

Banbury Unitarians News



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

Issue 2, April - June 2012

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Letter from the Student Minister

Dear Friends,

By the time you read this, the worst of the winter weather should be over, and we can all look forward to the season of renewal and hope that is Spring.

The last three months have been eventful. We have started our Engagement Group *Building Beloved Community* (see page 4) and I have also had the privilege of meeting many of you in your homes, and finding out more about your lives. Thank you for making me so welcome! I hope to continue this programme of pastoral visits in the next quarter.

In April, we will be having our first Kaleidoscope service of the year, on the theme of *Spring: The Season of Renewal*. Please bring a story, poem, prayer, reading, or piece of music that speaks to you about this theme. It will be followed by our **Annual General Meeting**, which is your chance to have a say in the future of the Fellowship.

In June, we will be holding our usual Flower Communion service – please bring a flower that means something to you.

I am two-thirds of the way through the final part of my ministry training, a Counselling Skills course at the Metanoia Institute in London. The final weekend will be the last weekend in April, after which we will be able to revert to our usual service pattern of final Sunday in the month – thank you all for your flexibility in accommodating me.

And finally, a big THANK YOU to everyone who has contributed to this issue of the newsletter – I really appreciate it!

In fellowship,

Sue

Calendar for April - June 2012

April

Wednesday 11th Building Beloved Community (2)
Sunday 22nd Kaleidoscope Service: *Spring the Season of Renewal* **to be followed by our AGM**

May

Wednesday 16th Building Beloved Community (3)
Sunday 27th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

June

Wednesday 20th Building Beloved Community (4)
Sunday 24th Flower Communion service, led by Sue Woolley

*All worship services are held at
Banbury Town Hall and start at 11.00 am
All Building Beloved Community sessions are held at Don &
Rosemary Booth's and start at 10.30 am*

Building Beloved Community

On 14th March, 12 of us gathered at Don and Rosemary Booth's house to start our journey of Building Beloved Community. This group will be continuing until December, and all are welcome to join us. We will be exploring the following areas:

- Finding your balance (April)
- Guiding stars (May)
- The gifts we bring (June)
- Caring for each other (July)
- Unity in diversity (September)
- Sharing the message (October)
- Living our faith (November)
- Writing a covenant together (December)

Building Beloved Community: the First Meeting

On Wednesday March 14th, at the home of Rosemary and Don Booth, eleven members of Banbury Unitarian Fellowship gathered for the first session of an **Engagement Group** on *Building Beloved Community*, led by the minister, Sue Woolley. The subject for this session was "**Why I am a Unitarian**".

The meeting began with greetings and opening prayers, followed by a short discussion of the framework, principles and general aims of how this and future meetings should be conducted. Then a text entitled "A New Small Group" was circulated and members, prompted by what they had read, were invited to share their responses and ideas.

The meeting continued with each member reading a leaflet entitled *Why I am a Unitarian*, after which they were invited to contribute verbally, or in writing, their own reasons for being Unitarian.

During "Check-out" everyone was asked to share their thoughts about the first Engagement Group, and dates for monthly meetings in April, May and June were confirmed. The session was closed with devotions.

We were pleased to be part of the study group. It was thought-provoking and absorbing, and it was good to think about Unitarianism with others, and to share thoughts and ideas. The two hours passed by quickly and enjoyably, under Sue's leadership. We are looking forward to the next session in April.

Beryl and Jack Thomas

Poetry Corner

Unforgettable by Pamela Parrish

Spring, following last winter's bitter cold
 Appeared at first reluctant to take hold.
By stealth this year it came, a lovely day, then bitter cold
 Icy winds still kept shy spring at bay.

Daffodils waited for so long their chance to flower
 Only to be cut down within the hour
 By returning ice and snow
 Merciless and out of time.

Then, at last, came this long awaited spring
 With all its glory day by day,
 Branches dripping flowers of May
Where just a while ago were weighted down with snow.

Birds, enraptured by the sudden welcome warmth, sing
 As if they have known from birth the cadences
 And harmonised for our delight,
 And sing into the scented night.

We forgive the snow, the ice and frost
 The spring we thought was lost
 Appeared as if by magic overnight
To once again delight our hearts with sound
 And fragrance once again.



Easter Story by Rosemary Booth

Buds not open, light and green. Open flowers of yellow sheen
One daffodil is dead, wilted leaves and shrivelled head.
Amid the clumps of living flowers, tis clearly past its golden
hours.

Our daffodil has had its day. From bulb to bud and flowers gay
Its stem and flower must rot away
Below the earth the brown bulb does not die
Content to rest, hidden from sight you lie,
Until next Spring, in resurrection glory,
You rise to tell your Easter story.



The Haudenosaunee Declaration, 1979

Brothers and sisters: We bring to your thoughts and minds that right-minded human beings seek to promote above all us the life of all things. We direct to your minds that peace is not merely the absence of war, but the constant effort to maintain harmonious existence between all peoples, from individual to individual, and between humans and the other beings of this planet. We point out to you that a spiritual consciousness is the path to survival of humankind.

From *In beauty may I walk ... Words of wisdom by Native Americans*, Exley Publications, 1997. **Submitted by Beryl Thomas**



A Visit to the Albert Hall

I enjoyed my trip to London on the 18th of March. It was the St Patrick's Day Parade when we arrived, so some of the roads were closed. Our driver found somewhere to park and we all went for lunch. He then took us to the Albert Hall.



