



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

**Issue 66, October - December 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](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 October - December 2020

We are delighted to report that our Meeting House has now re-opened for worship, with all social distancing and anti-COVID measures in place. However, we will not be resuming our monthly Labyrinth Walks until after Christmas, at least. Worship leaders for October – December are as follows:

### October

Sunday 4th   Worship service, Rev. Sue Woolley (MUA)  
Sunday 18th   Worship service, Ms. Aleks Zglinska

### November

Sunday 1st    Worship service, Mr. Jon Small  
Sunday 15th   Worship service, Ms. Aleks Zglinska

### December

Sunday 6th    Worship Service, Rev. Jeffrey Bowes (Coventry)  
Sunday 15th   Worship Service, Ms. Aleks Zglinska

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## Message from our Community Development Coordinator

As I write this, the autumn colour is arriving, it's about 13 weeks until Christmas, and it feels a little like it was February then I blinked... And now it's nearly time to think about hauling the plastic tree out of the cupboard again!

I may have said this before, but I've very rarely had a 'real tree' in a house I've lived in for Christmas. I'm 36 and I think the count is

two or three! One year my dad put one up in his office, and the chaplain at the building I lived in at University always got us a real tree for our extremely spacious sitting room, since it was where we'd hold all our seasonal social events. In my childhood home we actually treasured an artificial tree my Polish Granny/Babcia had bought in the early '80s we kept getting it out year after year until the mid '00s when it had finally lost its shape.

It seems a bit premature to be thinking of Christmas trees as I write this, but plants are on my brain. Our meeting house took on a more green appearance than we were expecting this year, when we closed in March I didn't know we had a native clematis in our flower bed. And even as I visited during the Spring and Summer I didn't clock it's slow creep through the shrubs in the flower bed until there was a green carpet triangle outside the front door that I had to pick up and fold back into our small garden! Something else that seemed to spring up to a massive size has been the buddleias, these aren't native to the UK. They've 'self-set' from seed in the flowerbed, they're from China and they're considered an invasive species by Defra (The Department for Environmental and Rural Affairs) advice from the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) [Aleks- I apologise profusely for this acronym heavy paragraph!] recommends heavy pruning and replacing them when they die back with native lavenders which support a wider ecosystem of insects than the buddleia does.

You may be reading this wondering where this is going, but as recently as last Sunday I made a magical discovery. You are probably already aware that our closest neighbours in St Katherine's Square are two mature trees situated on the verge around the turning place, where there once was a huddle of terraces, much like the buildings our meeting house replaced in the 50s, some town planner must have planted these trees possibly around the same time as the square was created and the building which now houses our community was built. Again one is native

to the UK, it's the more usual whitebeam on the corner. Soon it will fruit with small apple like berries that the local birds enjoy eating. There's another in St Katherine's Gardens by the currently empty flower bed. The other tree, as I spotted from the immature, prickly green shells laying on the ground recently, is not native to the UK. It originated in the south of continental Europe and was brought here by the Romans because the fruits of the tree the nuts are edible and if the wood is coppice it makes excellent poles for construction.

The reason I've chosen to pen such a lengthy note on our arboreal friends is primarily to encourage you to visit them and say hello! We have begun, tentatively, to gather in person again, but the gathering begins and ends with none of the social time we've come to love in our Meeting House... And it's right, that at the moment we keep everyone as safe as possible by not congregating indoors to chat afterwards. So if I'm hurrying you from the building into the fresh air at the end of a meeting and you'd like to take a moment longer to linger... Pop over the road and say hello to our neighbours, although come later October/November you might have to fight me with my wicker basket if you're expecting to forage any of the edible looking chestnuts!

Our most recent gathering together was on the topic of birds, and how we impact the natural world. We're very lucky in Northampton and the surrounding towns that we have so much green space that is accessible to us. The river valleys, the wetlands, forests and nature reserves, the large parks in or near each suburb of the town. Even as it gets colder and darker and we maybe spend more time indoors, this year in particular it's likely we'll need to make use of the outdoors as the safest way to meet with people we'd like to see face to face. I'd encourage everyone pay closer attention to the plants and trees you're sharing the outside with, and the wildlife they support.

Quick request-

If you're on Facebook I'm setting up an album in our group linked to the church page for your Autumn/Winter 2020/21 nature images so we can share them with one another! I know at least one person will have some submissions and I'd like to be able to use them in our gatherings in person and potentially virtually throughout the coming months! If you're not active on Facebook but would still be interested in submitting any digital photos for us to see I can always be contacted on email- [aleks.zglinska@gmail.com](mailto:aleks.zglinska@gmail.com) also if you're on Facebook but not sure how to access the group, if you email me I can send you some links!

*Aleks*

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## **The Good Scapegoat by Jon Small**

Have you ever been a Scapegoat i.e. blamed or held responsible for something that you didn't do, or have no connection with? You probably felt that justice has not been done and have a sense of unfairness and frustration. This tale may show that being a Scapegoat may not always be so bad.

"I, like the other males watched over the females and kids. We moved from hill to rocky hill, across the patches of desert, we found food where we could. It was a day much like any other in that wilderness when They came.

We knew that They came from time to time and took our females and kids and sometimes us males as well. We'd seen bands of our kind captive, driven by Them across the desert, taken to places that they didn't particularly want to go to. Sometimes they were sold, or even worse.

This time it was different. They seemed to be only after we males and as luck would have it I, along with one other male were captured. We struggled, we fought whilst the rest of our band ran away. We had our legs bound and were carried off to their encampment in the nearby hills.

