

Bits and Pieces . . . and please keep them coming in!

Here is your Midland Unitarian Association Bits & Pieces for November 2014. If you want any news from your congregation included here, please send it to me (details below)

WORSHIP FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES WORKSHOP AT BIRMINGHAM

A hands-on workshop to explore the ideas behind creating worship that fulfills all learning styles, abilities, and ages. Interactivity is a very useful tool for engaging congregations large and small. Come learn and share ideas about how we can incorporate different elements into our services.

When: Sunday 16th November 2014

Workshop Leader: Lizzie Roper

Where: Unitarian New Meeting, Ryland St, Birmingham B16 8BL

Times: 1.30 - 3.30 pm (you are welcome at service 11.00 am & agape lunch too)

For more information, contact Rev. Winnie Gordon 0790 8888 196 revgordon.unitarian@yahoo.com

GROWTH ON THE MENU AT THE MIDLAND UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL LUNCH

Unitarians from eleven congregations around the Midlands gathered at Kingswood Meeting House to learn about how to grow their congregations, from our Guest Speaker, Rev. Andy Pakula. Andy is minister of New Unity, two of the flourishing congregations in London, and is also the founder of 2020: Growing Unitarianism in Great Britain, an initiative which now includes no less than four Midlands Unitarians on its Board: our President, Ash James, our Vice-President, Jane Couper, Aleks Zglinka of Kidderminster, who is also President of the British Unitarian Young Adults Network (BUYAN), and Rev. Winnie Gordon, minister of Unitarian New Meeting in Birmingham.

Proceedings started with some thoughtful devotions from Rev. Ant Howe, who remarked that once you've found a loving Unitarian home, the temptation is to set it in stone, and not to change. He reminded us to be thankful for what we have, but to dream of what could be. He quoted Dante: "Have you no yearning for a place more lofty, where you might make more friends, or see more widely?"

Then Andy Pakula started his presentation by telling us a little about 2020, which is a programme dedicated to growing Unitarianism through planting new congregations and/or rekindling dormant ones. He then explained that the good news is, that "all" you need for your congregation to grow is a few capable people, a strong desire, some money, and the willingness to change.

But the bad news is: your congregation may actually not want to grow (much). But there is no growth without change - growth always means change. The sorts of change that come with growth were discussed. And so, the question has to be addressed: Just how important IS growth? What changes will you and your congregation accept in order to grow? **Because you cannot both grow and stay the same.**

A series of volunteers from those present then shared why they wanted their own congregation to grow. Then a question was thrown open to the whole meeting: what would you be **unwilling to change** for growth, and the answers were a fascinating mixture of practical (e.g. music & singing, social action, social events) and spiritual (e.g. the Unitarian ethos, freedom of belief, an act of worship, a time of prayer / stillness).

What everyone present took away was that **we need to talk together as congregations** about 1) why we want to grow and 2) what we are not willing to give up in order to grow. And that the space between is the space where change can happen and dreams can be realised.

We then adjourned to the Schoolroom, where we enjoyed a delicious lunch provided by Jill Bowie, of Kingswood. All in all, it was a gorgeous, rich, Unitarian occasion.

If you have any contributions for the next *Bits & Pieces*, please send them to me at 5, Martins Road, Piddington, Northampton NN7 2DN or via e-mail to sue.woolley@virgin.net. Thank you!