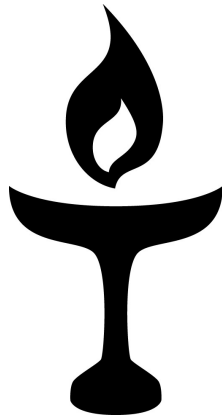


# MU NOW

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THE MAGAZINE OF  
THE MIDLAND UNITARIAN  
ASSOCIATION

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WINTER 2018/19

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[www.midland-unitarian-association.org.uk](http://www.midland-unitarian-association.org.uk)

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## From the Editor

Welcome to the Winter 2018/19 issue of *MU Now*. It includes MUA President Diane Rutter's farewell *President's Piece*, a tribute to the late Malcolm Sadler, some interesting articles in the District Round-up, and some lovely reflections in the New Year, New Hope section.

My thanks to everyone who contributed.

## 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 [revsuewoolley@gmail.com](mailto:revsuewoolley@gmail.com) or to 5, Martins Road, Piddington, Northampton NN7 2DN.

THANK YOU!

**The theme for the next issue** is "Awakening" and the deadline for submissions will be **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May**.

*Sue Woolley*

## President's Piece



“Here we are again, happy as can be, all good friends and jolly good company.” I can hear echoes of various members of my family, over the decades, singing the words of this ditty, as we greeted one another on family occasions. Although sung light-heartedly and with smiles and laughter it nevertheless contained undertones of emotions never expressed.

Of the love that adorned such occasions, and the memories and family bond that will tie us all together until we leave this earthly plane.

I know that I am very lucky to have had the family life that I have had. I know that for others, family is not such a happy memory. Of course there were tensions, fallings out and cross words spoken and unspoken. But most of my family memories leave me with a sense of worth, of belonging and of being safe and loved.

At the beginning of every New Year, and the approach of Spring, I begin to look forward to family gatherings. Already the family WhatsApp group is aflutter with messages for this year's picnic. But I am a true daughter of Janus, being a January baby. I have one face firmly fixed on the future, and one just as firmly fixed on the past. When we meet up we always take a family photograph – and we hold hats over small spaces in the air to represent those living members not present at the gathering – and in our hearts we remember – and tell the funniest stories we can – of those who are now dead.

For me it's the same with congregations. I am very fortunate to be the type of person who 'takes' to church life. I have always been a

church goer. Starting out as a Unitarian, then peregrinating between my mid 20s and 30s, and eventually coming back to Unitarianism.

I've done some fantastic things and been involved in wonderful times because of religion. Others have been fairly tedious, and some just plain boring. But I wouldn't have missed it for the world. I cannot imagine not being a church goer. At the same time I recognise that there is much to do with spirituality that has very little, if anything at all, to do with religion. Such as chatting with God in my head every time I take a bus ride. It's not that easy to do when driving a car, and every now and again I like to go for a ride on a bus just to connect with the divine. I do the same when walking the dogs around sunset. Here in Hollywood I have witnessed some of the most spectacular skies when out walking the dogs. And again, have experienced camaraderie with other local dog walkers. If you're ever stuck for someone to chat with, borrow a dog and head for a local park.

And now with my January faces fixed to both the future and the past, I bid you farewell. It has been my pleasure and a pride to serve as your President for the past couple of years. I have tried to visit as many of you as I can, and have enjoyed myself tremendously in the process. I wish you all the very best for the future, and I know that you will welcome your incoming President, Angela Maher, with as much friendship and kindness as you have myself.

With love, Diane

**Diane Rutter, MUA President**

## District Minister: Winter Update

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

**Leading worship around the Midland Unitarian Association:** My diary for **2019** is now filled. I look forward to seeing all of you as and when. I am also available to conduct Rites of Passage round the District, should the need arise.

The **Autumn Training Day**, on the topic of *Putting the Worth into Worship* took place on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November, at Kingswood Meeting House. It was led by Rev. Ant Howe, Kingswood's minister, and proved to be a deep day of sharing and learning.

The **Spring Training Day**, on the topic of *Music in Worship* will be led by Rev. Ant Howe, Kingswood's minister, and by Rev. Danny Crosby, who will be leading one of his Singing Meditation sessions. It promises to be a fascinating day, which could revolutionise the way music is perceived in our worship services.

