

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

Here is your 120th Midland Unitarian Association Bits & Pieces for July 2018. If you want any news from your congregation included here, please send it to me (details below)

**STOURBRIDGE UNITARIAN CHAPEL 320<sup>TH</sup> AND 230<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SERVICE**

More than 20 Unitarians gathered at Stourbridge Unitarian Chapel on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June to celebrate this special double anniversary. The service was led by Rev. Sue Woolley, District Minister, and included greetings from the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches, and from the Midland Unitarian Association, the latter by Diane Rutter, MUA President. Afterwards Sue planted a rowan sapling by the front gates, as a symbol of the future flourishing of the congregation. It was a lovely sunny day, and we enjoyed refreshments in the front courtyard.

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**KINGSWOOD 310<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SERVICE AND GARDEN PARTY**

**When:** Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July

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

**Time:** Service of Praise & Thanksgiving at 1.30 pm, followed by a bring-your-own picnic and Garden Party, with celebratory tea provided by the congregation – see separate flyer

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**SHREWSBURY UNITARIANS LEARN HOW TO LISTEN**

On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June, nine of the congregation gathered for a few hours of training about listening skills under the guidance of one of their local Samaritan trainers – Sue. Here is a report by Shrewsbury Unitarians' Chair, Debra Burbery – other congregations may like to consider asking their local Samaritan branch to do something similar.

“We started off with an exercise which involved following verbal instructions to draw an animal without, and then with, the chance to ask simple questions. The resulting pictures we all came up with were very ‘interesting’ interpretations / weird creatures indeed – especially the ones where no questions could be asked! This showed us how simple but careful questioning can elucidate a ‘clearer picture’. We discussed and explored what the barriers and distractions were to our own understanding when talking or having a deep conversation with someone. The ‘Listening Wheel’ concept was introduced, and the various stages explained in a little more detail.

Then came the fun of roleplaying! In groups of three, we each had a go at playing a role, either as the talker in a scenario, a listener/questioner and an observer. The observer noted how the listener used the various stages of the listening wheel. We fed back / talked about how the listening time went and the group came together to find out what we had all learned from the different roles and exercises.

We went away from the morning’s activities having learned much more about how we can improve ourselves as listeners in our everyday lives – a very worthwhile exercise for all concerned.”

**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) Thank you!**