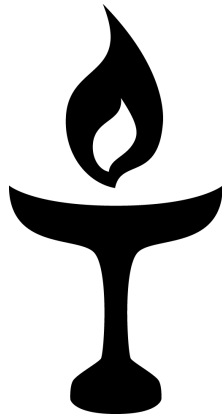


MU NOW



THE MAGAZINE OF
THE MIDLAND UNITARIAN
ASSOCIATION

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SUMMER 2014

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From the Editor

Welcome to the Summer 2014 issue of *MU Now*. As ever, plenty has been happening within the District since the last issue. Oxford and Evesham have both had visits from UK Unitarian TV; the Asparagus Lunch was held at Evesham; members of the Cotswold Group went on a visit to Transylvania; and Birmingham held a special inter-faith service to commemorate the centenary of the death of Joseph Chamberlain, the eminent 19th century Unitarian, who transformed Birmingham. (see pages 8-20).

Details of forthcoming District events may be found on pages 39-40. The Autumn Training day will be about *Exploring Our Unitarian Beliefs*, on 18th October, and our Annual Lunch is on 25th October. Both events are at Kingswood.

Following on from our Growth issue in Winter 2013, there is a fascinating article by Rev. Nicky Jenkins of Chorlton Unitarians, titled *How to Grow Your Church*, based on a talk which she delivered at the Valediction Ceremony at Unitarian College Manchester in June. (see pages 21-31)

Submissions to *MU Now*

We are particularly looking for stories on local activities, or with a local interest, in addition to articles on the theme. Please send your contributions to me at sue.woolley@virgin.net or to 5, Martins Road, Piddington, Northampton NN7 2DN. THANK YOU!

The theme for the next issue is "A Time for Giving", and the deadline for submissions will be Thursday 13th November 2014.

Sue Woolley

President's Piece



We live in an increasingly secular society in which the separation of state from particular or indeed any religious influence is becoming more and more noticeable. Good thing too, many Unitarians might suggest. The numbers of those who profess to have a faith is also we are told, in steep decline.

Does this mean though that western society is therefore increasingly irreligious in the broader sense, or absent of faith? Engage friends and acquaintances for example on the subject of what 'makes them tick', and you might struggle to disentangle what they might call their deepest feelings and emotions, from what others, maybe even yourself, might describe as a system of belief, or the presence of God within. They might of course protest that religion and faith have nothing to do with them, and that the life of virtue and goodness they try to lead does not require the need for such vestiges of outdated tradition. Being a good Unitarian you might even agree with them and say 'of course, and amen to that' (well, maybe not 'amen' bit).

But you might also be left with that sneaking feeling that such wonderful lives might also be missing a trick. After all, it's not as if society has relinquished all interest in spiritual matters. Go to a bookshop, for example, and see for yourself. One of the bigger sections will be entitled something like 'self-help'. Look more closely and you'll note that many of the books there have titles that engage with what traditional religionists might recognise as spiritual issues, matters of the heart and soul. However, they won't necessarily contain any traditional scripture, or if they do,

they'll more likely come from a whole variety of religious and philosophical backgrounds. Go to the web of course, and the opportunities to engage with support for the 'inner self' multiply exponentially.

So, many people who at face value may appear uninterested in faith are nevertheless engaged with the search for inner contentment, peace and enlightenment. They might not have recognised this as in any sense being part of a broader religious perspective, or maybe they would simply rather not wish to acknowledge this private aspect of their lives to others. But it's there in spades.

Conversely of course, those of us operating within a faith-based context have perhaps paid insufficient attention to the possibility of such broad but alternative engagement with faith, and have unwittingly spent too long in our churches and chapels providing well-intentioned plans that nevertheless amount to 'more of the same'. The predictable outcome of this is that we continue to remain unappealing to the very many out there who in other circumstances would find such great joy and support in our Unitarian faith.

Unitarianism as we know, is a wonderful, liberating and if needs be 'self-help' faith to support the life well led. That's not to say, of course, as some have suggested, that we are a 'free for all'. We do have a transcending message in the unity of God, the oneness of humanity, the prospect of eternal virtue rather than eternal sin, and the freedom to unselfishly practice individual reason and conscience. It also means the opportunity to worship and be thankful, to pray, to meditate as we wish, to be a supportive community, and of course to have a fire in the belly that drives us to do the right things for others. Our road to inner peace is blessed by fellow travellers.

I wish you well on your Unitarian adventure, and the next time you have even the remotest chance of advising a friend or acquaintance of the virtues of our faith, be bold and gently advise them of that transcending message that has so engaged and supported you. We, Unitarian or other, are all on a spiritual journey in one form or another, whether we admit to recognising this fact or not. And surely Unitarianism can do at least an equal job in promoting and supporting those deepest values in life, as that 'self-help' section in the local bookshop?

Ash

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MUA District Minister: Summer Update

Hello again. Here's a summary of what I've been doing, around the Midland Unitarian Association, and elsewhere.

My work as **Minister of the Banbury Unitarian Fellowship** continues. We have started a new Engagement Group, studying David Usher's book *Twelve Steps to Spiritual Health*, and have taken the first steps towards being accepted as a full congregation within the General Assembly.

Leading worship around the Midland Unitarian Association:

My diary for 2014 is now full - I am leading worship somewhere near you practically every Sunday between now and the end of the year. I have also done a naming at Northampton, and have a Silver Wedding blessing booked for September.

By the time you read this, the **Worship Studies Course Foundation Step** will have been completed. The eight participants, including six from the District, have been marvellous. I hope they have enjoyed it as much as I and my colleagues have enjoyed delivering it.

Our **Autumn Training Day**, on the topic *Exploring Our Own Beliefs*, will be taking place on **Saturday 18th October**, at Kingswood. Come along to explore the beliefs and values that underpin our worship services and keep us going as communities of faith. (You don't need to be a worship leader to attend!).

Sue Woolley, District Minister, Midland Unitarian Association

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## MUA Executive Committee Key Messages

The Key Messages below, from our May 2014 meeting has already been published in *Bits & Pieces*. So only those which have not been overtaken by events are published here:

### May 2014

1. A new portfolio of investments, to increase investment income, in order to maintain the current level of grants to congregations and others, was approved.
2. The Inter-Faith Day at Birmingham University in March had been a good opportunity to talk to students about Unitarianism, and had been "a pleasure to attend."
3. The Committee agreed to support Banbury Unitarians' first steps towards becoming a full congregation within the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches.
4. The MUA evening at the 2014 GA meetings, *Celebrating Our Communities*, was a great success., being well-received by those present. The Quiet Room, which we also arranged, had been appreciated.
5. The International Association for Religious Freedom is holding its annual Congress in Birmingham from 24th - 27th August 2014,

and has approached the District for "help with the Congress." Details to follow.