There was a small turn-out this year for the national **Worship Studies Course Foundation Step** – only four people, three of them from outside the District. But those four got a lot out of it. Normally, we would be offering the Rites of Passage Course in 2019, but we have heard that the London District is offering it in the Spring, and it seems that no other District is offering the Worship Studies Course Foundation Step in 2019, so we have decided to offer it in the Autumn of 2019, at a new venue – Unitarian New Meeting Church in Birmingham. Watch this space.

I am a fully qualified **spiritual director**. I have started to offer direction sessions, on a one-to-one basis. Please contact me if you are interested. Please see advert on p. 19 for further information.

**Sue Woolley, District Minister, Midland Unitarian Association**

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## MUA Executive Committee Key Messages

The Key Messages below, from our September and November meetings, have already been shared in the relevant issues of *Bits & Pieces*, the monthly news-sheet sent to all congregations. Only the messages which have not been overtaken by events are here:

1. MUA Annual General Meeting: this will be held at Shrewsbury Unitarian Church on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March. Guest Speaker: Karen Hanley, Parliamentary liaison person for the Unitarians.
2. Spring Training Day: the theme will be 'Music in Worship', at Kingswood on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March. It will be led by Rev. Ant Howe of Kingswood and Rev. Danny Crosby or Altrincham and Urmston. A flyer has been circulated.

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## Malcolm Sadler 1935 – 2018: a tribute

Although Malcolm Sadler never trained for the Ministry he was a powerful force in keeping Unitarianism in the Midlands alive over many decades as a Lay Leader. He was instrumental in maintaining our witness in both Warwick and Banbury as well as taking frequent services in many other Chapels. He was always a popular visitor because of his genial personality and his thoughtful and carefully prepared services.

Malcolm grew up in Birmingham where he joined his parents in running their music shop in Stirchley. On the eve of his call up for National Service the bus in which he was travelling into central Birmingham ran into the back of an unlit lorry in thick fog. Malcolm sustained serious hip and leg injuries which put an end to his Military Music School plans and caused him much aggravation for the rest of his life.

Malcolm was a life-long Unitarian, as a young man in Moseley and later in Waverley Road Church Small Heath. He was heavily committed to the thriving Unitarian Young People's League (UYPL) scene. He talked animatedly about their activities whether camping in Llanbedr or travelling to France, Holland and Germany. He revelled in being one of the drivers leading mixed groups of up to 24 especially to Rev Lee's property at Kinver where he was a long-distance warden for many years.

After a family move to Stratford upon Avon he worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company where met the Queen and was presented with a long-service award by Prince Charles. It was there too that he met Nigel who became his partner and his support for many years.

From Stratford he became involved with Warwick Unitarians in a relationship that lasted more than 50 years. Starting as organist he got more and more involved, developing a lively social and musical backdrop to the spiritual life of the community. There are several people still who recall that it was his warm smiling welcome which drew them in and helped to keep the congregation buoyant. He was the driving force behind the urgently needed renovation of the Chapel: his was the vision that removed the tiered box pews and created an attractive general-purpose space on the level, permitting the additional use of the Chapel for recitals, classes and many other purposes which,

together with the three flats he developed next door, have kept it solvent ever since. This was not achieved without considerable leadership from Malcolm who, though never the best at financial affairs himself, nevertheless persuaded the small congregation to hold a vast array of money-raising events from weekly raffles to major activities so that the Chapel could be saved. That it is still a lovely Chapel and a popular venue with superb and much appreciated acoustics and facilities is almost entirely due to Malcolm.



In 1994 he started to provide music for the Fellowship that Ruth Fowles was building in Banbury. For more than ten years he was Lay Leader there taking the morning services himself before heading off to Warwick to lead afternoon worship.

He was a founder member and Secretary of the Unitarian Association of Lay Leaders for many years and then President of the reconstituted Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry for several more. He was for a time Secretary and then Treasurer of the local Ministers' Meeting and from 1987-9 he was President of the Midland Unitarian Association. He founded the *MU Now* magazine and edited it for many years. Together with his life-long friend Peter Sampson he produced the slim pink volume of hymns called *Let us Sing*.

