



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

**Issue 65, July - September 2020**

## **Contents**

Statement of belief & websites / social media	page 2
Calendar for July - September 2020	page 3
Message from our Community Development Coordinator	page 3
One Step at a Time: Blogpost by Sue Woolley	page 5
Re-opening NUMH – update	page 7
Who we are and how to contact us	page 8
Prayer by Martin Whitell	page 8

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

## Calendar for July - September 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 7 & 8).**

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### Message from our Community Development Coordinator

Back in November I was invited to go to a concert with my friend Sarah in Hackney, Sarah lives in Bedfordshire and we both caught the train down to London. I thought to myself, I'll probably visit London again a few times in the next 12 months... Let's get a Railcard that lets me get reduced-price rail travel in the South East! Well with hindsight that was an optimistic idea... there were a great number of summer events I was planning to attend, Sarah invited me to join her at a folk festival in Oxfordshire, I usually travel to Norwich for their excellent Pride celebration, I was planning on hosting young Unitarian friends from across the UK in our own county at the Greenbelt progressive Christian festival near Kettering in August.

The pandemic just tilted everything about the lives of everyone at home and work. In our household, because of our creative backgrounds, we have many friends in the arts industry who rely on those summer events as the majority of their income for the year. Suddenly we were able to join a couple we know in Wigtown (Scotland's Book Town) who are known as The Bookshop Band, in their sitting room from our sitting room via Facebook Live. They played the excellent songs they write about book, performing (not too loudly so as not to awaken their sleeping three year old... Not usually an issue for their gigs) not

just to plug a hole in their finances but also to raise awareness of the online services provided by small independent bookshops. As 'non-essential' shops, all of them were closed and, without their ordinary footfall... unable to compete with the big companies flooding the inboxes of anyone who ever gave their email at a checkout with statements about the situation. As we were forced into our separate homes without the usual contact of visiting our church, visiting the pub, visiting each other's homes, conversely people also looked for ways they could reach out, help their neighbours with shopping or collecting prescriptions, phoning folks who would usually be attending lunch clubs and day centres during the week so they didn't get lonely. This outpouring for the greater good is something tangible, it can be easy to look at the situations going on in the world today and feel despondent, I have to fight against that myself. But even in the situations that make me angry, health inequalities in the US, police brutality, moves to erode the rights of trans people in the UK, 'LGBT-free zones' in Poland, I have learned of the positive things that continue to go on in the face of bleak headlines!

Growing up Catholic my favourite part of church on Sunday was the end... Not because I was bored by the service, but because there's a commission in the final blessing of The Mass to go out into the world and let your faith influence your life, and work. I know what I've written here may seem political rather than spiritual, but what I'm seeing is that in this time of crisis is many Unitarians, across the UK and the wider world, feeling moved by their faith to live out the values we talk about so often. I miss our gatherings so much, but I'm reassured that when it is safe for us to be together again, it will be a comfort and inspiration to us and the impact on the wider world will continue to ripple out as we put our faith in action.

*Aleks*

## One Step at a Time: Blogpost by Sue Woolley

Like so many of us, I can become disheartened by the sheer volume of what I need / would like / feel I ought to do. So the words of Saadi gave me fresh heart: “It is not an art to conquer the world; if you can, conquer a heart.”

It reminded me of another quotation, by (I think) the American Unitarian Universalist minister, Forrest Church, “Do what you can, where you are, with what you have.”

In other words, we don’t need to “conquer the world” right off the bat. Changes are made by individual people, doing what they can from where they are, day by day, using the skills that they have, and being open to change and growth.

I would guess that all of us can make a list of “things that are wrong with the world.” They might include poverty, war, homelessness, exploitation of the planet, violence... The list is endless, and depressing. And overwhelming. What can we, individual little people, do about it all?

The answer, I believe, is in Saadi’s quote, “if you can, conquer a heart.” Use the mind, heart and abilities we have been given, to change \*one\* person’s mind, to pick up \*one\* piece of litter, to choose to buy \*one\* eco-friendly bottle of washing liquid, to sign \*one\* petition, to attend \*one\* protest. Then, to further the washing metaphor, “rinse and repeat”.

This approach also applies to tasks which feel “too big”. When faced with a serious and complicated task, it is human nature to procrastinate, to do that which is easiest, and to ignore that which is difficult and overwhelming.



Image by Bill Stilwell (Flickr)

I know this from my own experience. Each time I add a new piece of software to my PC, which I know will \*ultimately\* make my life easier, it is such a massive temptation to carry on using the same old less-efficient software I know so well. Because the struggle to learn how to use a new program efficiently daunts me.

This happened to me this month. I downloaded a free trial edition of *Scrivener*, the writing software, and spent the whole of one evening going through the online tutorial. I could see that once I got to grips with it, it was going to make my novel so much more fun to write. BUT there were so many features with which I was unfamiliar, that I found the prospect incredibly daunting.

So I took my own advice and ordered a copy of *Scrivener for Dummies* and gave it a proper go. And it is absolutely fantastic. Those “so many features” that I found daunting on first appraisal, are actually making the writing so much more fun.

But the first step was the most difficult. Conquering one heart is the most difficult. The greatest amount of energy is used when we start moving. From still to first step takes more energy (certainly more emotional and spiritual energy) than the following steps do. A sort of virtuous feedback loop is set up and, as we form a new

habit, learn a new skill, it becomes easier to maintain our momentum.

And remember...



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## Re-opening NUMH: Update

You will all be aware that the Government is permitting places of worship to re-open from 4<sup>th</sup> July. But in the light of guidance received from the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, and from our own Midland Unitarian Association, the Officers have decided it would be best to wait until September, and then revisit the issue. In the meantime, if anyone needs any pastoral support, please contact Sue Woolley. Details on page 8.

## Northampton Unitarians

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**Prayer by Martin Whitell**

Spirit of God and Lord of the morning we come together and to you  
in the coolness of the beginning day.  
We thank you for the hope that is ours in the community of faith  
and in the determination  
of the best of humanity to make this world and every situation  
one of kindness and care.  
We think today of those who are very sick,  
those who are worried and those who are bereaved.  
May they find comfort in the presence of loved ones, carers,  
and the unfathomable resources of the Divine. Amen