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District Round-up

Changes in Ministries in the District:

- The congregation of **Unitarian New Meeting Birmingham** have been delighted to call **Rev. Winnie Gordon** to be their part-time minister.
- **Rev. Ant Howe** has sadly resigned from his ministry at **Warwick Unitarians** after eight years. He has accepted a call from **Kingswood Unitarians** to minister there full-time. His Farewell Service will be on 3rd August, at 4.30 pm, and will be followed by a barbecue in the garden. MUA folk are welcome to come along (but please bring your own food for the barbeque!).
- **Ministry students:** as reported elsewhere in this issue, **Ralph Catts** has completed a very successful student pastorate with the **Birmingham** congregation, as did **Matthew Smith** with the **Oxford** congregation. **Kate Buchanan**, who starts her second year of training at HMCO in October, will become student pastor at **Oxford**.

Birmingham

The congregation of Birmingham Unitarian New Meeting Church commemorated the centenary of the death of eminent Unitarian Joseph Chamberlain, who died on 2nd July 1914, on **Sunday 29th June 2014**. It really was an impressive occasion. The service

started as the official guests (including representatives from the local mosque, Anglican church and progressive synagogue; from the University, which Chamberlain had been instrumental in founding; from the Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College; Councillor John Cotton, from the City Council; and Martin and Christine Kenrick, relations of the Chamberlain family) entered.

Unitarians were represented by Mr. Alan Ruston, who gave a fascinating talk about Chamberlain's life and work; Mrs. Alison Thursfield, who was representing the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches, Rev. Sue Woolley, who was representing the District, and Rev. Winnie Gordon, as incoming minister of the Unitarian New Meeting congregation. The service was led by Dr. Ralph Catts, as the last act of his student pastorate, which has been a great success.

Following Alan Ruston's presentation, we were treated to several contributions from students at the Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College, who gave short speeches as characters who had been influenced / benefited by Chamberlain. Then Birmingham's brand new minister, Rev. Winnie Gordon, led the congregation in an inter-faith prayer, which was followed by a short tribute to Chamberlain by Councillor John Cotton. The official part of the service concluded with some spirited singing by the Joseph Chamberlain choir, including UNM's own David Jones and David Gaussen. Then we all moved into the Priestley Room for refreshments, and to look at the very interesting inter-faith display. It was a joyous occasion.

Ministers' Meeting: Annual Service of Worship and Asparagus Luncheon

The second Wednesday in May is traditionally the day of what has become known as The Asparagus Lunch, so it was on the

14th that nearly 50 Unitarians from congregations around the Midlands once again gathered at Oat Street Unitarian Chapel, Evesham. The event, hosted on behalf of the Warwickshire & Neighbouring Counties Monthly Meeting of Protestant Dissenting Ministers (1782) follows the Annual Service of Worship of that intriguingly entitled body of Ministers. The service was led this year by the Secretary of the Ministers' Meeting, Rev. Sue Woolley (MUA District Minister and minister of the Banbury Unitarian Fellowship), who took as her theme *Cherishing Your Doubts*.

Whilst the historic, not to say heretical, roots of the Asparagus Luncheon that follows the Service are well-known, a more modern tradition demands that the President of the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches should attend the Luncheon as Guest of Honour, and propose the Unitarian toast "*To civil and religious liberty the world over.*" This tradition was faithfully observed this year by Mrs. Marion Baker, newly elected at the General Assembly meetings in April, and accompanied on this engagement by her husband Ernest, a retired Unitarian minister.

An even newer tradition may also be developing with the presence again this year of the Mayor of Evesham as the honoured guest of the Evesham congregation. Attending the Service and Luncheon as his first official engagement following the mayor-making ceremony two days' previously, Councillor Charlie Homer spoke encouragingly of his first Unitarian experience and apologised for the 'heresy' of bringing to the mayoral office this year his unfortunate allergy to asparagus. He was not deterred, however, from enthusiastically proposing a toast to "*The Asparagus of Evesham.*"

Peter Forder (from the Cotswold Group newsletter)

Birmingham District Women's League

With the closure of BDWL in March 2013, minute books dating back to 1923 and many documents have been deposited in the Archives of Birmingham Library for future reference by anyone interested. Also deposited was a parcel of papers relating to Birmingham Branch at Church of the Messiah/Unitarian New Meeting.

Ann Harrison

Cotswold Group: Our pilgrimage to Transylvania – a trip back in time

In late May and early June a group of Cotswold Unitarians went to visit the Transylvanian Unitarians, both in their headquarters in Kolozsvár and in their small towns and villages in the remote Homorod Valley.

At first sight, Kolozsvár, (Cluj Napoca in Romanian), the “capital city” of the Transylvanian Hungarian Unitarians, appeared to be a modern, bustling city with an Orange mobile phone shop on almost every corner, a smaller, quainter and Austro-Hungarianized version of our Unitarian capitals of London and Manchester. But to go inside some of the buildings was to go back through time.

For example, the Unitarian School was an Austro-Hungarian version of the substantial Victorian edifices I remember from childhood, with high, dark corridors, large classrooms with huge high windows, solid furniture, and attentive happy children in uniform. Their end of term graduation songs, their end of term exhibition and a school bell which played Vivaldi's Four Seasons. Adjacent to the school was the Unitarian Headquarters and the

Protestant Theological Institute where there were more corridors, steps and ledges at every corner, large shaded rooms, large plants, heavy dark wooded tables and chairs, framed by rows of dark pictures of historical Unitarians.

In these large, shaded rooms, we were privileged to hear traditional, solid and reliable overviews by traditional Unitarian professors who had a traditional, solid and reliable basis to their faith. And what could be more historic than the highlight of seeing a beautifully preserved, genuine, original 1579 letter written by Unitarian reformer Francis David who gave his work and life for the religious tolerance that some of us enjoy today. What could be more soaring than the large, white, simply decorated and delicately carved Kolozsvár Unitarian headquarters church? What could be more hospitable than the lovely lunch, chat and local brandy provided by our hosts to round off the headquarters part of our Transylvanian Unitarian pilgrimage?

Moving outwards from the Unitarian city headquarters we began our journey to Unitarian outposts in the Transylvanian countryside. Only a short distance from Kolozsvár we arrived at the historic little town of Torda where we saw the very church where Transylvanian Unitarian pioneer Francis David preached the famous Diet of Torda: namely the right for all religious movements to worship as they saw fit. I leave it to John Hall however to describe the famous painting in the local museum of Francis David proclaiming this message.