It really is an experience going in to the Hall. The show was the Classical Spectacular, with music, lasers, lights and fireworks. The orchestra was the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, with John Rigby conducting, and the songs were sung by the English Concert Chorus. Jesus Leon was the tenor, and Kate Valentine was the soprano. In addition, the Band of the Welsh Guard played the Muskets and Cannons of the Moscow Militia.



The new Music for 2012 included Bizet's *Flower Song* from *Carmen*;

Mozart's *Lacrimosa Requiem*; and Rodrigo's *Adagio Concierto de Aranjuez* played by guitar sensation Craig Ogden.

We were then treated to Suppe's *Light Calvary Overture*; *The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves* by Verdi; Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty Waltz*; and Wagner's *Prelude to Lohengrin Act III*; followed by *Easter Hymn* from *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni and Verdi's famous *La Donna E Mobile*. Other music included Sousa's stirring *Stars and Stripes Forever* and *Zadok the Priest* by Handel. While the *Sleeping Beauty Waltz* was being played, there were dancers dancing down the aisles, which was beautiful.

The rousing finale included *Nessun Dorma*; *The Hornpipe*; *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory*. The last item in this Classical Spectacular was the *1812 Overture*, at the end of which cannons went off, guns fired and there was a splendid fireworks display.

I really enjoyed my day at the Albert Hall. **Doris Worrall**



Books That Inspire Us

I have found a beautiful quotation by 19th century American Unitarian minister Theodore Parker, which sums up how I feel about books and reading:



Theodore Parker

"The books that help you most are those which make you think the most. The hardest way of learning is that of easy reading; but a great book that comes from a great thinker is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth and beauty."

Reading has always been a passion of mine, to the extent that it has occasionally got me into trouble, when I have been too deeply buried in a good book to pay attention to life going on around me. Yet few things give me greater delight than the discovery of a new book that makes me think; that makes me see the world and

everything in it in a new light. In his introduction to *Mister God, This is Anna*, Vernon Sproxtton speaks of *Ah! Books*, "those which induce a fundamental change in the reader's consciousness. They widen his sensibility in such a way that he is able to look upon familiar things as though he is seeing and understanding them for the first time. ... *Ah! Books* give you sentences which you can roll around in the mind, throw in the air, catch, tease out, analyse. But in whatever way you handle them, they widen your vision. For they are essentially Idea-creating, in the sense that Coleridge meant when he described the Idea as containing future thought - as opposed to the Epigram which encapsulates past thought. *Ah! Books* give the impression that you are opening a new account, not closing an old one down."

Everyone will have different *Ah! Books*. Mine include

- *Beliefs of a Unitarian* by Alfred Hall
- *Quaker Advices and Queries*
- *Enough* by John Naish
- *Testament of Youth* by Vera Brittain
- *Rilke's Book of Hours* by Rainer Maria Rilke
- *The Spiral Staircase* by Karen Armstrong
- *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran
- *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life* by Frederic and Mary-Ann Brussat
- *A Backdoor to Heaven* by Rabbi Lionel Blue

And of course *Mister God, This Is Anna*. Each of these books has shown me the world in a different way, and made me think about myself in relation to it. They have influenced what I believe, and how I behave in very fundamental ways. What are yours? Write in to the newsletter and share them! **SW**

Regional Events

Midland Unitarian Association of Lay Preachers And Service Leaders: Worship Studies Course Foundation Step

Led by: Rev. Linda Hart, Rev. Ant Howe, Dr. Jane Russell, and
Sue Woolley

When: Saturdays 12th May, 9th June, 14th July 2012

Where: Kingswood Meeting House, Packhorse Lane,
Hollywood, Worcs. B47 5DQ

Time: 10.00 am – 4.15 pm (coffee/tea available from 9.30 am)

Cost: £39 to MUA delegates

Warwickshire & Neighbouring Counties Monthly Meeting of Protestant Dissenting Ministers (1782)

Annual Service of Worship and Asparagus Lunch

When: Wednesday 9th May 2012

Where: Oat St Unitarian Chapel, Evesham, WR11 4PJ

Time: 11.30 am

Guest Speaker: Mrs. Lis Dyson-Jones, President of the
General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches

Tickets: £12.50 – please give your names to Malcolm or Sue

More details about these events from Sue Woolley (see p.12)

**Banbury Unitarian Fellowship,
At the Town Hall, Bridge St, Banbury OX16 5PX
Website: www.banbury-unitarians.org.uk**

Student Minister: Sue Woolley

01604-870746 e-mail: sue.woolley@virgin.net

blog: <http://sue-still-i-am-one.blogspot.com>

Chairwoman: Elaine Nomura

077-6967-8363 e-mail: emtnomura@aol.com

Secretary & Musical Director: Malcolm Sadler

01789-205571 e-mail: malcolmsadler@live.co.uk

Treasurer: Don Booth

01295-253921 e-mail: donbooth@talktalk.net

Come into this circle of Community by Andrew Pakula

Come into this circle of community. Come into this sacred space.
Be not tentative. Bring your whole self!
Bring the joy that makes your heart sing.
Bring your kindness and your compassion.
Bring also your sorrow, your pain.
Bring your brokenness and your disappointments.

Spirit of love and mystery; help us to recognise the spark of the
divine that resides within each one of us.
May we know the joy of wholeness.
May we know the joy of being together.

Amen