

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

Here is your Midland Unitarian Association Bits & Pieces for April 2010. If you want any news from your congregation included here, please send it to me (details below)

MUA WORSHIP STUDIES COURSE FOUNDATION STEP 2010

When: Saturdays 22nd May, 12th June, 10th July 2010

Led by: Mrs. Sue Woolley with Guest Speakers Dr. Jane Russell (Hinckley), Rev. Linda Hart (Richmond & Putney), Rev. Ant Howe (Kingswood & Warwick)

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

Times: 9.30 am - 4.15 pm each day

Cost: £29 to delegates from MUA congregations. This includes a £5 registration fee and a copy of the MUA publication *The ABC of Lay Preaching* (usual price £7).

Session 1: So You're Going to Take a Service? What is worship? Practicalities and Precautions; Speech & Communications; Elements of a service: Introduction

Session 2: Elements of a Service (1) Storytelling; The Sermon / Address; Readings

Session 3: Elements of a Service (2) Prayer & Meditation; Hymns & Music

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND THIS COURSE

COTSWOLD GROUP RETREAT

The Cotswold Group is holding a Retreat Day on Thursday 22nd April at Stanton Guildhouse, near Broadway, between 10.00 am and 4.30 pm. The cost (£22.50) includes a two-course lunch, coffee and tea, and there are a few places still available. Contact Kath Riley (kath.riley1@googlemail.com) or Rev. Don Phillips (don.phillips@btinternet.com) if you are interested, as soon as possible.

MUA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

38 members from 13 of the MUA's 18 congregations met at Unitarian New Meeting Church, Birmingham for the 144th Annual General Meeting, our first as the Midland Unitarian Association. Rev. Andy Pakula, minister at Newington Green & Islington, our link on the Executive Committee, and our Guest Speaker was also present. The business meeting was over in record time. We welcomed three new members to the Executive Committee (Mrs. Jane Couper of Evesham, Mr. Ash James of Kidderminster, and Ms. Angela Maher of Birmingham) and thanked two retiring members (Rev. Don Phillips and Rev. Simon Ramsay) for their past services. Following a delicious shared lunch, we adjourned to the church to enjoy MUA President Rev. Peter Hewis's short service on the theme of valuing things that bring you happiness.

The highlight of the day for most people was Rev. Andy Pakula's presentation, entitled *It's Not About Us*, which was about the process of congregational growth. His article with Rev. Ant Howe in the latest issue of *The Inquirer* included seven "commandments" for growth. Using the example of lighting a candle from another candle, Rev. Pakula argued that we need to give our church away in order for it to grow. Unitarianism is a religion in motion, and has changed in our times. He invited us to consider what is transient and what is permanent about Unitarianism, and suggested that our task was to give Unitarianism to the world, not just to preserve it for ourselves. He pointed out that if we are faithful, Unitarianism will change in ways that make us uncomfortable. He finished by outlining a growth scheme for every congregation, with four different levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Each level had a list of things the congregation ought to be doing to achieve growth. We all left feeling energised and enthusiastic about the future of our beloved movement.

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!