He was a gentle, loving man, who gave of himself unstintingly, but after the death of Nigel, with whom he had delighted in exploring the canals in their narrow boat, he lost some of his mojo and when ill health reduced his mobility he slipped into an amiable lethargy. He died on 17<sup>th</sup> October in Warwick Hospital, at the age of 83.

Malcolm was central to the survival of both Warwick and Banbury congregations. He will be greatly missed.

**Malcolm Burns, Warwick**

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**District Round-up**

**Outreach Service**

You could say that Stourbridge congregation have been in the wars recently. Organist and Secretary David Mearman was in a car crash in September 2018, while travelling to Dudley Unitarian chapel to play the organ. Luckily without any serious injuries.

Prior to this, Pulpit Secretary Audrey Green suffered a fall at home, resulting in several weeks in hospital and then respite care. As Audrey had been unable to attend services for several weeks, it was decided that if she couldn't come to the service, the service would go to her!

So, on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October, our small congregation held their afternoon service at the care home, ably led by Barbara Russell from the Oldbury@Dudley congregation. The service was very moving, highlighting the sense of community in our small congregation. The first few lines of our first hymn, No. 174 'A

Church is a Living Fellowship' from 'Hymns for Living' ably summed up the afternoon service:

A church is a living fellowship  
More than a holy shrine,  
Where people can share their hopes and fear,  
Less of yours and mine...



Audrey Green (centre, seated) with (from left to right) Carolyn Taylor, David Taylor, David Mearman, Barbara Russell and Pam Archer. Photo by one of the care home staff.

**David Taylor, Stourbridge**

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**Heritage Open Day at Stourbridge**

Over two weekends in September 2018, Stourbridge Unitarian Chapel, along with similar historic buildings around the country, opened its doors as part of the National Heritage Open Day. The

theme of this year's Open Day was 'Extraordinary Women'. We decided to focus on extraordinary Unitarian women.

With bunting strung up outside, and specially designed banners on display, the interior of the chapel was decorated with information panels celebrating the life and work of Unitarian women. On the Sunday afternoon we were very glad to welcome Rev Sue Woolley to lead our Sunday afternoon service.

On the second weekend the chapel hosted an audio soundscape installation artwork by local artist Paul Gittins ([www.modernshadows.com](http://www.modernshadows.com)). Over both weekends a total of 94 people stepped into the interior of the chapel. Everyone expressed their delight at being able to visit a building they had always been curious about.

A display of historical items associated with the chapel was on display in the vestry, along with refreshments. To celebrate the open day the chapel reprinted booklets about the history of the chapel and the history of Unitarianism in Stourbridge, both of which sold well.

This was our second year taking part in the Heritage Open weekend, and again this year was a huge success.

### **Toilet Twinning**

Stourbridge Unitarian chapel recently twinned its toilet with a toilet in Nepal as part of the toilet twinning scheme. By donating £60 to twin your toilet, you help those in desperate poverty to have access to a proper latrine, clean water and the information they need to be healthy - [www.toilettwinning.org](http://www.toilettwinning.org)

**David Taylor, Stourbridge**

### **Visiting Sundays**

I don't know if it was something particular to the Pendleton Unitarian Congregation in Salford, but in the middle part of the last century we had something called 'Visiting Sunday'. We would go to worship with various congregations in what was then Lancashire. I can remember visiting Rivington, where we met in the Great Barn for tea. And also Swinton church, prior to being demolished. I cannot remember if we had to go on a bus or a charabanc, but we probably did as most of the congregation didn't have cars when I was young.

Services at our own church were suspended for the day I think, and I have vague memories of lovely sandwiches and cakes! I cannot recall if we met up with other congregations in the Manchester District on the same day, but the words 'visiting Sunday' still evoke feelings of joy and excitement.

I wonder if any of our Midland congregations ever did, or indeed still do, the same thing?

During our hiatus for the installation of new heating at Kingswood Meeting House, a handful of intrepid (and curious!) travellers took it upon themselves to visit other congregations in the Midlands District. **Diane Rutter**

Here are some reflections from a couple of our intrepid travellers.