After several hours drive we arrived in Udvarhely where we stayed at the comfortable Hotel Tarnava and visited the town Unitarian church. From Udvarhely we had day trips in which we climbed up winding roads to the hills and vales of the remote Homorod area, back to a time of un-mechanized countryside, no fences, no hedges, just large rolling forests and wild flowered

grassy plains, punctuated by lakes. In the village of Szentpal (St Paul) where our host Csaba Todor ministers, apart from the electricity pylons, you could have been back two or three hundred years. There was hardly a car to be seen but there were horses and carts on the roads and storks' nests on top of almost every pylon pole.

The spiritual culmination of our pilgrimage was our service at the Szentpal Unitarian Church, a simple white building with a tall spire, set in an open grassy, slightly cultivated area surrounded by trees. The pews and other woodwork inside were a beautiful clear blue. The organ was to the left high on a second level at the back. All very different from our urban little brick and stone clad chapel in Evesham.

And yet, in some ways, the Szentpal church resembled what our little chapel in Evesham must have been like when it was originally built in 1737. Inside the Szentpal church, its current pulpit, like our chapel's first pulpit, was in the middle, with the pews on three sides. Like the first windows of our chapel, the Szentpal church windows were clear glass. As must have formerly been the case in our own chapel, both inside and out, I could hear the songs of the birds and the sounds of the countryside more clearly than I have ever heard them before, there was no background traffic noise.

Our Szentpal Sunday service, in a mixture of English and Hungarian, given by Csaba, Don and Linda, and accompanied by the beautiful church choir singing in both Hungarian and English, was simple, moving, traditional, and timeless. It was St Paul's address to the Corinthians about all the different gifts of the Spirit have been given to different people, and how all the parts of the body are equally useful, and how everyone has a part to play. It is a sermon that can be given across time, across denominations,

throughout the world, and it went down very well with both our Transylvanian village hosts and our visiting town-dwelling party.

After the service, came the festivities throughout the afternoon and evening, down in the "English room" of Csaba's house. Such wonderful hospitality! Our glasses constantly replenished with local wine and local "fire-water" (village produced clear brandy)! Seemingly limitless supplies of home made food! Much impromptu singing, both in Hungarian and English, accompanied instrumentally by Csaba, his wife Eva and their daughter Esther. Plus a separate visit to a wine, fire water and cheese tasting party in another village just down the road with tales of farmers' battles with bears and wolves from the forests.

In all: a pilgrimage to Unitarian history as well as to another Unitarian community, a reminder that a traditional, strong, God centred faith lives on and yet also an illustration of Francis David's motto that we do not have to think alike to love alike.

Lesley Harris

[The above article first appeared in *The Inquirer*, and is reprinted with permission, and thanks to Editor Colleen Burns]

UK Unitarian TV visits the District twice in June

The team from UK Unitarian TV has now visited both the **Oxford** (on 8th June) and **Evesham** (on 29th June) congregations. Two videos from Oxford are available on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>). If you use the search term **Oxford Unitarians** both come up, under the titles *Oxford Unitarians Speak of Their Faith* and *A Unitarian Sunday Service from Oxford*. Both are very high quality, and show the congregation in a very good light. Stop Press: the videos from Evesham are now also available -

search YouTube using **Evesham Unitarians** and the videos *A Unitarian Sunday Service* and *Evesham Unitarians* come up.

Below, **Jeremy Harris** of **Evesham** records his impressions of the visit to Oat Street Chapel.

The UK Unitarian TV (UKUTV) project is steadily building a large collection of high quality videos on all aspects of Unitarian life in this country. Available both on the "ukunitarians" YouTube channel and on UKUTV's own website, they range from short "Why I Am a Unitarian" personal testimonies to recordings of services from various congregations and highlights from various conferences and other special events.

At Evesham Unitarians we were therefore delighted when UKUTV approached us a few months ago and said they wanted to come to record one of our services at Oat Street Chapel. We agreed on a date of Sunday 29th June, three weeks after UKUTV had given the same treatment to a service at Oxford.

Given the "outreach" message UKUTV seeks to put across, our Minister Rev. Don Phillips set to work crafting a service with a clear "That Unitarianism - what's it all about then?" theme. The readings were Andrew Hill's *The Unitarian Path in One Paragraph* and *Three Signposts, Three Tracks*. We also included a responsive reading of Will Hayes' *Credo*, whilst stressing that other brands of credo were also available. Don's address explored different ways of explaining the Unitarian faith to others. Hymns included *A church is not where altar stands....* You get the general idea.

Our 22nd June service essentially became a dry run for the big day, at which we tried out all the proposed elements for length, and practised singing the hymns. This was, as expected, a Valuable Learning Experience and various tweaks were made.

Don sent everyone the revised final service plan - and then we could do no more other than wait, and pray for good weather. The Oxford video was now online, looking very good, and we were determined to match it!

The UKUTV crew - John and Joan Wilkinson and Kevin and Bronwyn Lowe - spent the weekend of the service based at a caravan site in nearby Broadway. On the Friday evening, they visited Oat Street just ahead of our regular weekly Friday Light discussion group meeting and checked the place out for camera locations, light levels, power sockets and the like with all being declared well.

Sunday dawned sunny with the Met Office advising us of occasional showers. I arrived at Oat Street to find us thoroughly wired for sound, with a camera in the garden recording people's arrival (hastily covered at one point when a couple of showers decided to be less occasional than advertised), and more cameras, mikes and serious amounts of cabling inside. And then we were on our way - and all the rehearsing paid off as the service was just the right length and almost entirely free of technical hitches. The UKUTV crew were as unobtrusive as possible and did not ask for anything to be repeated, so the calm and reverent atmosphere of our usual Sunday service remained intact. Once all was finished, UKUTV recorded a number of individual pieces to camera from congregation members about their own Unitarian journeys, much as they had done at Oxford, and then they set off back to Broadway ready to set about turning the footage into finished product.

The resultant video of the service went online on 8th July, and, as expected, gives a fine glimpse into the lovely worshipping community that we have here in Evesham. I would like to thank all from UKUTV for their professionalism and cooperation, and

thoroughly recommend the UKUTV Experience for any other congregations who have the opportunity.

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# **Oat Street Unitarian Chapel Silver at the Antiques Roadshow**



On 29<sup>th</sup> May, Peter Forder and Sandy Ellis took two pieces of the Chapel Silver to the Antiques Road Show at Ashton Court near Bristol. On arrival we met up with our good friend John Dallimore, who knows his way around, having attended more than two hundred Antique Roadshows! After joining the main queue we were rapidly whisked across to the Silver queue where the resident Expert, Alastair

Dickenson, appraised the pieces whilst Fiona Bruce looked on. He explained that the flagon was not EPNS but Sheffield plate and dated from about 1815. He valued it at £200. He then examined the Communion Cup, confirmed the 1747 date and after remarking that two handled cups were rare, valued it at £800.

