our other senses, touch, smell, and taste, to perceive the beautiful.

Which can be hard, sometimes. If we are sad, lonely, grieving, or sick in body or mind, it can be difficult to open our senses to the beauty all around us, because we are consumed by negative emotions and feelings and have no room for anything else.

But I do believe in the healing power of beauty. If we can only open our senses to its ubiquitous presence in the world, it can help us to realign our souls. There always *is* beauty, but we have to be awake and attentive to see it all around us.

Where have you found beauty recently?

Northampton Unitarians

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### ***O! Source of All Beauty* by Yvonne Aburrow**

O! Source of All Beauty,  
May we see the beauty in the humble and unexpected:  
the patient spider and the wayside flower,  
the daisy and the buttercup;  
the wheeling of silver birds against a leaden sky.  
May we manifest the sacred art of love  
in all our words and deeds,  
and to forgive ourselves and begin again when we fail.  
May we tread gently on the Earth  
who is our holy Mother  
and protect her from harm.  
May we honour the sacred in the everyday:  
a smile, a look, a word; a simple act of kindness;  
a meal shared, or help with mending.  
Amen.