"In the interest of religion, what does one do when the church they regularly attend, is temporarily closed for new heating to be installed? GO AND VISIT OTHER UNITARIAN CHURCHES.



At the end of September, Diane (our Lay Assistant) and three other refugees went to Kidderminster. We were made most welcome and boosted the congregation to a massive 14!

Kath Forder took the service and talked about having a personal museum. I looked at my china cabinet with new eyes!

The following Sunday Diane and I went to New Meeting in Birmingham. What a beautiful room! The suspended windows by the ceiling - looking out at the trees was a joy. It was also a joy to see Winnie (Rev. Winnie Gordon) again, as she had trained at Kingswood. We all lit a candle for someone that we felt needed praying for.

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October saw Diane and three of us on our way to Evesham. Another lovely old church, hidden away with a lovely secluded garden. The Harvest service was again taken by Kath Forder, whom I had already begun to think of as an old friend. What a joy the old 19<sup>th</sup> century organ was. Such a delightful sound, like an old harpsichord.

We were again made most welcome, and I was surprised at the distance some of the congregation had travelled to the church. Again I think we boosted the congregation to a decent 15!

I for one would like to repeat this exercise. It is so very sad that people are not attending church. We are so lucky at Kingswood to have a good sized congregation.

Thank you to Diane for doing all the driving, and getting us safely there and back.” **Hazel Davies**

“I enjoyed all the chapels we visited whilst Kingswood was closed. All made us feel welcome and were very friendly, but for me Warwick was the most enjoyable. It was friendly and calm and I did like the way the chairs were placed in a horseshoe loop, with the celebrant at the open end.” **Janet Palk**

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**‘New Year, New Hope’**

Yesterday I took the cards down. I un-decorated the tree, and put all the decorations back in their boxes for another year. Then dismantled the tree, and put it back in its box. Then hoovered the floor and dusted and tidied the room.



Back to normal ...



On the one hand, this makes me sad. I love looking at our tree so much, with the decorations lovingly built up over the years, and the bright lights twinkling. And at our beautiful hand-carved nativity set, bought 28 years ago in Oberammergau, when we attended the 1990 Passion Play. It has been lovely to catch up with friends and family, either in person, or via the annual Christmas card. It always makes me feel bad, recycling all those loving wishes. But they were read, and appreciated, and brightened up our lives.

But on the other hand, part of me is relieved. Christmas is over, another New Year has been welcomed in, full of hints and promises. I have another chance to learn new things, to make new friends, to appreciate old friends, and to recognise God everywhere.

Spirit of Life and Love,  
Another Christmas is over.  
Another New Year marked.  
May 2019 be a good year  
For me, and for all those I love,  
And for the world.  
Amen

**Sue Woolley (from *Still I Am One* blog)**

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### **Copthorne Park**

Kingdom of squirrel and magpie.  
Theirs is the aerial realm;  
castles and highways of branch and sky,  
exposed but un-get-at-able  
by us, earthbound, shadowed by giants,

and crunching lightly underfoot  
the frosted trinkets of husks and  
leaves. Faintly from another world  
we hear the drone of cars and high  
excited playground cries. The light  
of early afternoon already  
holds the ending of the day.  
Within half-frozen mud and grass,  
we trust, lie the beginnings of the year.

**Alison Patrick, Shrewsbury**

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### **In the Garden At Midnight by Moonlight**

How strange it looks, by the light of the moon,  
Like familiar words to a different tune;  
The lawn, an emerald by day  
Is now a field of pearly grey.  
And not the most audacious breeze  
Will dare molest those sombre trees.  
For, oh my trees, your green has fled,  
And black the rose –this morning red.  
But look at the white ones –how they gleam  
Strutting their stuff in moon's silvery beam.  
Filling the garden with delight  
Reflecting once-reflected light.  
The moon's a globe of sand and stone  
And has no lustre of its own.  
But, generously, our great day-star  
Flings its radiance wide and far;  
This gives the moon its magic glow  
Loved by lunarphiles here below!  
Poor moon, it never gets a rest

But we'll not know if it's depressed.  
By Nature's laws it must abide  
And always show its SUNNY SIDE

**Barbara Russell, Oldbury@Dudley**

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### SEEKER SEEKING SEEKERS

You may have read that I am a qualified Spiritual Director. Unlike therapy, spiritual direction is not necessarily centred around a problem, although it could be. Often it begins with a desire to grow - to move beyond the place where one is to a deeper, richer place.

