



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

Issue 70, January – March 2022

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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 January – March 2022

Worship leaders for January - March are as follows:

January

Sunday 2nd Worship service, Mr. Jon Small
Sunday 16th Worship service, Ms. Aleks Zglinska

February

Sunday 6th Worship service, Rev. Sue Woolley (MUA)
Sunday 20th Worship service, Ms. Aleks Zglinska

March

Sunday 6th Worship service, Rev. Jeffrey Bowes (Coventry)
Sunday 20th Worship Service, Ms. Aleks Zglinska

Message from our Community Development Coordinator: Northampton Unitarians Christmas 2021

The winter is a time that seems to call us into reflection, the short days and long nights. The chill winds hurry us along the street and rush us inside to warm fires. This year's winter has a strange mix, for me at least, of yearning to see and be with others especially since last year's Christmas took place with a very firm promise of we can do our usual things 'next year' and also my usual desire to hibernate away from the cold under layers of blankets to be woken again sometime around... March?! It still doesn't quite feel like a 'normal' Christmas this year, but this gives us a wonderful opportunity to try out new traditions and refresh old ones.

We each personally and usually as family groups have traditions we feel make our celebrations our own. A Unitarian Universalist minister friend of mine is Jewish and this year has been testing out sending her high school aged daughter with increasing numbers of chocolate gelt for Hannukah. Every day she'd include some in the lunch bag, one for the first night etc.... Which seemed like a lovely idea for night one but I quickly realised she'd require several bags of coins to be able to have the 36 required to make it to the eighth night and remembered that even establishing new traditions takes some planning.

This year we have tried something new of our own at Northampton Unitarians Meeting House. We held carols in collaboration with our friends from Northants Life Music which meant we could be accompanied by jingling bells, and steady drums for some Christmas classics and also explore some songs we didn't know from other countries. It also meant we could experiment with a cafe-style church layout (see photo on page 5) where there is room for everyone to spread out and have space for their teas and coffees and also lots of space near the front on one side for a 'Curiosity Corner' with a play nativity scene and lots of books about Christmas. This is what I like to refer to as VIPs... Very Inquisitive People... who are usually the youngest attendees at any gathering. Next year I hope to be able to advertise more of the regular services on the 'third Sunday I lead to families of all ages in this style.

Carols were accompanied by Mark on the piano, Aleks on flute and Thea on glockenspiel. As well as by the carollers who all had different instruments depending on the song! See photo on page 5.



I grew up as a Catholic with the nativity being a big part of the church decoration in my childhood and one of the most fun things we ever did at secondary school was to make a nativity scene out of what we would normally throw away! This won the school a small cash prize which was used to buy a beautiful permanent nativity set which could be used year after year (as wonderful as our display of reused waste was it wouldn't have been practical to then keep it!) One of the things we have gained this year is a very sweet nativity display set (as well as the one for children to play with!)

When I lay out the nativity set, rather than have everyone gathered around the young family, I tend to focus on the elements of the story as it is told in the Christian *Bible* where the different visitors are never at the crib side all at the same time. So each collection of figures makes its own small tableau. The family in the centre, the wise men journeying through the desert, the shepherds on the hills tending the sheep. Just by chance or fortune, when I first began work with the congregation I purchased a set of 'plant' labels, they don't list the names of plants but they bear the words Peace, Love and Hope in pink text pressed into the terracotta clay. My intention is to pair them

eventually with a plant that does bear that name and keep them in our light and airy vestry! But I was encouraged to think about how the different elements of the nativity link to these labels, since they were just lying around when we were decorating and Thea and I discussed how they would fit. Love is obviously embodied in the family the parents and the child as the expression of the deepest connection are all intended to experience in a family unit. Then what about Peace and Hope?

For me, Hope is in the call to the shepherds to be included, those who spend their time doing important everyday work that is so vital to the survival of their own families and others there is always risk in such work, predators, poor weather the loss of ewes or lambs to illness, but there is the need for a great deal of Hope in farming. These people and people everywhere who grow and tend today, know what it is to place their faith in the hope for good outcomes.

Peace, therefore, is in the journey of those from foreign lands, who travel not knowing if or how they will be welcomed. This journey seems even more poignant this year particularly knowing that there still are those who seek refuge who make impossibly complex journeys in the hope of finding peace.

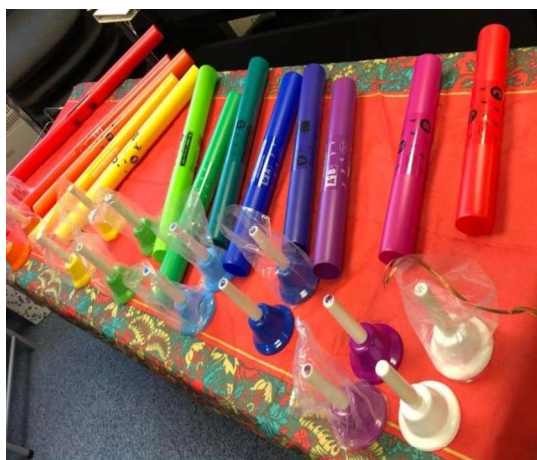
I don't really think there is such a clear cut answer to how these are entwined in the Christmas story and the story of all our lives, but my prayer for us for ending this year and journeying into the New Year is to find, Love, Hope and Peace in all we do.

*Merry Christmas, Joyful Yule, Seasons Greetings
for whatever you celebrate and Happy New Year!*

Aleks



The Nativity scene, with the plant labels which prompted the conversation!



The tuned bells and Boom whackers are very inviting and colourful – it's almost a shame that taking them to play spoils the display!

Northampton Unitarians

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### *There's More to Christmas by The Liberalist*

There's more, much more, to Christmas  
Than candle-light and cheer;  
It's the spirit of sweet friendship  
That brightens all the year;  
It's thoughtfulness and kindness,  
It's hope reborn again,  
For peace, for understanding,  
And for goodwill to men [and all people, Ed.]