Caged, we were fed and watered and discussed our fate. We knew they were not past killing us and even eating us! Fear filled our hearts for four days until we were dragged out from our cage and paraded before some kind of chieftain or priest.

“Is this the best you could catch?” he asked the men who caught us.

“They were a poor bunch, but the only ones around, holy one, and these two were the best of the whole lot.”

“Well they will have to do – now which one is the best looking, the fittest?”

My fellow captive whispered, “I’ve heard of this, one of us is to be the Scapegoat, they put all the year’s evils, guilt and sins on you and then you’re killed!”

The priest walked up and down; he kept looking at me, I tried to look like I was the least good-looking and unfit. Suddenly he made up his mind and pointed at *me*, “This one shall be the Scapegoat!”

I nearly fainted with fear as I was led away; looking back I saw a look of sympathy, but also relief on my companion’s face.

I was subjected to strange ceremonies where the tribes’ evils, guilt and sins were put onto me. I felt nothing except fear of my coming death. I hoped the silly rituals would go on forever.

Girls came and festooned me with garlands of flowers and then gilded my horns – must have looked magnificent, but they were about to kill me. At last it was led to the edge of the camp. “This is it,” I thought, “this is when they do it.”

My halter was removed, it was no good trying to run, they would have caught me before I had gone more than a few yards. The priest started to say a lot of words, nobody appeared to have a knife or a bow, everyone now joined in the ritual words. I just stood there waiting for the end.

Suddenly someone slapped me on the rump, “Go on! Go on! – take our sins into the wilderness! Go on! Depart Scapegoat – depart!”

They all began to chant, “Go evil – depart – Go sins – depart – Go! Go! Go! Go!” I ran.

Once I was away I rubbed against a rock and removed the garlands which I promptly ate. So my companion was wrong - they didn’t kill the Scapegoat or eat him and this made sense, for if they had put their sins onto me and then eaten me they would have got those sins back!

But what of my companion?

Later I sneaked back to the outskirts of the camp; he was there, the centre of attention, which he seemed to like, by a great roaring fire near a strange stone altar.

“Now, do they garland him and gild his horns?” I thought. But no, they bound him and put him on the altar and the priest cut his throat and drained his blood. His fat and entrails were offered up to their G-D and burnt, making a nice smell. The rest of him was cooked in the great fire and eaten by the tribe.

After a time I found my herd and joined once more, fighting to regain my status and my right to mate with the females. The gold wore off my horns; I lost a lot of it through fighting other males.

After this whenever I saw Them I bleated a warning and ran and ran. Next time if I was caught again I might not be lucky enough to be made the Scapegoat!

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### **A Blessing for Time Spent with a Mature Deciduous Tree in Autumn by Aleks Zglinska**

Oh tall friend, I dwell beside you conscious of the fact that I am in fact resting here on you, inside you.

Your roots spread beneath me anchoring you to the earth.

I am inside your sphere of being.

We are sharing the same air, I am breathing in the oxygen you are creating, and you are taking in the carbon dioxide I am creating.

I observe your canopy above me, the branches reaching up way beyond the reach of my arms.

You are likely home to smaller creatures than I, birds, bugs, small animals, other plants, fungus, etc... your own microbiotic biome\*.

Your shape is comforting to me, your roots, your trunk, your branches.

Above me the colour of your leaves changes day by day, and soon you will bear your bare branches to the pale wintery sky.

Around me what you shed in leaves, and twigs and fruits lay a blanket on the ground to sustain more life there. To create your offspring, to feed the local residents.

There is much that is different between us, but in these moments I pray to learn from you, the ability to sustain the life and lives of others as I sustain my own.

May it be so and amen.

\*we all have one too!



(image Salcey Forest, Sue Woolley)

## The Benefits of Smiling by Sue Woolley

I once read somewhere that it takes only four muscles to smile, but 72 (I think I remember it correctly) to frown. Whether that is true or not, smiling is good for us. So I warmed to a quotation I came across the other day, an Indian proverb, “The smile you send out will return to you.”

Because it really works. When I’m out for my daily constitutional, I always smile and say “hello” to anyone I pass. And even the most pre-occupied will acknowledge me, often with a smile of their own. Which makes the world a slightly more benevolent place, every time.

With so much craziness and bad things going on in the world at the moment – wars, famine, poverty, discrimination, violence – not to mention the corona virus, our spirits need lightening, if we are to survive. And smiling (and being smiled at) helps enormously. Admittedly, it is sad that we can’t make closer physical contact with anyone outside our own personal bubble at present, but a smile can mean so much...

- I like you
- I love you
- Well done, congratulations
- I know how you feel
- You’ve got this
- You make me happy
- I care about you
- Life is good
- That’s funny
- Namaste – that of the divine in me cherishes that of the divine in you

And a thousand other things. A true smile is never a negative conversation. So smile at someone (or someones) today... and cherish that smile back.

## Northampton Unitarians

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### Prayer for the community of the earth by Joan Wilkinson

May we live in peace within the community of Mother Earth,  
respecting all that to which she gives birth,  
from the smallest grain of sand to the greatest mountain range,  
she is there.

We are fed from her abundance.

May we learn to plant and reap in harmony with her laws.  
Both microbes and men are sustained from her bounty.

Forgive our greed and teach us how to live modestly,  
that all living beings may be sustained in their season.

It is with awe, reverence and joy we walk upon this sacred earth.  
May we celebrate and care for our earth community  
in all its diverse life forms – for you are there.

Amen

