

## ***BITS AND PIECES . . . AND PLEASE KEEP THEM COMING IN!***

Here is your 186th Midland Unitarian Association Inc. Bits & Pieces for January 2024. If you want any news from your congregation included here, please send it to me (details below)

### **MUA Inc. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- Support congregations
- Make things happen by providing leadership and initiating projects
- Find resourceful solutions
- Connect Unitarians in the Midlands.

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### **REFLECTION FOR THE NEW YEAR**

In this deep breath between Christmas and the New Year of 2024, I would like to share some words by Patience Strong: “It is good to throw away the old calendar with its all too familiar picture, and to hang something fresh on the wall. How clean and bright the new calendar looks. It seems to symbolise the high hopes of this new morning of a new year. But as I flick through the crisp new pages of the months, I am suddenly aware of the strange mystery of the future. These pages with their neat rows of dates represent un-lived time, the promise of seasons not yet come to fulfilment.” This time of year is full of new promise.

During the past year, all of us have fallen short, and been less than the best people we can be. But we have also done some things well, and lived up to our potential as human beings. Many world religions have a special time of year, during which their adherents “reflect on and evaluate their thoughts, words and actions over the past year [and] acknowledge their prejudices, negative behaviours and bad habits, so that they may begin the process of transforming themselves.” [Bhalodkar] The Hindu festival of Diwali is one, and the ten-day period leading up to the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur is another. It is a time to “celebrate and appreciate life and to look forward to the coming year with a renewed sense of purpose and passion.” [Bhalodkar] For Christians, it is the period of Lent, but for the vast majority of people in Britain, who do not follow any particular religion, New Year is the time for reflecting on the past, and for making resolutions for the future.

As spiritual and/or religious people, we may choose to go deeper, rather than just resolving to lose a few pounds after the culinary excesses of Christmas. One of my favourite theologians is the wonderful Rabbi Lionel Blue, who used to be a regular contributor to Radio 4’s *Thought for the Day*. Over the years, he has taught me that the only thing God wants from us is for us to be more kind, more generous to everyone (including themselves) and more honest, both with ourselves and our fellow travellers in the world. Living well is about listening to that inner voice, whether we call it God, or the Light within, or our conscience; and about doing the right thing rather than the easy one. It is also about trying to live and respond to events in the present.

So my resolution for the coming year is to follow the advice of the poet, Rumi, in his wonderful poem, *The Guesthouse*: “This being human is a guesthouse / Every morning a new arrival. / A joy, a depression, a meanness, / Some momentary awareness / Comes as an unexpected visitor. / Welcome and attend them all! Even if they’re a crowd of sorrows, / Who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, / Still, treat each guest honourably. / He may be clearing you out for some new delight.”

I wish you all a Blessed, Peaceful, Happy and Productive New Year, this coming 2024.

**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 [revsuewoolley@gmail.com](mailto:revsuewoolley@gmail.com) Thanks!**