We then circulated around the various Expert Valuers busy at work whilst they sheltered from the rain under large umbrellas. After seeing Henry Sandon appraising a large Greek amphora and Rupert Maas examining a weird-looking picture, we spotted John

Benjamin, the jewellery expert, about to be filmed appraising four brooches and took our places behind him. It was an education witnessing the Roadshow staff organising the filming of a valuation which would probably occupy three minutes of television viewing time, but which took nearly an hour to complete. The results were being transmitted to the Director in a studio located in one of the large BBC lorries and instructions about 'Take 1', 'Take 2' and 'Take 3' were passed back to the headphones of the Producer who was co-ordinating the lighting and the three cameras.

The Valuer had to keep repeating his words until the Director was satisfied. I'm sure he would qualify as a member of Equity! Then the macro-camera was produced to take close-ups of the brooches and the Valuer had several



goes at pointing his finger at the various brooches before the Director was satisfied. The happiest person there was the owner of the brooches when she learned that they were worth £40,000! It was a most interesting day. Keep an eye open for us on your TV in the autumn!

**Sandy Ellis** (pictured on the previous page with Peter Forder)

PS Since writing this article, it has come to my attention that Fiona Bruce was not in fact present during the evaluation of our silver. She was added electronically by the enthusiasm of the photographer, whose name is unknown. SE

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Cricnic In The Midlands

I had not heard the term Cricnic before, but once invited by Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi of the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue, I was intrigued!

A Cricnic is an event, organised by the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue, held in a local private park, where people get together to play 6-a-side cricket, eat and socialise. They have been organising this event for ten years, and last year made it a cross-community event. On Sunday, 6th July, at their second cross-community event, my daughter and I sat on my car emergency blanket, eating and sharing in some samosas and fruits, chatting away to a group of Methodists, some Christians, as well as members from the Progressive Jewish community. From babies to seniors, all had fun. I did not play a game (maybe next time) but had a wonderful afternoon in dialogue and friendship.

It was a wonderful change to meet our neighbours and share our concerns regarding the ecumenical and interfaith challenge today. In our busy world, finding time to just be with our neighbours can be difficult. Yet, time is needed if we ever are to make friends. Time is necessary if we want our spirituality to grow beyond our own internal needs. Making time is vital if we are to engage the imperative to help those in need in our community. The concerns of the world, and in particular, the communities surrounding our churches need aid that is unifying as well as practical. We do not need to belong to Churches Together or the Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEP) to commit to living and working together. The partnership on the issue of same-sex marriage, between Unitarians, Quaker and Liberal Jews proved that our concerns can unite us, and our togetherness can change the world.

Meeting our neighbours is a first step in finding the commonalities, breaking barriers down and correcting misunderstandings. It is a chance to make meaningful friendships that allow for a good support system. It is not about being in competition with one another, for our theology naturally allows for folks to be drawn to what suits and meets their needs best. Ecumenical and interfaith socialising is a great way to celebrate our diversity and learn from each other's traditions.

I am reminded of the saying, "from acorns come many oak trees." From socialising together new ideas sprang up and now other cross-community events are percolating! Watch this space for more events and times to meet with our neighbours in the future... and please do join with us!

Winnie Gordon

Minister of Unitarian New Meeting Birmingham

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## Worship Studies Course Foundation Step 2014

On Saturday 12th July, the 2014 students came to Kingswood to complete their studies for the Worship Studies Course Foundation Step. This course consists of three sessions, which cover all aspects of preparing and leading a Unitarian worship service: What is worship? practicalities and precautions, prayers & meditation, readings, hymns and music, the address, story-telling, and speech and communication - quite a comprehensive list.

Congratulations to: **Matt Grant** (Oldham), **Dee Green** (Coventry), **Simon Hall** (Northampton), **Jeremy Harris** (Evesham), **Cressida Pryor** (Cheltenham & Gloucester) and **Aleks Zglinska** (Kidderminster).

**Ian Cook** (Birmingham) and **Jude-ith Waine** (Isle of Wight) also participated, but were unable to attend all three sessions.

## How to grow your church by Rev. Nicky Jenkins, Minister of Chorlton Unitarians

[Following on from our Growth issue in Winter 2013, here is the edited transcript of a talk given at the closing proceedings of Unitarian College Manchester, 10th June 2014, reprinted with Nicky's permission.]

### How can we be clear on what we are doing?

We need to understand our deepest reasons. Too often we jump straight to “what we are going to do?” And that is where you might find this talk disappointing. Unfortunately there is no recipe for church growth. If there were you would all be following it and bursting at the seams. And that is why it's not really that useful to tell you what we did. I led a workshop at FUSE on how we did our café church but there was a strong *caveat*. I don't think that simply applying an activity or getting a better website is the answer. These are technical fixes to a challenge which is much bigger. It is an adaptive challenge. If we want to serve our communities we need to adapt and change, and not only how we do things; we need to be in a constant state of change.

Is your congregation composed entirely of people in their over-seventies? Then no doubt you are happy to continue doing things the way they ‘always have been’. Except they haven't always been done that way. They suit that generation, but they will be unlikely to attract any but the most errant of the younger age groups. Our church services have changed over time to suit different generations, but the pace of change seems to be accelerating and people are living longer, so a natural progression and change isn't happening.

### How has the world changed?

The world is changing:

- From Passivity to Interactivity
- From Institution to grassroots
- From Face-to face to virtual

Our congregations are changing:

- From pews to circles
- From anonymous to intimate
- From attraction to mobilisation
- From academy to family
- From Ordained Ministry to ordinary ministry

We've tried to ape marketing techniques as a denomination, pinning our hopes on strap lines and elevator speeches, but the world and we are weary and cynical. They can spot a slick advertising slogan from a mile away. What people do believe is personal recommendation. Look at all the online shopping sites or trip advisor. How do you choose which hotel or restaurant to go to? You ask friends where is good. Or you look online and read the recommendations there.

Chorlton doesn't have a slick tag line. **What we are trying to achieve is that A) people have heard of us and B) they have a clear idea of our values.**

**So we need to be telling people what we believe.** Our members are inspired by the worship services to spread the word about Unitarianism. They are inspired to share that ours is a church that welcomes people whatever their sexual orientation; that welcomes people who are ashamed of themselves and their past behaviours;

that ours is a church that says “I see you, and you are a wonderful, worthwhile human being”.

