

# Banbury Unitarians News



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

## Issue 18, April - June 2016 Contents

Letter from the Minister	page 2
Calendar for April - June 2016	page 3
<i>A Vision of Hope : a blogpost</i> by Sue Woolley	page 3
Regional Events	page 7
Who we are and how to contact us	page 8
<i>Prayer</i> by Maureen Killoran	page 8

## Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends,

The first three months of the year have been hard for us, as a congregation. Malcolm, although thankfully no longer in hospital, is now pretty much housebound; Rosemary's recovery from her operation has been slower than she had hoped; Jack has had a cataract operation; and Pam had a nasty fall at her home, sustaining a broken hip and broken wrist. The rest of us have suffered various aches and pains brought on by the cold and inclement weather, and I think we will all breathe a sigh of relief when March is over, and Spring really starts to make herself felt.

In spite of this however, several members of the congregation managed to enjoy a post-Christmas congregational lunch at the Bowling Green just outside Banbury at the end of February - very many thanks to Elaine for organising it.

As is our custom, we will be holding our Annual General Meeting following our April service. Please make every effort to attend this important meeting, as it is your chance to review what has happened over the past twelve months, and perhaps make some suggestions about what might happen in the next twelve months.

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER: We all started out well last year, bringing contributions in for the Banbury Food Bank, and our loose change for the Helen & Douglas House Hospice. But for one reason or another, our enthusiasm seems to have flagged, and apart from a faithful few, contributions (particularly to the Food Bank) seem to have dried up. Please try to remember to bring something to the end of month service - you could be making a real difference to local people, who don't have enough to eat.

Wishing you all a warm and reviving Spring,

*Sue*

## Calendar for April - June 2016

### April

- Thursday 14th Discussion Group, led by Sue Woolley:  
*Can you be spiritual without being religious?*
- Sunday 24th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley  
**(to be followed by our AGM)**

### May

- Thursday 12th Discussion Group: led by Sue Woolley:  
*Could science put an end to religion?*
- Sunday 29th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

### June

- Thursday 9th Discussion Group, led by Sue Woolley:  
*Where do \*you\* encounter the Divine?*
- Sunday 26th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

*All worship services are held at  
Grimsbury Community Centre and start at 11.00 am*

*Discussion Group sessions are held in the small room at  
Grimsbury Community Centre and start at 10.30 am*

