



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

Issue 64, April - June 2020

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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
www.unitariansocieties.org.uk

Calendar for April - June 2020

All services and weekday gatherings have been suspended for as long as the Covid-19 pandemic lasts. We look forward very much to seeing you when that happens. For the latest information, please see our website (details on page 8).

Message from our Community Development Coordinator

Well, what a difference a few months makes to our plans. For my last message to you all, I was wishing you a Happy New Year for 2020, and discussing plans to try and create more opportunities to open our building during the week!

We did open on Friday afternoons during February and a few friends did pop by to visit and we shared some toast and reflective spiritual time together. However with Ciara blowing the roof off our neighbours across at the Sol centre, the town became gridlocked and many stayed away from the area. We'll revisit this idea when we're able to!

Just now though, we have a different challenge to overcome. Our beloved building is closed to limit physical contact between us for the time being. In my last service I explored this possibility as it approached us on the horizon, cancelling our shared post-service soup and sandwich lunch together... there will be times again in the future when we can gather again, eat together again, sing together again in the same space side by side. But for now we have paused... but we are still church. The church was never the building.

With this in mind, we are presented with an opportunity to try some things we haven't before. Even before we'd taken the decision to not meet face to face, I was already considering the possibility of providing further opportunities for connection, not just for those of us already regularly attending at NUMH but also those from the wider community who seek us out. One idea came from my attendance at the Midland Unitarian Association (MUA) District Training Day, where one participant shared that their meeting has adopted the practise of a small 'reflection' article from someone who attended the previous Sunday's worship being mailed out with the coming week's reminders! This sounded like an excellent opportunity to share a flavour of our service with those who couldn't get to us that weekend for whatever reason, and give an insight into our worship to any who is curious about our Sunday gatherings.

- So starting in April each Wednesday afternoon I'll be mailing out something.
- It will go electronically to everyone who we already have contact details for.
- A subscription link will be created from our website for new inquirers.
- The link will be posted on our social media channels (Twitter and Facebook) and as a news article to our website.
- Initially we won't have Sundays together to reflect on, so I'll do the first few reflections myself suggesting sources for spiritual nourishment during this time.

This quarterly newsletter you're reading now will continue to be the longer form and printed communication stream for our community. It continues as ever to be open to you all to write longer articles and share celebrations, information and news with

the community. (I know Sue as current secretary welcomes these as often as you'd like to submit them, please!)

The electronic weekly mailing is primarily for the reflection I mentioned and any reminder notices that come up between publications of the quarterly. We have such a lovely time together when we gather so think of the ripples we can create in the world sharing a small moment of this with the wider community.

Please take care in these uncertain complex times and I hope to be able to see you all again very soon.

Aleks

Love Opens Doors: Blogpost by Sue Woolley

Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet and short-story writer (among other talents) wrote, “Whoever does good, knocks on the door; whoever loves, finds it open.”

As we all hunker down to live our new lives under COVID-19, I have been encouraged and uplifted by the amount of good deeds and loving that is going on in the world, in my neighbourhood and in my country.

To be sure, there are still some selfish people, who are operating from places of scarcity and fear, who are hoarding toilet rolls and pasta, in deep fear of an almost entirely fictitious Armageddon. But most of the people I know, both online and in person, are taking a far more pragmatic, and unselfish approach to life. Unitarian ministers and lay worship leaders / congregation leaders are producing online resources to share with their congregations, coming up with ingenious ways to keep in touch with them while the physical distancing rules are in force, and

generally trying to do their best in very difficult circumstances. I have found the willingness, even eagerness, of the fit and healthy, to care for the less fortunate among us, very heartening.

This virus is undoubtedly the most life-changing thing most of us have come across, in our whole lives. I believe that how we respond to it, both individually, and as a society, will have a great effect on how well we come through it. If we do the best that we can to look after ourselves, support others, or receive support graciously and with gratitude, we will come out of this better and stronger than before. But if we allow fear to overcome common-sense, it will be a very long few weeks or months.



Yes, there are things we cannot control – how long this will last, its effects on the economy, and on our individual lives. Yes we are afraid for the well-being of our loved ones. But there are also things we *can* control – mainly our own attitudes, our willingness to take each day as it comes, sensible adherence to the physical distancing regulations (because this is not about “social” distancing at all – there are many other ways to keep in touch) and to do our best to remain as positive as we can, and get through this somehow. Together.

Bright blessings to all our readers – may you be well, may you be happy, may you be free from harm, may you find peace. Amen

The Metabhavna: Prayer of Loving Kindness

I was first introduced to this beautiful prayer (a Buddhist spiritual practice) in 1988, when the late Peter Galbraith was lay leader of Northampton Unitarians. It is used frequently in worship at Northampton, and in this time of scarcity and fear, I think it would be good to re-visit it. This is my version:

After each line, I invite you to close your eyes, and pray for the people concerned, using the words given, if you wish...

First of all, we pray for ourselves: May I be well, may I be happy, may I be free from harm, may I find peace.

Next, we pray for our loved ones, those people who are dear to us: May they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from harm, may they find peace.

Next, we pray for someone less well-known to us, about whom we have no strong feelings, but whom we might know better, if we made the effort: May they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from harm, may they find peace.

Next, we pray for people we don't know, for all the people who are doing their best to make a positive difference in the world, and for those who are lost in places of scarcity and fear: may they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from harm, may they find peace.

Next, we pray for someone we dislike, or find it difficult to get on with: may they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from harm, may they find peace.

Finally, we pray for the world: may all be well, may all be happy, may all be free from harm, may all find peace. Amen

Northampton Unitarians

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### Prayer in the time of a Pandemic by Sue Woolley

Spirit of Life and Love,  
Be with us as we share our lives,  
Each in our own place.  
Help us to feel a sense of community,  
Even though we are physically apart.  
Help us to care for each other in this difficult time,  
Keeping in touch however we can,  
And helping each other, however we may.  
We hold in our hearts all those  
Whose lives have been touched, in whatever way,  
By the coronavirus and the fall-out from it. Amen

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