So they tell their friends “Yes, I go and I’m gay” or “Yes, I go and I’m an atheist” or “Yes, I go and I’m a Buddhist”. They tell their friends *“When I started going I was in a mess and I’ve changed so much and I’m learning about myself and about my spirituality.”*. They tell them *“Even though they are not like me they have really cared about me when I’ve been struggling.”*

We welcome people by listening to them. We give them the freedom of our pulpit. We encourage our members to put together services, we include candles of Joys and Concern on a regular basis. And we receive the gifts that our new attenders bring.

Sometimes this is scary. Will a service on silence, with three different kinds of meditation go down OK? Will anyone go to the after service lunch in the teashop? How should we run our church? Where is the authority? Will our church be taken over by someone with a limited understanding of Unitarianism who thinks that anything goes?

**But I have always held that our core purpose was the provision of a home for the spiritual seeker.** That is our purpose is as a religious group, where we hope to grow spiritually and learn from each other and the world.

When I was called to be the Lay Pastor at Chorlton, I was elated and terrified at the same time. I knew that the funding for the stipend was coming from the very generous District for a period of three years, so I felt under some pressure to deliver. To deliver growth. Although I had read a lot of books during my time as Community Celebrant with the Presbyterian Church in New

Zealand, I was not at all sure that any of that theorising would work.

I went into a trendy little boutique, Homewares in Chorlton, and bought myself this mug. It’s a Rob Ryan one. He does lovely delicate cut outs. I like the words on it: *“Listen to the world.”* So every time I have a cup of Earl Grey in that mug, I am reassured that I don’t need all the answers, but I must listen to what I am being told, by the world and by the people around me.

### **We are a community**

One of our very first strategies was to start including other groups that used our building and treat them as a community. We invited them to contribute articles to our newsletter. We asked a woman from the Community of Interbeing to share some of their teachings with us one Sunday. She continues to attend as a regular as has another woman from that group. We have in the last few years attempted to let our space to users who, we feel, are in accordance with our ethos.

And we have included Candles of Joys and Concerns in our services. This gives the community a chance to get to know each other’s deepest feelings and grow their understanding. I see it as a form of intercessionary prayer. Café Church allows time for discussion and more community building. We now have a social secretary who organises lunches that family and friends can attend and outings.

Our idea of community extends to the wider denomination, and we are not jealous of our members, but let them know about other events in the District that might appeal. Several members attend Rev Danny Crosby’s Singing Meditation sessions as well as Living the Questions. We could not offer such groups due to our

space being let. And it was risky. Our members may have decided to start going to Danny's church.

We have changed our governance to allow all people who come to our services a chance to comment and keep up to date. We now have committee meetings on alternate months with after church community meetings. Through this we have had people volunteering to help with some of the jobs needing to be done to keep the ship afloat.

This goes back to our ethos of hospitality. **Welcoming the people who come to us and accepting the gifts and the suggestions they make. And listening to the world.** Our new members are in a slightly younger demographic. They are working age and several have families and partners. We don't necessarily know what will suit them best. As to age groups I have heard it say that a minister will attract an age demographic ten years on either side of their own age but I think we are doing better with ages ranging from 18 to 89 with the majority in their forties and fifties.

My 2011 contact list had thirteen people who attended regularly. My 2014 list has twenty-three, and our communications secretary sends e-mails out to a much larger number who have been coming regularly but sometimes weeks or months apart. Probably another twelve to fifteen. Of all these, only eleven people are actual Members.

### **The place looks OK**

We have re-invested the receipts from rental for the space into redecoration and a new kitchen which is lighter and brighter and less damp than the old one. This in turn brings in more potential renters. And it means that our space looks more loved and hospitable than before.

We have a simple hall space with no religious symbols apart from the chalice on the lectern which is closeted behind folding doors during the week. We pay attention to our notice boards, refreshing them regularly and displaying info about activities at other local Unitarian Churches. We want people to understand who we are from our passive presence when they use the building for their groups. So we have a Pride LGBT friendly poster. We have copies of our quarterly newsletter on display and *The Inquirer*. Inside the Hall we have posters from the GA website, Wordles from two sermons, Rumi quotes and a copy of the UUA principle "We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people" together with a copy of the front cover of the *Inquirer* "I will seek my God." (In fact a member mentioned this poster as something that caught her eye and spoke to her the first time she came to our church). We also have a movable calendar made by a member with the Pagan festivals in the Wheel of the Year.

We have discovered that our third-hand chairs and inherited embroidered tablecloths are no longer dated but 'vintage' and fit in with the ethos of our new attenders, who are resistant to consumer culture and want us to behave sustainably.

### **Exercise**

There is a website called **Six Word Stories** <http://www.sixwordstories.net> This is a collection of short short stories consisting of just six words. It was inspired by Ernest Hemingway's famous challenge and first six word story, "**For sale: baby shoes, never worn.**" There have been many imitators, and now I'm going to ask you to do your own six word story:

- Now think of a most meaningful experience you have had as a Unitarian
- See if you can condense it into six words

What are the really powerful words?

You need to use feeling words to connect with people.

We really need to connect to the visceral, to the lizard brain if we are to break through and generate that sense of loyalty and belonging.

### **Context**

“Ah but” you say “That’s all very well for you. That wouldn’t work where we are. Our building is different. Our people are different. Our neighbourhood is different.”

You are right!

It is very important that you understand the area your church is located in and the sort of people who live round about. You should carry out a sort of mental survey of the area.

- What age and stage of life are they?
- What are their politics and concerns?
- How well educated are they?
- How do they spend their time?
- What is their ethnicity?
- What is their class?

We were very lucky in that Unitarian values fit very well into the culture around us in Chorlton. What you need to find are the points where your values converge with other groups in your area. See if you can form alliances. How can you meet their emerging needs? It depends where you are too. If you are the only Unitarian presence for miles around then you can widen your net. Look at concentric lines around your church. half an hour away, one mile away and ten miles away. How can you provide a focus within these areas?

In our newsletter we have an occasional column *Where can I find a Unitarian?* This shows our readers that our members are human,

involved in things they are interested in and local. People still crave community although they don’t like institutions.

We have attempted several events to welcome in non-members. An open day as part of a spiritual trail was a complete disaster, as the leader failed to bring the trail to us. A Coffin Morning brought thirteen people, eleven of whom were outsiders. They expressed interest in Unitarianism but have not attended any services. Neither do our much acclaimed Café Churches result in any visitors. Though they may have a part to play in welcoming friends and families. It is important to think positively about what you do have to offer rather than focus on what you cannot do.

