

Banbury Unitarians News



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

Issue 19, July - September 2016 Contents

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Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends,

I hope that all this rainy weather is not getting you down. Hopefully Summer will start soon!

At our Annual General Meeting in April, we were delighted to welcome Michaela Heppingstall as our new Secretary. Her husband David continues as our Chairman, and Elaine Nomura is carrying on her sterling work as our Treasurer. So we now have a strong team of officers in place.

Malcolm Sadler sadly remains housebound, but always enjoys receiving visitors. A couple of weeks ago, he was very happy to see Rev. Penny Johnson, and her husband Ken, who were down in the Midlands to lead worship at Warwick (Penny, not Ken). Penny and Malcolm go back a very long way, to the times when they were both young Unitarians in Birmingham.

It was lovely to see Elaine Nomura, Wendy Moorhouse-Johns, and David and Michaela Heppingstall at the Grand Opening of Northampton Unitarians Meeting House on 7th May - I really appreciated the effort you all made to attend this event at my other congregation.

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 peaceful and enjoyable Summer,

Sue

Calendar for July - September 2016

July

- Thursday 14th Discussion Group, led by members:
Free speech - how far should it go?
- Sunday 31st Worship service, led by Sue Woolley
(note: this is FIFTH Sunday)

August

- Thursday 11th Discussion Group: led by Sue Woolley:
Can we find meaning in suffering?
- Sunday 28th Worship service, led by Simon Hall

September

- Thursday 8th Discussion Group, led by members:
Topic to be confirmed
- Sunday 25th 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*

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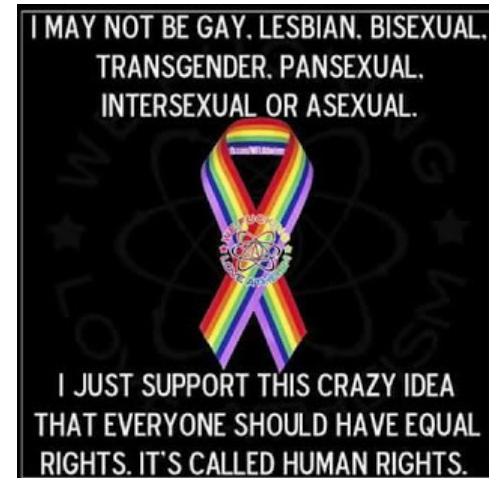
**Note from the Minister:** I am very sorry that I will not be able to join you at our Discussion Group sessions in July and September. This is due to national commitments: on 14th July, I will be up in Great Hucklow, attending a review of the Hibbert Trust's Ministry in the Making, and in September, I will also be at Great Hucklow, attending the Unitarian Ministerial Fellowship's Autumn Conference. Normal service will be resumed in October!

# Standing on the Side of Love: a blogpost by Sue Woolley

My Facebook feed this week has been filled with an outpouring of grief for the 50 innocent men and women who were senselessly murdered in the Pulse Club at Orlando, because one man was filled with hate for the LGBT community.

Many vigils have been held, both in the US and over here, in which people of all sexual orientations have been drawn together to mourn their loss, and to stand shoulder to shoulder with each other.

I have been incredibly moved by this up-swelling of love and solidarity. I posted this quote (shared by Sue Kelly Squires) on my own Facebook page yesterday, and was touched by the response of a friend: "Thanks Sue. I really needed to see this post today. I've been shocked by the homophobia of some Christians this week. I'm so tired of defending Christians to the gay community. It's time now for the Anglican Church to step up. You are so lovely to post this! Thank you!"



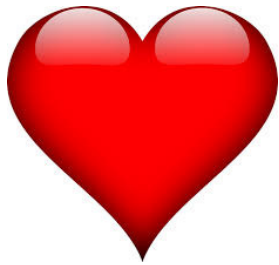
I felt both humbled and shamed as I read her words. Living as I do, a heterosexual white person, I had not truly appreciated until this week, the difficulties and fears that many of my LGBT friends still have to deal with every day. I had not realised how unaccepted and separate and vulnerable many of them still feel. I apologise for my lack of sensitivity and understanding, born of unthinking privilege.

Then on the Thursday came the news of the murder of Jo Cox, a young MP who had spent her life fighting for the rights of those less fortunate than herself, notably Syrian refugees. She was shot, stabbed, and then kicked as she lay dying, by her vicious murderer.

Later on, her husband Brendan Cox issued a very moving statement: "She would have wanted two things above all else to happen now, one, that our precious children are bathed in love, and two, that we all unite to fight against the hatred that killed her. Hate doesn't have a creed, race, or religion. It is poisonous."

Maybe standing on the side of love, standing up for the best that humankind can be, sharing a message of hope, not hate, is all we can do. To quote Nick Lowles, of HOPE not Hate, "The best way to do that is for us all to redouble our efforts to challenge hatred, prejudice and intolerance, wherever we encounter it."

May we all remember this, in the weeks and months to come.



## Midland Unitarian Association Visit to Quarry Bank Mill & Styal Chapel

All congregations and friends are warmly invited to join this trip to Quarry Bank Mill and Norcliffe Unitarian Chapel at Styal, near Wilmslow, Cheshire, to meet with Unitarians from across the Midlands area.

Enjoy the Museum, gardens, and a short service at the Unitarian Chapel, in the company of friends from across the MUA.



**When:** Saturday 24th September 2016

**Where:** Quarry Bank Mill & Styal Chapel, SK9 4LA

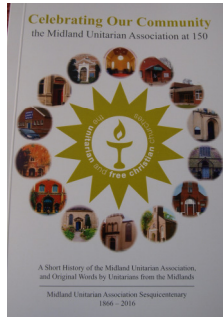
**Timings:** We are planning to meet up at the Mill Café at 11.00 am, followed by a tour of the Mill at 11.15. Then after lunch at 1.30, we will be joining Rev. Alex Bradley, Minister of Norcliffe Chapel, Styal, which is in the grounds of the Mill, for a short worship service at 2.30 pm

**How to get there:** Located south of Manchester, off B5166, 2 miles from M56 exit and links from M6, SK9 4LA.

**Open:** 10.30am – 5pm

## 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 Sue Woolley at £8.00.



## Gems for the Journey: one Unitarian Pilgrim's Progress

My little book, about the books that have inspired my spiritual journey, was launched at the Annual Meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches. If you would like a copy, please get in touch with me (contact details on page 8). Like the MUA book, it costs £8.00.



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Prayer by Carol Meyer

May we open ourselves ever more fully to that Eternal Mystery which lures us onward towards life and creativity.

May we find the courage to live our faith, to speak our truth, and to strive together for a world where freedom abounds and justice truly does roll down like water.

May we know the fullness of love without fear, and the serenity of peace without turmoil.

May we hold one another in the deep and tender places with compassion, and may we grace one another by sharing our own vulnerabilities, being every mindful of the divinity within, that makes soul-mates of us all.

Amen