



Northampton Unitarians News

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

Issue 85, September - November 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/Northampton Unitarians](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 September to November 2025

September

- Sunday 7th Congregational Circle Service. Theme: Harvest.
11.00 am
- Sunday 21st Worship service, Heather Korbey, 11.00 am
- Thurs. 25th Threads, craft and chat group 2.00 till 4.00 pm

October

- Sunday 5th Congregational Circle Service. Theme: TBC.
11.00 am
- Sunday 19th Worship service, Jon Small, 11.00 am
- Thurs. 30th Threads, craft and chat group 2.00 till 4.00 pm

November

- Sunday 2nd Worship service: Rev Sue Woolley, 11.00 am
followed by committee meeting.
- Sunday 16th Worship service: Mark Beaumont
- Thurs. 27th Threads, craft and chat group 2.00 till 4.00 pm



The Ritual by Jon Small

I wrote this years ago as an experiment in ‘loaded’ language, the sort of way that the gutter-press will report anything and carefully use words that imply their quite feeble story is in fact sensational....

AS I TURNED to lock the door, I felt the chill of the evening air. It had been one of those days, early in the year, when everything is bright, sharp and very cold. A time when snow lays in dirty, white mounds on pavements and road sides. When children’s voices can be clearly heard in the still air streets away.

It was late afternoon and I confess that the chill I felt was not entirely due to the season. I was about to meet an old acquaintance of mine. We had known each other, on and off, for years. At first, when we had been young, it had been socially. Then we went through a period when we merely nodded to each other in the street. In later life common business interests had brought us back together again.

I had been aware of Robin’s religious interests since I had first known him, and although we had completely different views, we never allowed them to interfere in our friendship, or our business interests.

Tonight Robin was going to take me to one of his religious gatherings. I was to witness one of their famous rituals. He had suggested that we meet a few streets away from the building where the rites were to be conducted.

‘It will be better if we walk to the place together, others might wonder who you are if we met outside.’

I did know where we were going, I’d walked past the place hundreds of times, *and* I’d had a good idea what it was used for. Tonight I was to enter that building for the first time, I was to see what really went on in there; to see for myself and discover once and for all what *really* happened at their meetings – whether any of the lurid tales I had heard were true.

'Don't do anything out of place, copy me and don't draw attention to yourself' he warned me as we met under the street-lamp a few hundred yards from our goal. 'I think they could be quite upset if they knew that a person with your beliefs had penetrated one of their groups.'

We walked silently through the quiet, terraced streets until we came out onto the main road. To our left, a little further down and on the other side stood the building.

'You OK?' asked Robin, his face bloodless in the sodium street-light.

'Yeah, fine.' I replied.

'Still want to go?'

'Yes – are *they* going as well?' I pointed to a loose group of people standing and talking quite openly on the pavement outside the building.

'Oh yes!' Robin smiled. 'There's a lot of us you know – more than some people think!'

They looked quite normal, in fact I recognised two of the men, one was a butcher in the town and the other I had seen driving a bus. Some of the children looked familiar too; possibly they attended the school near my house. There were no particular social group represented in this crowd. Their behaviour and appearance gave no clues to their true "beliefs". They were just a cross-section of ordinary people standing and gossiping in the street.

Robin was getting nervous as he steered me towards the dark entrance. 'For God's sake,' he hissed. 'Just do as I do – and *don't* stare!'

I nodded and smiled grimly as we were carried by the crowd through the door. I snatched one last glimpse of the darkening, snow-laden sky as I entered the forbidding building.

The room where the ritual was to take place was huge. Practically the whole interior of the building was one room. Two

rows of pillars supported the roof which was open right up to the beams about forty feet above my head.

I had expected to be dimly lit and mysterious, but in fact, it was well illuminated by hundreds of candles. Some, set high in the roof were obviously electric, but many of the ones in easy reach, particularly at the altar end of the room, were real. The smell of hot wax mingled with the reek of incense.

Everyone, even the children, performed a little ritual in entering the 'temple'. No one seemed to notice my clumsy attempt at copying Robin. We sat near the back, in the shadow of one of the roof supports, the place slowly filled up, the doors were closed, and the rituals began.

I cannot remember the full details of everything that went on over the next hour or so. It was so confusing, the coloured lights, funny smells, chanting, singing, standing up, kneeling down, intoning in a strange tongue. Suffice to say that the rituals involved only men and boys, although women and girls were able to witness the full rites.

There were several 'priests' as they liked to be called, dressed in long exotic robes, festooned with embroidered symbols. One, which needs no description here because of its well-known connection with such practices, predominated.

Robin explained in whispers to me some of what was supposed to be going on. I suddenly realised that he was telling me that a sacrifice was about to take place. I had heard about this, but I didn't realise it was to happen on the night that Robin had brought me!

The hypnotic chanting and bell ringing began to rise in pitch, there was a sudden flurry of activity around the 'altar' and one of the 'priests' triumphantly held *something* up. From the back I could not see what it was and the people around me were gasping and muttering with excitement. Several called on their Deity and drew mystic signs in the air in front of them. As far as I could see children were witnesses to all of this.

I was horrified when Robin told me that he was going up to the place of sacrifice to get a bit of the victim and eat it! He added that if he was lucky he'd get a drink of the blood too! I was sickened, but relieved to discover that not everyone availed themselves of the 'honour' – so I was able to remain in my seat whilst Robin went and did what he felt he had to do.

When he returned he was smiling, his face glowed and there was red on his lips!

My recollection of the ceremony is confused, the music, smells, brightly coloured idols and chanting became one blur.

I can remember standing and kneeling at times and repeating things. I remember parting with some money – but I am sure I didn't sign anything, or agree to join anything – of that I am sure!

I really came to when Robin sprinkled me with some water as we escaped into the sharp, night, air. Outside, in the street, life was going on as usual. Stars shone down through the glare of the sodium lamps and traffic hummed along the road, just like it always did.

As we walked away from the place Robin said, 'You look a bit worse for wear. It's probably the atmosphere in that place; it can get pretty stuffy at times. How about a drink in that pub?' he pointed across the road.

We went in, the barman knew Robin, 'Hello, took a mate with you this week?'

I nodded and smiled. '*God, even the barman knows about it!*' I thought to myself.

We sat in a corner on our own. I was full of questions.

'Well,' said Robin, bringing over the drinks, 'what do you think of a Roman Catholic Mass then, eh, Jew-boy?'

The account is actually based on an experience I had many, many years ago when a long standing R.C. friend of mine took me to a Mass to see what it was like, his name wasn't Robin.

Northampton Unitarians

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***Interfaith Unity Prayer by Jenny Miller***

O Loving God of our Understanding – O God of many Names,  
Awaken our hearts into Your Heart

And pour into us Now

Your Divine Light, hidden in Our Souls, One with Thee –

Christ Light

Krishna Consciousness

Buddha Nature

Flow of Tao

Oneness,

Divine Isness,

Beloved,

I AM

One in Thee

Om Aum Amen