### **Mission is being out in the community**

That’s what we were taught at Luther King House on the Mission and Ministry course. We have a new Member at church who is a whirlwind of community and social media action. She has set up several Facebook Meetup groups; A happiness group, a philosophy group, a breakfast group and has recently become the chair of the Civic Society. But that’s just her. When she shares a post from our Facebook page, over 200 people see it. A URC Minister asked if she was a Unitarian Secret Weapon, but of course she isn’t. It’s up to us to attend these groups and get involved with our local community. I must admit to feeling a bit guilty about sitting in a pub having a cooked breakfast and hot chocolate and chatting to people and thinking of it as work, but it is part of my Listen to the World mantra.

When I was a student in Dukinfield, I discovered that several members of the congregation did their shopping in Morrisons and went for lunch afterwards on a Friday, so I started to lurk in the café and achieved several pastoral visits in one go. Maybe there is a similar place in your community or if you are well resourced

you could make that place your church by opening for tea and cake once a week.

What value can you bring to your community? I have started to share adverts for community events supporting good causes on our Facebook page and we hope to get more involved with a group who is helping the homeless in our area.

### **Inspirational Worship**

Why do people keep coming?

They get a lot out of the services. They say they are inspirational. They know that we provide a space where you can come however you are feeling and we will not deny you that feeling. You will be held. We can cope with your sorrow or distress. We won't make extravagant promises. But we will remind you of who you really are and that you are loved and a worthwhile human being. We will tell you it's OK to make mistakes, everyone does (especially the minister) We will tell you it's OK to have a laugh (especially at the minister) and we will allow you the space to simply be.

You will be reminded that you are a peace and justice loving person and that you must continue because everyone should be treated equally. You will be reminded that you are not alone, that you are part of a community who wants to support you and share your journey. You will find that your gifts are appreciated and that you learn valuable lessons in how to be together with others who do not necessarily share your spiritual outlook.

And they love the other people who come. I get immense joy and satisfaction from looking round at tea time and seeing different combinations of people chatting animatedly each week. We have a young girl in sixth form. When she put her flower in the vase for the flower ceremony she said that hers was a common flower that

could get on with everyone. Like her, happy with all sorts and all ages!

And they are reminded of their highest selves, the selves they aspire to be.

### **Let people know who you are**

Our Facebook page started in November 2011. We now have 63 likes. Those people will automatically get our postings in their newsfeed. This is not a method for informing church members of events meetings etc. That is usually done by e-mail. It is outward facing. Very few church members are actually on Facebook (four). We started by posting about our services - not who was preaching but the subject. Every such posting includes start time and 'Everybody welcome'. I try to make the subject sound interesting. Anyone interested in Unitarianism or us as a congregation can see the sorts of ideas we are thinking about over a period of time. We try to keep service titles relevant and timely (fitting in with seasonal and festival themes) Have a look at our page Chorlton Unitarian Church.

I then started to include uplifting quotes and relevant information about causes like same-sex marriage, IDAHO (International Day Against HOMophobia), Earth Day, Diwali, Pagan festivals and Unitarian personalities and history. I aim to get as many pictures in as possible because more people look at the picture posts and may well share them to their friends. Most recently I have started to share information about community events in line with our ethos such as the Bicycle Festival, with a little comment such as "Unitarians support the interdependent web of life". Initially I was struggling to get enough to keep putting posts on to keep the page lively but now we have more events going on, they are included.

I also comment as myself in other local Facebook forums and link to our events. An example of that was a Coffee Festival in local

cafes and I suggested you continue your coffee pilgrimage with coffee and spirituality at our Café Church. It is important to keep your presence in front of people so you gradually become known and eventually your name will reach a potential attender several times over and they will actually come to church.

We also have a website, designed using the UCCN template which was then adapted to include a blog which we use as a calendar. It's not as outward facing as we would want so one of our members is looking at redesigning it so we can have a Google calendar accessible by those who need to post events and details of the lettings groups and the availability of rooms for hire. We hope to include a podcast of sermons in the future too.

Our newsletter has been widely acclaimed. It only comes out quarterly. It has colour photographs and articles about conferences, events people have gone to; books they have read; upcoming events and causes we support as well as national stuff like the GA motions etc. This now goes out to 47 people, which includes regular attenders, by e-mail. We print a small number (say ten) for non-digital members and the public. It is expensive to print but we do so few that we think it worth it to have an attractive item that people might want to pick up and read. We also think this is important to keep us in touch with the more irregular pattern of attendance from many of our congregation as well as old friends who have moved away.

### **Conclusion**

It doesn't sound like rocket science and I'm sure that many of you are already doing many of these things and probably better than we do them. Attitude is important, constant alertness and keeping on top of publicity and relationships is important, and an ability to share the leadership and be an undefended leader is one of the biggest challenges. And .....Listen to the World.

## **Valediction Ceremony at Unitarian College Manchester**

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June was a very special day for one particular group of people, as well as their friends and families. It was the End of Session Proceedings and Valedictory Service for the four students of Unitarian College Manchester, who have all successfully completed their studies to become Unitarian Ministers: Ralph Catts, Maria Curtis, Anna Jarvis and Shammy Webster.

Ralph Catts carried out his year as a student pastor at Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham and there were several members of that congregation present to offer support and good wishes. Ralph fitted into his role with us surprisingly quickly and has been invaluable throughout the nine months of his pastorate. We can only hope that he gained as much from his time with us as we gained from him.

The proceedings started at 3pm with a welcome and refreshments, before the hundred or so assembled Unitarians listened to Rev Nicky Jenkins, who offered some helpful insights into that topic which constantly occupies us of "Growing a Congregation" (see pages 21-31)

College Principal Rev Alex Bradley then delivered his report for 2013-14 and spoke of next year, when there will be only one Unitarian student. He said what a joy it had been to see the interaction and development of this year's four students.

We then broke for a most delicious buffet tea before returning to the chapel for the Valedictory Service. This was a delightfully fresh service with opening words and chalice lighting by Rev Alex Bradley, several modern hymns, some of which proved challenging due to their lack of familiarity, but the assembled





Ralph Catts & Sue Woolley (photo Ralph Catts' camera)

voices were a joy to hear. Each newly qualified student took an active part in the service, offering prayers, readings and personal testimonies. Rev. Elizabeth Birtles gave a thought-provoking address “And Who Are We Now?” about the transitions we all pass through on our journeys through life. The service finished with the Valediction ceremony when each student replied individually to the charge to take up the honour and the challenge of ministry.

