

Banbury Unitarians News



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

Issue 21, January - March 2017 Contents

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Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends,

I hope that you are all looking forward to a peaceful, gentle Christmas with your loved ones. As I said in the last issue, another year has gone by, and we are still here. Some of us have been poorly, and not all of us attend everything, but there is a wonderfully strong spirit in the congregation - we all care about each other, and look out for each other. Which is so precious.

I mentioned last time that it might be nice to try something new for our mid-month Thursday gatherings. So I've bought a copy of Rev. Dr. Vernon Marshall's adult RE course, *The British Unitarian Journey*, and I hope that you will be able to join me in exploring this fascinating topic over the next few months, and indeed for most of 2017.

As you know, Malcolm Sadler is sadly back in hospital, having had a chest infection and a gall bladder infection. It looks as though he will be in there over Christmas, so please spare him a thought, and remember him in your prayers. I will be going to visit him before Christmas, and again afterwards.

Wishing you all a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas, and a Happy and healthy New Year,

Sue



Calendar for January - March 2017

January

- Thursday 12th The British Unitarian Journey*: Session 1
Where do we come from?
- Sunday 29th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley
(note: this is FIFTH Sunday)

February

- Thursday 10th The British Unitarian Journey*: Session 2
Our European Origins
- Sunday 26th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

March

- Thursday 8th The British Unitarian Journey*: Session 3
The Unitarian Story in Britain
- Sunday 26th Worship Service, led by Sue Woolley

* see article on page 4, for some exciting news about what we will be exploring in the next few months.

*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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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.**

## The British Unitarian Journey

This adult RE course, which was put together by Unitarian minister Rev. Dr. Vernon Marshall, will be the focus of our mid-month time together for the next few months. The first three sessions are called *Where do we come from?*, *Our European origins*, and *The Unitarian story in Britain*. Let me share a little about each of them, to whet your appetites.

In the first session, the aim is, to quote the author, "to consider where we are at present as Unitarians. The question is asked 'Why are we Unitarians?'. What do we understand the ethos of our movement to be? Do we know how the British Unitarian movement developed? What is it that characterises British Unitarianism today? A consideration of the present state of Unitarianism will lead on, in subsequent sessions, to an examination of our denomination's origins."

In the second session, in February, the aim is "to reflect on the evolution of liberal religion in Europe, leading to the creation of identifiable Unitarian ideas. Unitarianism is not a modern phenomenon, nor has it arisen out of one phase of religious history. It has emerged and developed sporadically with no particular time or person associated as being the founder of Unitarianism."

Then in March, we will "consider the developments that led to the creation of a distinctly Unitarian movement in Britain. Although most of the focus is on developments in England, there are references also to Scotland and Wales." (Which will please Jack and Beryl!).

I hope that you will be excited to join us, on the second Thursday of the month, from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm.

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More Blessed to Receive: a blogpost

I have often heard that "it is more blessed to give than to receive", as it says in the Book of Acts. Indeed our Discussion Group at Banbury was discussing this question a couple of weeks ago, and came to the conclusion that both are equally important, but that it is probably *easier* to give than to receive, graciously, and thankfully.

But God had other ideas for me yesterday, and I spent the rest of the day being blessed by many small kindnesses.



the sweetest little Christmas cake in the world

First of all, I got stuck in traffic on my way back from said Discussion Group, and was able to phone ahead and ask my best beloved to have my lunch ready for me. So that when I shot into the house at 1.20, a nutritious and delicious meal was waiting for me, which I was able to eat and enjoy, before rushing out again at 1.40.

Second, when I got to the car park on time, and was feeding pound coins into the machine, a young woman stopped on her way out and rolled down her window: "I have a ticket here that's valid till midnight - do you want it?" Yes please - thank you!

Third (and fourth), when I shared some very intimate good news with two friends, both had tears of joy in their eyes for me.

Fifth, another friend, who eats gluten-free herself, had baked me the prettiest little Christmas cake in the world.

And finally, when we were sharing out stories about the gift of difference in the Encounter group, I felt so honoured to have *been* the different person who had unknowingly helped someone else to grow spiritually.

By the end of the day, I felt so light, so blessed, so very grateful. Yes, it is blessed to give, but also so blessed to receive.

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### 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). It costs £8.00, and was reviewed in the 24th September issue of *The Inquirer*, by Rev. Feargus O'Connor.



## Regional Events

**MUA of Lay Preachers & Worship Leaders  
Spring Training Day  
How do Unitarians do communion?**

**Workshop Leaders:** Rev. Sue Woolley & Rev. Ant Howe

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

**When:** Saturday 18th February 2017 (TBC)

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

**Cost:** FREE to MUA participants; £10 a head to others

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MUA Annual General Meeting

Guest Speaker: Rev. Danny Crosby,
minister at Altrincham and Urmston

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

When: Saturday 25th March 2017

Times: 10.30 for 11.00 am - c.4.00 pm

All are welcome

Banbury Unitarian Fellowship

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### **A Tale of Two Cities: London & Aleppo**

We are worried about train strikes; they are suffering from air strikes.

We are sending Christmas cards; they are sending farewell messages.

We are singing carols in the streets; they are dying in the streets.

We are stocking up for Christmas, they are packing up, fleeing their homes.

Their government is bombing their homes, our government is not doing enough.

God of our hearts, Spirit of Love and Compassion,

May our horror at the situation in Aleppo

be translated into action.

May we protest, donate, and pray for peace.

And when some refugees make it here,

as they surely will,

may we welcome the stranger,

in Your name. Amen