

## Job, Calendar

### FEBRUARY

Wednesday 25th 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Discussion Group

### MARCH

SUNDAY 1st 11.00 am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay  
*Stewards: Alan Barker and Josie Whitely*

Wednesday 4th 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Discussion Group

SUNDAY 8th 11.00 am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay  
*Stewards: Hazel Reynolds and Jean Glaser*

Wednesday 11th 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Discussion Group

SUNDAY 15th 11.00 am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay  
*Stewards: Graham White and Jill Hudson*

Wednesday 18th 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Spiritual Move Club

SUNDAY 22nd 11.00 am Mothering Sunday Service.  
*Stewards: Winnie Gordon and Monica Gordon*

Wednesday 25th 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Discussion Group

SUNDAY 29th 11.00 am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay  
*Stewards: Bryan Wood and Angela Maher*

### APRIL

Wednesday 1st 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Discussion Group

SUNDAY 5th 11.00 am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay  
*Stewards: Owen Beale and Cheryl Ford*

Wednesday 8th 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Discussion Group

SUNDAY 12th 11.00 am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay  
*Stewards: Alan Barker and Josie Whitely*

Wednesday 15th 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Spiritual Movie Club

SUNDAY 19th 11.00 am Morning Service with Agape Meal following the service.

*Stewards: Philip Crosskey and David Jones*

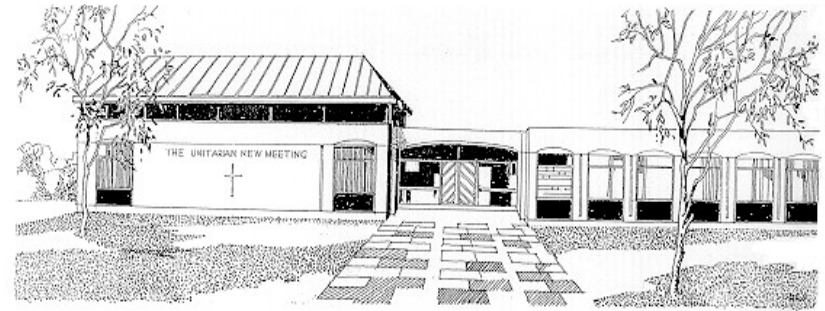
Wednesday 22nd 6.30 pm Meditation Service and Discussion Group

SUNDAY 26th 11.00 am Morning Service with Rev Simon Ramsay.  
*Stewards: Hazel Reynolds and Jill Hudson*



## Unitarian New Meeting Church

### Birmingham



### March 2009

*It has taken long months beneath cold ground for these flowers to prepare their blooming.*

*Elizabeth M. Strong (adapted)*

Isn't it marvellous to see the sun putting in an appearance, the days lengthening and the flowers showing themselves once again? I think that I might be someone that suffers from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) as the poor weather of 2008 had left me feeling more than a little despondent. As soon as the sun made its welcome return my spirits lifted, I felt much more active and alive. Now I feel much more inclined to engage with life.

*It has taken long times of growth and sorrow to prepare for our living now.*

As the seed needs time in the darkness to gestate before being summoned to growth by the warmth of the sun upon the soil, we too need times in darkness and confusion before we begin to understand the meaning of our life. Then it dawns upon us, like the spring sunshine, where we can see the colours more vividly and the abundance of life in sharper focus.

*The blooming season is short and the flowers only stay for a brief time. We are travellers through all the brief moments of our life.*

As with the rest of the natural world spring ushers in a greater tendency to be more active ourselves. If we are wise we will come to know that life needs both active time of creativity and quieter times of gestation where we can reflect and gather ourselves once more.

*Therefore let our moments be bountiful. Let us rejoice in the unique colours, aromas and sounds. Let us celebrate together in love; that as we travel we take with us the memory of the golden hours together.*

**So let us make use of this active time together by working to achieve what needs to be done in our church life**, so we may create golden memories that will nourish us through difficult times to come. As the sun presents itself more and more I wish that our moments together will be bountiful and filled with the light of love.

**Simon Ramsay**

### **Church Spring Cleaning**

Spring has sprung and the time of year for cleaning out the church has come again.

Please sign up to help on either Saturday 14th or 28th March (or both). Many hands make light work, and it will be plenty of work for everyone to get involved in.

### **Forthcoming Events**

**Sunday 1st March** Vestry committee meeting following the service.

**Saturday 21st March** Midland Union AGM at The Great Meeting House, Coventry, 10.30 am to 4.00 pm The guest speaker will be Rev. John Harley. Further details from Sue Woolley tel: (01604) 870746

**Wednesday 15th to Saturday 18th April** Meetings of the General Assembly, at University College Chester. For more information contact Rev. Simon Ramsay.