After the Benediction everyone went to the lounge for a reception with the opportunity to congratulate the four students and raise a glass to them. There was an atmosphere of celebration, but the undoubted sincerity of each of the four to dedicate themselves to their future in ministry shone through with great clarity and it was an honour to witness this very moving ceremony.

**Jill Hudson, Birmingham**

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Valedictory Service at Harris Manchester College Oxford

Two short weeks later, it was the turn of the four students from Harris Manchester College Oxford to be "welcomed into the ministry of religion" at the Valedictory Service on 24th June, which is part of the annual Ministerial Old Students' Association conference. The four being valedicted this time were John Carter, Jo James, Matthew Smith and Kate Whyman.

The Oxford congregation had enjoyed having Matthew Smith as their ministry student during 2013 and the first part of 2014. He also facilitated two engagement groups. As they recorded in the March/April issue of the Oxford newsletter: "Matthew conducted many original and engaging monthly services for us, and also did some pastoral work, throughout 2013 and the first quarter of 2014. He will be greatly missed. We wish him well as he reaches the end of his ministerial training and moves into the next phase of his Unitarian journey." (as minister at Framlingham and Bury St. Edmunds). It was another joyous service, led by Rev. Dr. Arthur Stewart, and we wish all eight students the very best as they start their new lives as Unitarian ministers.



Matthew Smith photo by Daniel Costley

Cherishing Your Doubts

A strange word in this context: 'cherish'! Should we really treasure and cling fondly to those things we feel uncertain about? After all, in everyday life we usually hate uncertainty. We like to feel secure in the knowledge that we have chosen the right partner in life, that our car will not let us down, that we are secured a regular income month by month and that, if we are in employment, we are not likely to be made redundant at the whim of an inconsiderate employer. Why, then, in matters of belief should uncertainty be a good thing?

Well, Robert T Weston in his famous piece 'Cherish Your Doubts' raises all sorts of arguments as to why doubt should be a good thing. Firstly he says doubt is '**the attendant of truth**', is '**the key to the door of knowledge**', is '**the servant of discovery**'. In the case of the last mentioned, of course, he is absolutely right. Columbus doubted the earth was flat and set sail hoping to prove otherwise, Galileo was far from sure the sun revolved around the earth and managed with his telescope to prove the opposite. Without doubt neither of those famous discoveries would have been made.

Certainty in areas where there is no ultimate proof is bound to be bad thing. Think of politicians who speak with absolute conviction on matters about which they really know little. Often, with the passage of time, they are proved wrong, and yet they persist in their attitude. Certainty leads to complacency, smugness, inertia. How can we be sure of anything that we can't really prove? Should we take things on trust simply because we have been told it is so? Surely a little scepticism doesn't come amiss, especially when we are dealing with spiritual matters.

There is that famous quotation by Peter (Pierre) Abelard, which I expect we all know: '**By doubting, we are led to enquire; by enquiry we perceive the truth**'. My most famous quotation about doubt, however, comes from a leading figure of the German Enlightenment, the playwright and philosopher, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. He said this: '**The true value of a man is not determined by his possession, supposed or real, of Truth, but rather by his exertion to get to the Truth. It is not possession of the Truth, but rather the pursuit of Truth by which he extends his powers and in which his ever-growing perfectibility is to be found. Possession makes one passive, indolent and proud.**'

And then he said something remarkable, to which we in our weakness can hardly hope to subscribe: '**If God were to hold all Truth concealed in his right hand, and in his left only the steady and diligent drive for Truth, and to offer me the choice, I would in all humility take the left hand.**'

Yes, it is not easy being a doubter, but, who knows, it might be better for us in the long run!

Graham Williams (Kidderminster)

I think it is safe to say that all Unitarians have the same attitude to religion and spirituality. All of us believe profoundly in the necessity of personal freedom of religious belief - the freedom to grow, and to act in accordance with our beliefs, to work out our own answers, to be able to share our doubts and questions. Forrest Church, late minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City, summarises it very neatly in his book *Born Again Unitarian Universalism*: "We value one another's thinking. We respect one another's search. We honour it even when it differs from our own. We resist imposing our perception of truth upon one another. Embracing a kind of theological pluralism, we affirm

the human importance of our joint quest for meaning in life without insisting upon the ultimacy of any single set of theological criteria."

This devotion to spiritual freedom was shared by the brave Unitarian ministers who started to meet here in Evesham and elsewhere in the Midlands at the tail end of the 18th century, in order to support each other, because in those days, it was illegal to profess Unitarian beliefs. Unitarians continued to be prosecuted and persecuted for daring to question and doubt the tenets of mainstream Christianity until 1813, just over 200 years ago. Unitarian beliefs had grown out of the Reformation, when the Bible was first translated into the vernacular, and when the invention of printing meant that such translations became widely available, to ordinary people. To quote Ant Howe, "The early Unitarians encouraged ordinary folk to read the Bible for themselves and to only believe what they found there, not what bishops, churches and prayer books told you to believe."

So Unitarians have always been in the habit of questioning beliefs and cherishing doubts. I would guess that many of us came to Unitarianism exactly by that path - by starting to question some of the beliefs that we grew up with. In my case, I realised that I could not accept the divinity of Jesus as the unique Son of God, and also struggled with the idea that his death on the cross somehow put me back into right relationship with God. When my father gave me Alfred Hall's *Beliefs of a Unitarian* to read, it was such a relief to learn about a denomination that "holds faith and doubt in reverent balance", to quote Jan Carlsson-Bull.

What does holding faith and doubt in reverent balance mean? I believe that it is a very delicate balancing act, which certainly needs to be undertaken with reverence. It means actively searching for and working out what gives your life meaning,

putting your whole heart and mind and soul into it, and yet at the same time totally respecting the right of every other member of your Unitarian community to disagree with you. It can be a very tough call sometimes.

Because it is only human nature to feel passionately about religious and spiritual matters, about things that touch us deeply. And when we feel passionately about something, it can be difficult to remember that our fellow Unitarians are absolutely free to disagree with us. And that it is our job as Unitarians, as folk who are aiming to "live Unitarianly", to use Michael Dadson's wonderful phrase, to not only tolerate their different views but also to wholeheartedly accept and cherish them. And to not feel aggrieved because Reverend X or Mrs. Y has written something on Facebook with which we disagree.

Holding faith and doubt in reverent balance also means being open to new ideas, from wherever they come. Unitarianism at its best is a wonderfully open way of approaching life and religion, based on an appeal to reason, conscience and your own life experience. And it is an ongoing process - you don't just experience a one-off conversion, and then rest on those fixed beliefs for the rest of your life; every Unitarian has a duty to approach all new ideas and concepts reverently and critically, and take from them what speaks to our own reason and conscience, and what makes sense in the context of our own life experience, in order to live out our lives in the best and truest way we can.

