

Banbury Unitarians News



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

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Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends,

Every morning, I go out for a walk around our village with my best friend, just for half an hour. And over the past few weeks, which have included many beautiful blue-sky mornings, I have been watching Spring arrive.

The wonderful, miraculous, annual frenzy of growth is evident, at the sides of the path, in the hedgerows, and in the trees. Everywhere, there are buds and flowers and blossoms, and a thousand different shades of green. When I open my ears, the air is full of bird-song. On such days, it feels good to be alive.

And I feel that our Fellowship could be on the threshold of something new, as we prepare to adopt a modern constitution, and apply to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches to become a full congregation. I hope that everybody will come along to our Annual General Meeting on 27th April, where these things will be discussed.

In June, we will be coming to the end of our engagement with Karen Armstrong's wonderful book *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. My thanks to the faithful attenders, who have come along every month, and for the deep and wonderful sharing that has taken place in the group.

From July, our mid-month Engagement Group will be studying Rev. David Ushers' book *Twelve Steps to Spiritual Health*, which I hope you will enjoy.

In fellowship,
Sue

Calendar for April - June 2014

April

- Thursday 10th Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life
Step 11 Recognition
- Sunday 27th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley*

May

- Thursday 8th Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life
Step 12 Love Your Enemies
- Sunday 25th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

June

- Thursday 12th Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life
Preface: Wish for a Better World
- Sunday 29th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

***to be followed by our Annual General Meeting**

*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*

Next Steps for the Fellowship

Further to the last issue of the newsletter, your Committee has now drafted a model constitution for the Fellowship, which will be presented to the membership at our **Annual General Meeting**, which will follow our service on **27th April**. **Please make every effort to attend**, as we will need a clear mandate from the congregation to adopt the new constitution, and then to apply to the General Assembly to change our status from a Small Congregation to a Full Congregation, with voting rights.

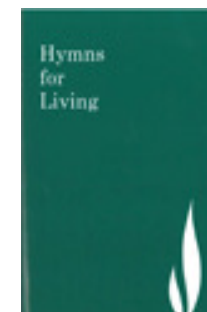
Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life

During the second quarter of 2014, our Engagement Group will continue to engage in a very deep way with Karen Armstrong's book *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. Details in the Calendar on page 3.



Hymns for Living

From our April service, we will be able to use the green hymn book *Hymns for Living* as well as our current pink hymn book *Let Us Sing*. Fifteen copies have been donated to the congregation and we are very grateful.



In the Spirit of Love - a blogpost by Sue Woolley

Brian Cavanaugh's *Ten Commandments for Human Relations* really sum up what it means to live your life in the spirit of love; whether the people concerned are your family, your friends, your church / chapel community, your work colleagues, or just the people you meet in the street or the shop:

1. Speak to people. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
2. Smile at people. It takes 72 muscles to frown, only four to smile.
3. Call people by name. The sweetest music to anyone's ear is the sound of one's own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful. If you would have friends, be friendly.
5. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like almost everybody, if you try.
6. Be generous with praise, cautious with criticism.
7. Be considerate with feelings of others. There are usually three sides to a controversy: yours, the other person's and the right one.
8. Be alert to give service. What counts most in life is what we do for others.
9. Learn to trust people, for trust builds lasting relationships.
10. Add to this a good sense of humour, a big dose of patience, and a dash of humility, and you will be rewarded many fold.

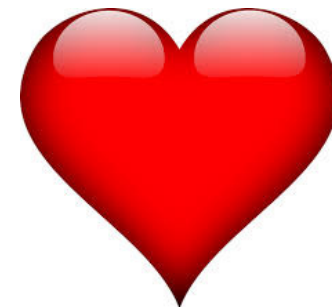
My favourite is number 5: "Be genuinely interested in people - you can like almost everybody, if you try." And yet it is probably one of the hardest things to do. We are all individuals, with different personalities and quirks, and will naturally be drawn to those people with whom we have

something in common, or with whom we can empathise. Liking almost everybody is quite a tall order! I suppose it's another way of saying that we should recognise that of God, the divine spark, in everyone.

The other hard thing about living your life in a spirit of love is that it has to be unconditional. You can never say "I'll love you if ...". Instead, you have to say "I love you in spite of ...". Joyce Grenfell coined the phrase "loving in spite of human imperfection", and I think that this is the best kind. But it's not easy.

The parable of the prodigal son is a salutary one here. We all know the story; the youngest son demands his half of his inheritance, goes off and squanders it on wine, women and song, and is reduced to herding pigs, who are better fed than his father's servants. He realises the error of his ways, and goes back home, with the idea of asking his father if he could be a servant in the house. But when he gets there, his father is overjoyed; he dresses him in a fine robe, puts a ring on his finger, and kills the fatted calf in rejoicing. As it says in the Gospel of Luke: "While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him, and kissed him."

That is loving in spite of human imperfection. That is living your life in the spirit of love.



Regional Events

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

Course Leaders: Rev. Ant Howe, Rev. Stephen Lingwood,
Dr. Jane Russell and Rev. Sue Woolley

We are offering a three-part course, leading to a GA-recognised qualification - the Worship Studies Course Foundation Step (you will also need to do two assessed services).

Session 1: So you're going to take a service?

- What is worship?
- Practicalities and precautions
- Speech and communication

Session 2: Elements of a service (1)

- Prayer and Meditation
- Readings
- Hymns and Music

Session 3: Elements of a service (2)

- Storytelling
- The Sermon / Address

When: Saturdays 10th May, 14th June & 12th July 2014

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

Times: 10.00 am - 4.15 pm (tea/coffee from 9.30 am)

Cost: £39 to MUA participants; £48 to others

Contact Sue Woolley for further details

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Treasurer: Elaine Nomura

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

Secretary & Musical Director: Malcolm Sadler

01789-205571



Words from the Chinook Psalter

O Lord,

May we today be touched by grace, fascinated and moved by this
your creation, energised by the power of new growth at work
in your world.

May we move beyond viewing this life only through a frame,
but touch it and be touched by it,
know it and be known by it,
love it and be loved by it.

May our bodies, our minds, our spirits, learn a new rhythm
paced by the rhythmic pulse of the whole created order.
May Spring come to us, be in us, and recreate life in us.
May we forge a new friendship with the natural world
and discover a new affinity with beauty, with life,
and with the Spirit of Life and Love behind and within all.
Amen