

Banbury Unitarians News



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

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Musings from the Minister

Dear Friends,

I write this on the last day of 2017, looking forward to my seventh year with the Fellowship, as your minister.

Although some of us have been ill, and Jack and Beryl can sadly no longer attend, we have continued to meet faithfully each month – mid-month for our Discussion Group, and on the last Sunday for worship.

Our Christmas service was joyful – it was lovely to see so many of you on Christmas Eve. We were sad that Doris was unable to be with us, due to a bad cold, and that Wendy was elsewhere with her family, but we held you in our hearts as we gathered to celebrate Christmas together.

I think we are all agreed that meeting in the smaller room for worship is much better – it is warm and cosy, more intimate.

I wonder what 2018 will bring for the Fellowship – I hope that it will be a happy, productive and joyful year for us all. For myself, I am hoping that the Lindsey Press will be publishing my book about Unitarian beliefs and spirituality, at the GA meetings at Staverton Park.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful New Year.

*Yours in fellowship,
Sue*

Calendar for January – March 2018

January

- Thursday 11th Discussion Group.
Topic: Perspectives on Divinity
- Sunday 28th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

February

- Thursday 8th Discussion Group.
Topic: Perspectives on Love.
- Sunday 25th Worship service, led by Sue Woolley

March

- Thursday 8th Discussion Group.
*Topic: Perspectives on Spring & Renewal.**
- Sunday 25th Worship Service, led by Sue Woolley

*Note: This session will have to be led by a member of the group, as I am away with my covenant group.

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

*All Discussion Group meetings are held at
Grimsbury Community Centre, and start at 10.30 am*

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## **Annual General Meeting**

Our Annual General Meeting will be held after the service on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March. Please make every effort to attend, if you are able – it is your chance to review the past twelve months, and to make plans for the next year.

## Death by Rosemary Booth

He came again last night into my room,  
I lay beguiled, my senses filled,  
With his presence in the gloom.  
His voice, black velvet, seemed to say,  
Come with me now, why need you stay?  
He beckoned me to where the tall trees  
Stood ghostly in the park.  
Each branch bereft of leaves,  
So blackly stark.  
I walked, bare feet on icy frosts  
Pure sterileness.  
My head and shoulders shrouded were,  
In misty night's caress.  
My heart grew light and empty of earthly care,  
I travelled far, I knew not where.  
But beautiful it was, to be with him,  
A shadow not a body, through the night to skim  
To feel all things, yet part of them to be.  
My clay to clay, so let it be.

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A Challenge for the New Year: Blogpost by Sue Woolley

This morning I was finally re-connecting with the computer, having had a few days away from it over the Christmas period, and catching up with the daily meditations from Richard Rohr's Center for Action and Contemplation, which usually give me a nice, spiritual start to my day.

And I came across this passage, from *The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness: Preparing to Practice*, by Rabbi Rami Shapiro, which

Richard Rohr quotes, and which has really resonated with me, as a challenge for the coming year:

“Will you engage this moment with kindness or with cruelty, with love or with fear, with generosity or scarcity, with a joyous heart or an embittered one? This is your choice, and no-one can make it for you. If you choose kindness, love, generosity, and joy, then you will discover in that choice the Kingdom of God, heaven, nirvana, this-worldly salvation. If you choose cruelty, fear, scarcity, and bitterness, then you will discover in that choice the hellish states of which so many religions speak. These are not ontological realities tucked away somewhere in space – these are existential realities playing out in your own mind. Heaven and hell are both inside of you. It is your choice that determines just where you will reside.”



“Heaven and hell are both inside you. It is your choice that determines just where you will reside.” Wow! For 2018, I resolve to try to engage with the world, with each moment, with kindness, love, generosity and joy.

First comes the waiting by Erika A. Hewitt

This is the season of endings and beginnings,
when the small signs of dawn pierce through the night and
something new is born.

But first comes the waiting.
First come the lessons of endings and beginnings.

The Presence of Life, the sheltering Spirit of Love,
grieves with those sweeping up the debris of loss;
waits with those who restlessly reach out for change;
grants us courage in the night to guard each other's dreams for
this holy, wondrous universe.

Grant us, oh Universe unfolding in mystery, a sense of your
timing.

May we loosen our grip on that which doesn't serve us,
leaving behind that which we have outworn and outgrown.

Teach us the lessons of beginnings.
Remind us that such waitings and endings may be a starting
place,
a planting of seeds which bring to birth what is ready to be born –
something right and just and different -
a new song, a deeper relationship, a fuller love –
in the fullness of time.



Regional Events

MUA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Guest Speaker: Stephen Lingwood, Unitarian minister

When: Saturday 24th March 2018

Where: Unitarian New Meeting Church, Ryland Street,
Birmingham B16 8BL

Times: 10.30 for 11.00 am - c.4.00 pm

Cost: £5.00 a head for lunch provided by UNM
(more details from Sue Woolley)

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**MUA of Lay Preachers & Worship Leaders  
in association with Local Leadership Strategy Group**

## **Spring Training Day**

### **Building Resilient Congregations**

**Course Leader:** Simon Bland, GA Ministry & Congregational  
Support Officer

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

**When:** Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2018

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

**Cost:** FREE

# **Banbury Unitarian Fellowship**

**At Grimsbury Community Centre, Burchester Place,  
Banbury OX16 3WT**

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**Secretary:** Michaela Heppingstall

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New Year wishes by Neil Gaiman

May your coming year be
filled with magic and
dreams and good
madness. I hope you read
some fine book and kiss
someone who thinks
you're wonderful, and
don't forget to make some
art – write or draw or build
or sing or live as only you
can. And I hope,
somewhere in the next
year, you surprise
yourself.

Happy New Year!