



Northampton Unitarians News

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

Issue 56, April - June 2017

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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/Northampton%20Unitarians)

<http://twitter.com/@NtonUnitarians>

<http://sue-still-i-am-one.blogspot.co.uk>

<http://www.midland-unitarian-association.org.uk>

www.unitarian.org.uk

www.unitariansocieties.org.uk

Calendar for April - June 2017

April

- Sunday 2nd Worship service, Dorothy Haughton (MUA)
Sunday 9th Worship service, Rev. Sue Woolley
Sunday 16th Easter Sunday Congregational Service
Sunday 23rd Worship service, Jon Small
Sunday 30th Congregational Service. Theme: TBC

May

- Sunday 7th Worship service, Pastor Kath Forder (Evesham)
Sunday 14th Worship service, Rev. Sue Woolley (followed by our AGM, postponed from March)
Sunday 21st Soul Haven gathering, Simon Hall
Sunday 28th Worship Service, Mark Beaumont

June

- Sunday 4th Worship Service, David Taylor (Stourbridge)
Sunday 11th Worship Service, Rev. Sue Woolley
Sunday 18th Soul Haven gathering, Simon Hall
Sunday 25th Worship Service, Jon Small

Please join us for our AGM, after the service on 14th May.

*****Weekday Gatherings*****

We have decided to move our regular **Walk Away the Cares of the Week** on our Labyrinth to 3rd Tuesdays, from 7.00 pm – 9.00 pm. We hope that this will attract more people.

More details on our website: www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk

*All Worship Services and Gatherings are held at
Northampton Unitarians Meeting House, St. Katherine's Terrace,
Northampton NN1 2AX.
Worship Services start at 10.30 am
ALL ARE WELCOME!*

Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

By the time I go on sabbatical, at the beginning of July, I will have been your part-time minister for 18 months, and your Secretary for 13 years before that. I have run other-than-Sunday groups, edited the newsletter, and maintained the website, and MeetUp and Facebook pages since their inception. I have helped you to find and settle into your lovely new Meeting House. I feel that I have done everything I can to give you a solid foundation as a congregation, but have run out of energy and inspiration.

So sadly, this letter is to let you know that, having thought and prayed about it for some time, and having done much soul-searching, I am resigning from the post of quarter-time minister of Northampton Unitarians. I am giving you just over the requisite three months' notice, and will be leaving on 8th July. My final privilege as your Minister will be to conduct Rachel and Sanna's wedding, on that date.

After I leave, you will not see me at NUMH for the rest of 2017, unless I am needed to conduct a naming, wedding, or funeral, which I do for all congregations without ministers throughout the District. From the start of 2018, I will be happy, as District Minister, to lead one service a quarter for you, to conduct rites of passage as required, and to offer advice, if requested.

I would like to thank you all for your friendship down the years, and Jon in particular for his unwavering support. Without his help and dedication to the congregation, I could not have achieved what I have for you. I wish Northampton Unitarians every good thing for the future, and hope that you will manage not only to survive as a congregation, but also to grow. I have complete faith in this possibility, and in you all.

Yours in fellowship, *Sue*

From Roots to Fruits: blogpost by Sue Woolley

At the end of January, I attended a one-day intensive for my spiritual direction course on the theme 'Tree of Life: from Roots to Fruits', led by Noel Moules.



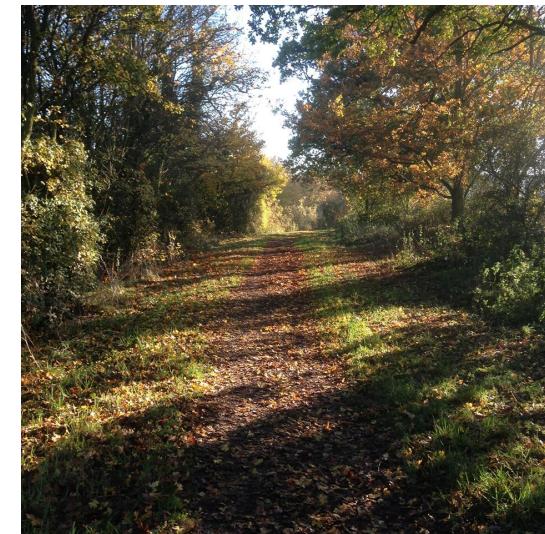
It was fascinating to learn what a universal icon the Tree of Life is. There is something about a tree - any tree - which so beautifully reminds us both of the cycle of life, and that the whole of creation is inter-connected, in a very profound way. Without trees, there would be no life on this planet.

It is a symbolism which can be used in so many ways in the spiritual life, by considering yourself as a tree, and asking some searching questions (most of which I remember from the Build Your Own Theology course):

- What is your spirituality rooted in?
- Which roots from your past have influenced you?

- Had you considered that much of the work of the spiritual life goes on at a sub-conscious (roots) level?
- What is the main foundation of your faith (trunk)?
- Consider the different elements of your faith / spiritual journey (branches) - what fruits have resulted from them (beliefs and actions)?
- Look at the discarded leaves on the forest floor - which parts of your spiritual life have you left behind?
- Consider that every fruit contains seeds, which need to be planted in fertile soil in order to grow and bear fruit in their turn.

He also emphasised the importance of living by life-giving values (Shalom), rather than by legal, head-based rules. All this was presented with beautiful images of living trees, which are so essential to the healthy life of our planet. It was a gentle, challenging, holistic day, with lots of time for reflection. I offer it to you, as an opportunity to reflect about the life of the congregation, in the days and months ahead.



Regional News

Saturday 25th March saw nearly 40 Unitarians from across the District meeting at Kingswood Meeting House to take part in the 151st Annual General Meeting of the Midland Unitarian Association.

The business meeting was over in just under an hour, and included a special presentation to our dedicated Treasurer, Mr. Sandy Ellis, to mark his 34 years of service to the District. Our new President is Ms. Diane Rutter, of Kingswood, and our new Vice-President is Ms. Angela Maher, of Birmingham UNM. We also gave thanks to outgoing President, Mrs. Jane Couper.

Business over, we came together in the Kingswood schoolroom to enjoy an excellent buffet lunch, laid on by Jill Bowie and her helpers. Then it was time to re-convene, for the new President's service, and to listen to our Guest Speaker, Rev. Danny Crosby, minister of the Altrincham and Urmston congregations in the North West.

Diane spoke about life in terms of high tides and low tides, varying between times of activity and involvement, and times of quietness and reflection. Life and ministry are sometimes brilliant, sometimes the reverse, but mostly about getting through the ordinary days every day.

Danny's talk was about how Love changes everything, and will be published in full in the May issue of *MU Now*. His theme was that impermanence is the energy and beauty of life, and that the spiritual life is about being awake to the wonders of life. There are both wonderful and painful moments, and everything is in change. But that love underpins everything.

All in all, it was a rich and enjoyable day.

Northampton Unitarians

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Chalice Lighting words by Erika A. Hewitt

Reader:

To “encourage” means to hearten; to impart strength and confidence. This is our work, as a religious community: to encourage one another; to be bold in engaging the world around us, as well as what scares us internally; to give one another the confidence and heart to live as fully as possible.

Congregation:

With full hearts,
we affirm our relationships with one another;
we recognize our agency and our connective power;
and we accept our responsibility to be bold and courageous.

We light this chalice,
symbol of all that we are, all that we have done together,
and all that we will be as our shared ministry encourages those
within, and beyond, our walls.