



## Northampton Unitarians News

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

Issue 57, July – September 2018

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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](http://www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/Northampton Unitarians>

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

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

[www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk)

[www.unitariansocieties.org.uk](http://www.unitariansocieties.org.uk)

## Calendar for July – September 2018

### July

- Sunday 1st      Worship service, Ms. Aleks Zglinska  
(Kidderminster)  
Sunday 15th      Worship service, Rev. Jeffrey Bowes (Coventry)  
Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>      Walk the Labyrinth

### August

- Sunday 5th      Worship service, Rev. Sue Woolley (MUA)  
Sunday 19th      Worship service, Ms. Diane Rutter  
(MUA President)

### September

- Sunday 2nd      Worship Service, Dr. Mark Beaumont  
Sunday 16th      Worship Service, Mr. Jon Small

### \*\*\*\*\*Weekday Gathering\*\*\*\*\*

Our last Labyrinth Walk before the Summer Break will be on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> July. We will be resuming on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October.

More details on our website: [www.northamptonunitarians.org.uk](http://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!**

## Letter from the Editor

Dear Friends,

Welcome back to the Newsletter, which has been in abeyance since June last year. Time has passed, and since our AGM in May, I am back in my old jobs for the congregation – Secretary and Newsletter Editor.

The last twelve months have been hard for the congregation. After much thought, we have decided to revert to our former worship pattern of two services a month, but on first and third Sundays.

Up until May this year, our third Sunday service, the Soul Haven Gathering, was led by Simon Hall. But sadly, Simon has decided that it is time for him to return to Leicester Great Meeting full-time, so we are now reliant on our own worship leaders, Jon and Mark, and on the services of guest worship leaders. This quarter, we are pleased to welcome Aleks Zglinska of Kidderminster, Rev. Jeffrey Bowes of Coventry, MUA President Diane Rutter and me with my District Minister's hat on.

Jon continues in his role as Treasurer, with help from Sandy Ellis, the Treasurer of the MUA. We have now set up internet banking, which should make things easier.

We were pleased to welcome Julie Small into membership of the congregation at our service on 6<sup>th</sup> May, so there is good news too. We also have a splendid new paved drive, which is much easier to maintain than the old gravel.

We welcome visitors, so any time you are in the area, do come along!

Yours in fellowship,  
*Sue*

## Sharing Our Scriptures: Blogpost by Sue Woolley

A couple of months ago, I spent a wonderful day at Holland House, a Christian retreat centre in Worcestershire, with the Worcestershire Inter Faith Forum. Representatives from various faiths – Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Baha’I and myself as a Unitarian – were invited to engage with their own scriptures, and to share them with each other and the audience. It was a rich day and I feel blessed to have been a part of it.



But of course Unitarians do not have a single sacred text of their own. So I had some explaining to do. I said:

‘This is a difficult question for a Unitarian to answer, because we do not officially \*have\* a sacred text which is unique to Unitarians. Unitarianism grew out of Christianity, and before World War II, most worship services would include a reading from the Christian or Hebrew Bibles. Some of our congregations, who call themselves Free Christians, still do this. But in the last 50 years or so, the majority of Unitarians have moved to a more pluralist viewpoint, espousing freedom of religious belief, based on individual reason and conscience. So I can only answer these questions as an individual Unitarian, with my own particular beliefs and viewpoint, rather than on behalf of the denomination

as a whole. If another Unitarian minister was speaking to you, his or her answers might well have been different.

These days, Unitarian worship leaders are able to create our own “living scripture” of readings that speak to our condition and that of our hearers. There might still be a reading from the Bible, but equally, there might be a poem by Rumi or Hafiz or Mary Oliver, a chapter from the *Tao Te Ching*, one of the Quaker *Advices and Queries*, or a passage from the work of a contemporary theologian or spiritual leader, such as Richard Rohr, Karen Armstrong, the Dalai Lama, or Marcus Borg, to name but a few. Or of course by other Unitarians, past and present. To quote one of our ministers, Stephen Lingwood:

“We can pay attention to a cloud of witnesses from many different countries around the world and many different times in history. We can delve deep into the traditions of our spiritual ancestors and listen to their voices. In doing so, we can create a ‘living scripture’: a loose, dynamic collection of texts which brings together essential insights from the past and present of our movement.”

If the question means “To what scripture do you turn in times of trouble?” the answer will be similarly diverse. In my own case, I will turn to the Psalms, from the Hebrew Bible, and also the poetry of John O’Donohue. For advice, I turn to *Quaker Advices and Queries*, which I always carry with me.’

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## Regional News

More than 30 Unitarians from 11 congregations around the District assembled at Unitarian New Meeting Church in Birmingham for the District’s 152nd Annual General Meeting.

Following a commendably brief business meeting, followed by an even briefer AGM of the Midland Unitarian Association of Lay Preachers & Service Leaders, we enjoyed a delicious cold buffet lunch, which had been laid on by the congregation of UNM. It was a chance to catch up with old friends, and to make new ones.

Our Guest Speaker was Stephen Lingwood, pioneer minister of Cardiff Unitarians. He gave us a fascinating talk about his new post at Cardiff – which is 1/3 for the congregation, and 2/3 doing Unitarian evangelism – sharing the good news about our Unitarian faith. He stated that our mission is to address the current spiritual crisis, which is causing the climate crisis, by inviting people into relationship with self, neighbours, community, the Earth and God. And to encourage a deep connection with the interdependent web of all existence – we are all one.

He explained that as Unitarians are a liberal religious movement, we acknowledge that revelation is not sealed, and that there is always more truth to be discovered. Our practice should be dialogue, rather than monologue – not just about the individual spiritual journey. His current ministry is about building relationships and having conversations, about being alongside people where they are.

He argued that spirituality is about becoming more human, each in our own unique way, by making discoveries through faith and trust. He said that one part of the greater mission should be to make a more loving, just world which will enable us to work on the climate crisis. We need to combine activism and spirituality.

He concluded by saying that if we can build beloved community, we can build paradise. It is about entering into dialogue, respecting the dignity of the individual and their right to say no, building relationships over time, and also part of a larger mission to work towards justice and peace.

## Northampton Unitarians

Northampton Unitarians Meeting House,  
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**Organist:** Dr. Mark Beaumont

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### Prayer by Celia Midgley

Loving God, help us to love  
our neighbour as ourselves.

Create in us a tender heart for all that lives,  
for all that may grow.

Make us aware of the fragility  
and potential of human beings.

Let our passion ever be tempered with kindness,  
our lives with humility,  
and however hard the path  
may caring be our calling.

Amen