The interplay of individuals' beliefs is one of the great strengths of a Unitarian congregation – the bouncing of ideas off each other means that we can never be complacent about what we believe. It is stimulating to belong to such a congregation, but can be very hard work. Nothing is set in stone, and each individual is responsible for keeping his or her mind open to new ideas, so that

our faith can grow. As Robert T. Weston wrote: "Doubt is the key to the door of knowledge; it is the servant of discovery. ... Doubt is the testing of belief."

So let us cherish our doubts and support each other on our spiritual and religious journeys, as we explore what gives our lives meaning. I leave you with the words of American writer and theologian Frederick Buechner: "Whether your faith is that there is a God or that there is not a God, if you don't have any doubts you are either kidding yourself or asleep. Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving."

Sue Woolley

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## District Events

### Midland Unitarian Association of Lay Preachers and Service Leaders: Autumn Training Day

#### Theme: Exploring Our Own Beliefs

**When:** Saturday 18th October 2014

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

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

**Cost:** FREE to MUA participants; £10 to others.

**Contact Sue Woolley for further details**

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Midland Unitarian Association Annual Lunch

When: Saturday 25th October 2014

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

Guest Speaker: Rev. Andy Pakula,
Minister of New Unity, London, and Member of 2020

Time: 10.30 am for 11.00 am (speaker at 11.30 am)

Cost: £9.00 a head (to be confirmed)

A form will be going out to congregations shortly with full details of menu etc.

Andy Pakula writes: Anais Nin asserted "Life is a process of becoming, a combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death."

The 2020 programme and fund is dedicated to helping Unitarian communities to engage in "becoming." Through financial resources for new and rekindled groups and guidance and training for all interested congregations, 2020 aims to equip motivated Unitarians with the tools they need to live. 2020's first funded rekindling congregation has been selected and will official launch in late 2014.

In this presentation I will address strategies and approaches for vibrant congregational life. There will be time for questions and also an opportunity for attendees to help shape what 2020 will offer in the months and years to come.

MUA Congregations: Times of Services

Every Sunday:

Birmingham	Unitarian New Meeting Church	11.00 am
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Bayshill Unitarian Church	11.00 am
Evesham	Oat Street Chapel	11.00 am
Kidderminster	New Meeting House	11.00 am
Kingswood	Meeting House	11.00 am
Oxford	Manchester College Chapel Society	11.00 am
Shrewsbury	Unitarian Church	10.30 am
Stourbridge	Presbyterian (Unitarian) Chapel	11.00 am
Warwick	High Street Chapel	4.30 pm

First Sunday of the Month:

Coseley	Old Meeting House	11.00 am
Dudley	Old Meeting House	3.00 pm
Oldbury	at Dudley	3.00 pm
Wolverhampton	at Dudley	3.00 pm

Second Sunday of the Month:

Coventry	Gt Meeting House Unitarian Church	11 am
Cradley	Park Lane Unitarian Chapel	6.30 pm
Northampton	Unitarians	10.30 am

Third Sunday of the Month:

Coseley	Old Meeting House	11.00 am
Dudley	Old Meeting House	3.00 pm
Herefordshire Unitarians		3.00 pm
Oldbury	at Dudley	3.00 pm
Wolverhampton	at Dudley	3.00 pm

Fourth Sunday of the Month:

Coventry	Gt Meeting House Unitarian Church	11 am
Cradley	Park Lane Unitarian Chapel	6.30 pm
Northampton	Unitarians	10.30 am

Last Sunday of the Month:

Banbury	Unitarian Fellowship	11.00 am
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MUA Congregations: Contact Details

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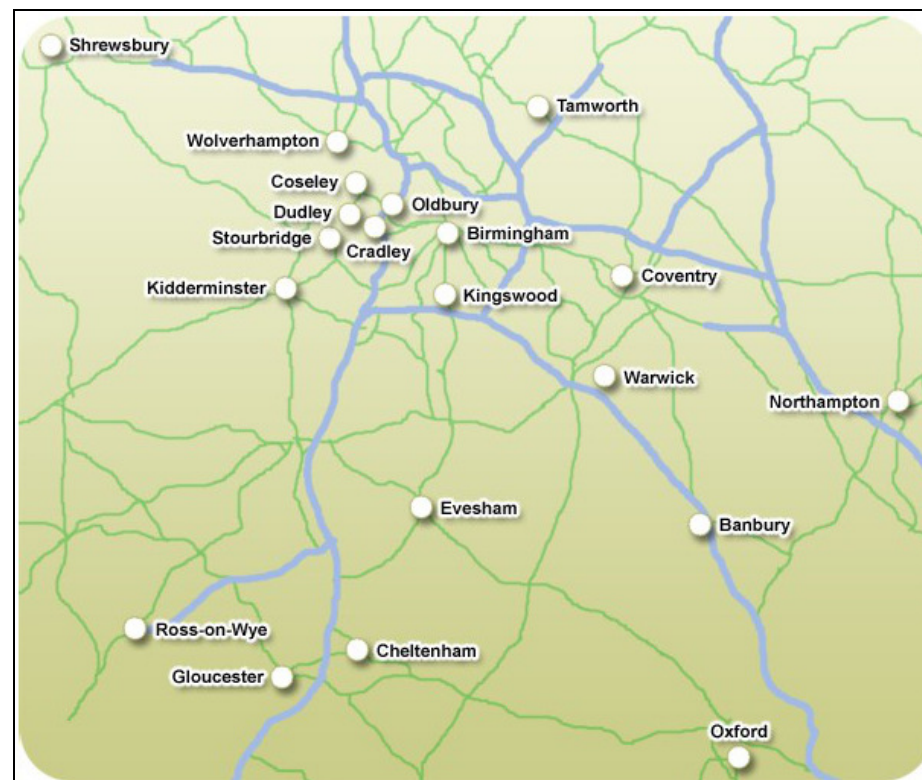
"Cherish your doubts, for doubt is the servant of truth.
Question your convictions, for beliefs too tightly held
strangle the mind and its natural wisdom.
Suspect all certitudes, for the world whirls on - nothing
abides.

Yet in our inner rooms full of doubt, inquiry and
suspicion, let a corner be reserved for trust.

For without trust there is no space for communities to
gather
or for friendships to be forged.

Indeed, this is the small corner where we connect - and
reconnect - with each other."

Michael A. Schuler



The Winter 2014 issue will be published in December.

**Please may we have your contributions on local matters,
& on the theme of "A Time For Giving"**

by Thursday 13th November 2014

Thank you!