Spirituality is not a distinct area of life, but a dimension of all life. God is not present to us only when we pray; nor is spiritual growth confined to such times. Therefore, spiritual direction is not just focused on the obvious aspects of a spiritual life: prayer, religious vocation, temptations, delusions, and other such things.

Since there is no area of human life where God is uninterested...no corner of it in which the Holy Mystery is not present...no aspect of life is inappropriate to bring to spiritual direction. **God is the deepest dimension in all areas of human life:** thus, all areas are open to spiritual direction.

So if you are interested in going deeper on your spiritual journey, please get in touch. (details on page 3).

**Sue Woolley, District Minister**

## District Events

### MUA Annual General Meeting

**Guest Speaker:** Mrs. Karen Hanley, Parliamentary liaison person for the Unitarians

**When:** Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Where:** Shrewsbury Unitarian Church, High St, Shrewsbury

**Time:** 11.00 for 11.30 am – 3.00 pm (approx.)

Letters and booking forms have been circulated to secretaries.

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### MUA of Lay Preachers & Service Leaders Spring Training Day

#### Music in Worship

**Course Leaders:** Rev. Ant Howe and Rev. Danny Crosby

**When:** Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019

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

**Time:** 9.30 for 10.00 am – 4.15 pm

Flyers for this event have been circulated.

*Please send your booking forms for both events to Rev. Sue Woolley,  
District Minister, 5, Martins Road, Piddington,  
Northampton NN7 2DN*

## 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 |
| Shrewsbury              | Unitarian Church             | 10.30 am |
| Warwick                 | High Street Chapel           | 4.30 pm  |

### First Sunday of the Month:

|             |                         |          |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Dudley      | Old Meeting House       | 3.00 pm  |
| Northampton | Unitarian Meeting House | 10.30 am |
| Oldbury     | 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 |
| Stourbridge | Presbyterian (Unitarian) Chapel   | 3.00 pm |

### Third Sunday of the Month:

|             |                         |          |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Dudley      | Old Meeting House       | 3.00 pm  |
| Northampton | Unitarian Meeting House | 10.30 am |
| Oldbury     | at Dudley               | 3.00 pm  |

### Fourth Sunday of the Month:

|             |                                   |          |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Coventry    | Gt Meeting House Unitarian Church | 11 am    |
| Stourbridge | Presbyterian (Unitarian) Chapel   | 11.00 am |

## MUA Congregations: Contact Details

| Name                    | Contact           | Details                                          |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Birmingham              |                   | unitariannewmeetingbirmingham@yahoo.co.uk        |
| Cheltenham & Gloucester | Alison Thursfield | 01242 254825<br>ajthursfield@tiscali.co.uk       |
| Coventry                | Francesca Rogers  | 02476 605055                                     |
| Cradley                 | Sheila Powell     | 01384 838729                                     |
| Dudley                  | Barbara Russell   | 01902 650168<br>barbara-russell@blueyonder.co.uk |
| Evesham                 | Lesley Harris     | 01242 573927<br>agonoid@gmail.com                |
| Kidderminster           | Elaine James      | 01384 374007<br>elainejamesjames@gmail.com       |
| Kingswood               | Mick Bridgman     | 0121 628 1458<br>michael.bridgman@cantab.net     |
| Northampton             | Sue Woolley       | 01604 870746<br>revsuewoolley@gmail.com          |
| Oldbury                 | Pamela Rose       | 0121 422 0311                                    |
| Shrewsbury              | Fiona Checkley    | 07487 531 913<br>shrewsburyunitarians@gmail.com  |
| Stourbridge             | David Mearman     | 01384 376478<br>davidmearman@hotmail.com         |
| Warwick                 | Elaine Nomura     | 01926 611964<br>emtnomura@aol.com                |



**The Spring 2019 issue will be published in May**

**Please may we have your contributions on local matters,  
& on the theme of "Awakening"**

**by Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019**

*Thank you!*