

Banbury Unitarians News



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

Issue 8, October - December 2013

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Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends,

Doesn't time fly? I cannot believe that it is nearly October. But the leaves are changing colour, and the nights are drawing in, so I guess it must be!

Now that we have all had our Summer holidays, we need to discuss the important issue of our status as a congregation within the General Assembly. As I explained in the last issue of the *Newsletter*, we are counted as a Small Congregation, and so cannot vote at the GA meetings. Please see the last issue and page 3 for what we need to do next.

Our Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life group goes from strength to strength. In spite of having August off, we came back together in September, and I was awed and thrilled by the quality and depth of the sharing and trust within the group. You are special people!

Banbury Unitarian Fellowship now has a Facebook page! I set it up in August, and so far, we have 16 likes, which isn't very many, but I'm hoping it will grow. Who knows, we might even attract someone new through Facebook!

Our Anniversary Service at the end of October is being led by Rev. Ant Howe, minister at Kingswood & Warwick.

My life has changed big time this month, as both my children-no-longer-children have gone away to university - my son to read Politics & International Relations at Leicester De Montfort and my daughter to read History at Sheffield. The house seems very quiet - and very tidy!

In fellowship,

Sue

Calendar for October - December 2013

October

- Thursday 10th Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life
Step 6 Action
- Sunday 27th Anniversary service, led by Rev. Ant Howe

November

- Thursday 14th Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life
Step 7 How Little We Know
- Sunday 1st Dec.* Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

December

- Thursday 12th Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life
Step 8 How Should We Speak To One Another?
- Sunday 22nd Christmas service, led by Sue Woolley
- Sunday 29th End of the Year service, led by Sue Woolley

*NB Our November worship service will actually be taking place on Sunday 1st December, because both Sue Woolley & Malcolm Sadler will be away on 24th November, the last Sunday of that month.

*All worship services are held at
Grimsbury Community Centre and start at 11.00 am
All Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life sessions are held at
Grimsbury Community Centre and start at 10.30 am*

Our Status within the General Assembly

As reported in the last issue of the Newsletter, when the Fellowship started meeting in 1994, we were recognised as a Small Congregation, rather than as a Congregation, and hence have no voting rights. It was also explained how we might be able to alter our status to that of Full Congregation. This includes

adopting a modern constitution in order to proceed with our application. I have a copy of the model constitution recommended by the Midland Unitarian Association, which we will need to look at. It will mean having a properly-constituted Committee and audited accounts. We will also have to hold a Special General Meeting in order to adopt such a constitution, but this could be done after a regular service. We will then need to ask the Midland Unitarian Association to sponsor our application, and send the relevant documents to the General Assembly.

Now that we are all back from our Summer holidays, we need to start doing something about this ... let us discuss it after the September service.

Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life

During the rest of 2013 and into 2014, our Engagement Group is engaging in a very deep way with Karen Armstrong's book *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. Already, in the first five steps, we have become closer as a community, and are learning to be more compassionate in our daily lives. Details in the Calendar on page 3.

Seeds of Hope from Water Aid

Although we are not having our traditional Harvest Service this year, it would be good to support Water Aid in their efforts to being clean water - and hope - to the world's poorest people. This year, they are focussing on Madagascar, where the situation is dire. Here are some statistics:

- 89% of homes in Madagascar don't have a toilet
- 70% of Madagascan people live below the poverty line.
- Madagascar is the fifth worst country in the world for access to safe drinking water. 11 million people have no

access to clean water. In rural areas they can walk for up to three hours a day to collect dirty water. They don't have enough water to grow crops, so their children go to school hungry as well as thirsty.

Water Aid's Seeds of Hope campaign is aiming to work in 14 villages in Madagascar in the next twelve months. So please give generously.



Crafted with Love: a blogpost by Sue Woolley

For the last couple of months, I have been stitching away at a beautiful cross-stitch project. It's called *Indian Summer Reflection*; it was designed by Martina Weber of Chatelaine Design, and it is exquisite. It's in the form of a mandala, and I'm working from the centre outwards. Last night, I got to a certain point, and decided to take a photo of it and post it in a stitching group I'm a member of on Facebook. But because I'm not particularly *au fait* with

posting photos and such, I posted it to my own timeline first, then shared it with the group.

And received a beautiful benediction from a Facebook friend: "patiently creating such a lovely mandala is a great way to honour your life, your achievements and who you are."



Which made me think about the power of creative art of all kinds to transform lives, not only those of people who see the finished work, but also those of the crafters and artists. I certainly feel at peace when I am stitching and try to stitch mindfully.

And then, by that marvellous serendipity that I am learning to recognise as grace, another friend posted these words by Kent Nerburn, from his *Letters to my Son*:

"I can measure my life by the moments when art transformed me—standing in front of Michelangelo's *Duomo pieta*, listening to Dylan Thomas read his poetry, hearing Bach's cello suites for the first time.

But not only there.

Sitting at a table in a smoky club listening to Muddy Waters and Little Walter talk back and forth to each other through their instruments...standing in a clapboard gift shop on the edge of Hudson Bay staring at a crudely carved Inuit image of a bear turning into a man.

... It can happen anywhere, anytime. You do not have to be in some setting hallowed by greatness, or in the presence of an artist honored around the world. Art can work its magic any time you are in the presence of a work created by someone who has gone inside the act of creation to become what they are creating. When this takes place time stands still and if our hearts are open to the experience, our spirits soar and then our imaginations fly unfettered.

You need these moments if you are ever to have a life that is more than the sum of the daily moments of humdrum affairs.

If you can create these moments—if you are a painter or a poet or a musician or an actor [or a dancer]—you carry within you a prize of great worth. If you cannot create them, you must learn to love one of the arts in a way that allows the power of another's creation to come alive within you."

And I felt as though God himself had reached down and pasted a star on my forehead.

Regional Events

Midland Unitarian Association Annual Lunch

Guest Speaker: Dr. Taj Hargey, Muslim Educational Centre of Oxford

When: Saturday 26th October 2013

Where: Kingswood Meeting House, Hollywood,
Worcs B47 5DQ

Times: 11.00 for 11.30 am - c. 3.00 pm

Cost: £9.50 a head

A letter / booking form has been sent to Elaine Nomura, with menu choices. Please return to Sue Woolley as soon as you can.

Deadline for bookings: 18th October

Banbury Unitarian Fellowship
At Grimsbury Community Centre, Burchester Place,
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Minister: Rev. Sue Woolley

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Secretary & Musical Director: Malcolm Sadler

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Autumn by Rainer Maria Rilke

O Lord, it is time
The summer was so vast
Put your shadows on the sundials
And in the fields let the wind loose.

Order the last fruits to become ripe
Give them two more sunny days
Push them to fulfilment
And force the last sweetness into the heavy wine.

He who has no house now will not build one
He who is alone will be so for a long time to come
Will stay awake, read, write long letters
And restlessly walk in the park among the blown leaves.