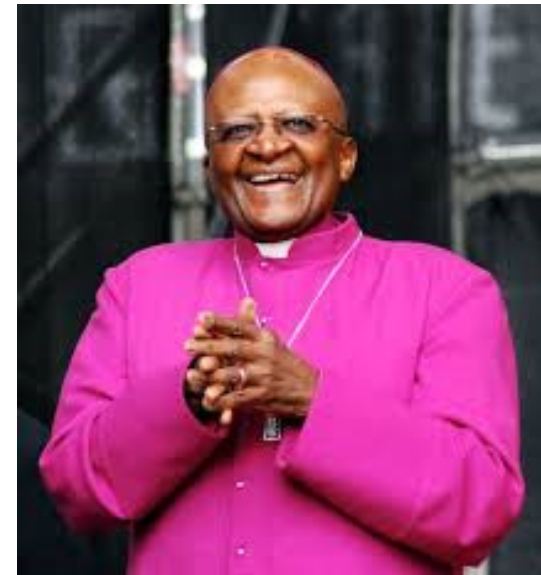
~~~~~

### **A Vision of Hope: a blogpost by Sue Woolley**

There are certain authors whose words inspire me to strive to become the best person I can be. The Liberal Jewish rabbi Lionel Blue is one, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu is another. I have just finished reading the latter's inspirational book *God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for our Time*.

It is written from a place of deep faith in a loving, transformative God, and from one of belief in the capacity of human beings to transcend their limitations and meanness, and become members

of one human family, working together for the common good. In his introduction, he states firmly "there is no such thing as a totally hopeless case. ... The most unlikely person, the most improbable situation - these are all 'transfigurable' - they can be turned into their glorious opposites. Indeed, God is transforming the world now - through us - because God loves us."



Each of the short chapters starts with the words "Dear Child of God". Dear Child of God - that's me, you, every human being, from the most saintly to the most wicked. According to Tutu, each and every one can become their best selves, thus making the world a better, happier, and gentler place. It's a wonderful statement of faith.

It would be easy to write this message off as hopelessly idealistic, until you remember what he, with others, achieved in South Africa. In the mid-1990s, at the downfall of apartheid after many years of brave and dangerous campaigning, the situation could easily have degenerated into a vengeful bloodbath. But somehow,

through the influence of Nelson Mandela, through Desmond Tutu himself, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established "to move us beyond the cycles of retribution and violence that had plagued so many other countries during their transitions from oppression to democracy."

He has somehow moved beyond the natural human instinct for revenge (or even retributive justice) to a place where he considers every human being to be a member of God's family, and hence worthy of respect and caring and compassion. He speaks about the Nguni concept of *ubuntu*, that each human being is in interdependent relationship with every other human being. He explains: "A person with *ubuntu* is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong to a greater whole." How many of us can truly say that, I wonder?



Working from this place of *ubuntu*, he makes the reader understand that it should be every person's duty to behave in a

loving way towards others, even when we don't feel it. One particular paragraph really hit home: "You have very little control over your feelings. That's why God didn't say 'Like your enemy'. It's very difficult to like your enemy. But to love your enemies is different. Love is an act of the will, where you act lovingly even if you do not always feel loving. We tend to think love is a feeling, but it is not. Love is an action; love is something we do for others. ... You do not have a great deal of control over when you feel resentful or irritable, but you can still choose to be loving, to act lovingly."

Oh. So that's what Jesus meant. I had never heard or seen it described so clearly, in a way that makes so much sense. "Love is an act of the will, where you act lovingly even if you do not always feel loving." This is such a challenge, such a call to action. Which is why he can still talk of hope, after all that he has seen, all that he has suffered. His faith in a loving God, and in the capacity for humankind to be loving and good and compassionate and caring, is absolute.

The final paragraph of the book articulates this wonderful vision of hope: "All over this magnificent world God calls us to extend His kingdom of shalom - peace and wholeness - of justice, of goodness, of compassion, of caring, of sharing, of laughter, of joy, and of reconciliation. God is transfiguring the world right this very moment *through us* because God *believes in us* and because God *loves us*. What can separate us from the love of God? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. As we share God's love with our brothers and sisters, God's other children, there is no tyrant who can resist us, no oppression that cannot be ended, no hunger that cannot be fed, no wound that cannot be healed, no hatred that cannot be turned to love, no dream that cannot be fulfilled."

\*\*\*\*\*

## Regional Events

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

**Led by:** Winnie Gordon, Ant Howe, Stephen Lingwood,  
Jane Russell, and Sue Woolley

**When:** Saturdays 23rd April, 14th May, 11th June 2016

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

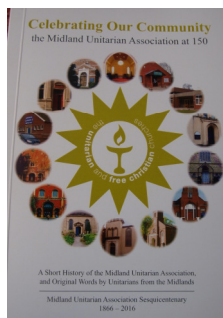
**Time:** 10.00 am – 4.15 pm (coffee/tea available from 9.30 am)

**Cost:** £39 to MUA participants / £48 to others



### Midland Unitarian Association Celebrates 150 years

Our District Association was formed on 26th March 1866, and celebrated its' sesquicentenary exactly 150 years later, with the publication of a commemorative book entitled *Celebrating Our Community*. It is available from the District Secretary at £8.00.



### Banbury Unitarian Fellowship At Grimsbury Community Centre, Burchester Place, Banbury OX16 3WT Website: [www.banbury-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.banbury-unitarians.org.uk)

**Minister:** Rev. Sue Woolley  
01604-870746 e-mail: [revsuewoolley@gmail.com](mailto:revsuewoolley@gmail.com)  
blog: <http://sue-still-i-am-one.blogspot.com>

**Chairman:** David Heppingstall  
079-3155-9531 e-mail: [heppingstall@googlemail.com](mailto:heppingstall@googlemail.com)

**Treasurer:** Elaine Nomura  
077-6967-8363 e-mail: [emtnomura@aol.com](mailto:emtnomura@aol.com)

**Secretary & Musical Director:** Malcolm Sadler  
01789-205571

~~~~~

### Prayer by Maureen Killoran

May hope's light guard us and keep cynicism from our hearts.  
May the energy of laughter build endurance for the dark times of our lives.

May creativity's vision grant the possibility of seeing old relationships with new eyes.

May the oil of healing keep us from anger's hardness or despair.  
May the mantle of humility give courage to admit when we are wrong.

May compassion's loom weave in us the discipline to forgive.  
May patience help us bear in mind that ours is not the only scale of time.

May the flame of justice be a beacon for the choices we must make.

May peace be ever in us and sustain our stressful days.

Spirit of all blessing,  
be with us in the ordinariness of our days. Amen