**Saturday 2nd May** Workshop on Small Group Worship and Covenant Groups at Kingswood 10.00 am to 4.15 pm. Course leader Rev. Jim Robinson Further details from Sue Woolley tel: (01604) 870746

**Saturday 25th July to Saturday 1st August.** Unitarian Experience Week at Great Hucklow, the theme is *Searching for Gold and Golden Moments*. For more information contact Kathy Beckett, 13 Neilson Close, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants SO53 1GR.

**Saturday 15th to Saturday 22nd August.** Hucklow Summer School, the theme is *The Journey*. For more information, contact Mel Prideaux on (01924) 781020 or email [info@hucklowsummerschool.org.uk](mailto:info@hucklowsummerschool.org.uk).

### **Wayside Pulpit**

Give to every human being every right that you claim for yourself.

**Robert G. Ingersoll**

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In accordance with convention, all unsigned articles are written by the Editor. Any views expressed by the Editor make no claim to represent the views of the Congregation, or any person other than herself.

## Unitarians Across the World

I think it's fairly well known that the largest grouping of Unitarians is the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in the United States. There are lots and lots of them, and they are generally characterised being more humanist and less Christian on average than the Unitarians in the UK. **But, have you ever looked to see where there are other Unitarians in the world?**

The International Committee of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) has twenty full members. In many cases these groups will be well known to Unitarians in the UK such as those in Romania (the Hungarian speaking Unitarians of Transylvania) and India (Khasis of north India). But I didn't know that there were Unitarians in Indonesia (Jemet Allah Global Indonesia, meeting for worship on a Saturday) or Denmark (Unitarisk Kirkesamfund, founded in 1900).

Even more interestingly there are emerging groups of Unitarians and Universalists in the Congo, Cuba, Burundi and Bolivia worshipping in Spanish in Latin America, and in French in West Africa. These are all small congregations, but they are important ones - **traditions of liberal religious thought and freedom of belief are valuable wherever they occur.**

Lad denne lille flamme symbolisere den guddommelige livsgnist, som findes i alle levende væsener. Må dets flamme lede os til større viden og tolerance. Må dets varme lede os til dybere kærlighed og omsorg. Og må dets lys lede os mod større visdom og forståelse. Ja, hver for sig er vi kun en lillebitte flamme. Men tilsammen kan vi oplyse verden!

Let this flame symbolize the divine spark of light, embedded in all living beings. May its flame lead us to greater knowledge and tolerance. May its warmth lead us to deeper love and compassion. And may its light lead us toward greater wisdom and understanding. Yes, each of us is but a tiny flame. But together we can enlighten the world!

Lene Lund Shoemaker  
Danish Unitarian Church.

Angela Maher

## Message from the Chairman

**Well what sprang to mind, almost literally when I sat down to write this was a picture of a hare.** We probably all know the saying "Mad as a March hare" and my little sister Charlotte gave me a picture of a hare running for my birthday. That picture came into my mind because March means that Spring is almost in sight. As I write the snowdrops are out (and that makes me think of Keith Hill's sermon at Kingswood) and the crocuses are just beginning to appear. After all the snow and ice we have had the thought of warmer weather is intoxicating isn't it?

The cold winter is something that we've nearly forgotten with the mild times we have had in recent years but let's hope that we don't have too much more cold weather before the spring comes. However, at least it lets us be truly grateful for the better weather and to remember that we live in a world of contrasts and that without these differences we would not really appreciate the good things in life. **We need the dark as much as the light, cold as much as heat and loss as much as love.**

And at this very point baby Charles woke up. Tracy assures me that the sound of the computer wakes him up so I am going to have to sign off for this month!

Owen Beale

## The Unitarian and UNM

There have been a number of mentions of UNM in previous issues of The Unitarian, but not full articles. **Now, in February, there is an article by Bini about the Christmas Fayre, with a photo of her and Winnie,** and there will in the March issue be a general article about the church written by Simon, also with photos.

Copies of the February issue are available on the bookstall, and the March issue will shortly appear. **Do please take copies** - there is no charge. The Unitarian comes out monthly, about the end of the month and contains many items of interest about Unitarian people, churches, and the movement as a whole (as well as a few jokes).

Frank Hytch

## *In God We Doubt*

Rediscovering once more the joys of the library, I picked up a copy of *In God We Doubt* by John Humphrys, based largely on the research he undertook for a Radio 4 series, *Humphrys Searches for God*. The story begins with Humphreys' own loss of faith, from his childhood upbringing in the Anglican Church of Wales, through atheism into deep agnosticism. Humphreys would like to believe, and yet finds himself unable to do so, and as the book explores, he is far from alone.

**The main focus is monotheism** - specifically the Abrahamic faiths and the belief in a personal interceding God. It covers discussions with Archbishop Rowan Williams, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, and Islamic theologian Tariq Muhammed, research into the religiosity of the general public, the rise of militant atheism, and religious fundamentalism. The chapters of most interest are those where Humphrys writes about the correspondance that he received as part of making the radio series. A few of the writers were comfortable in their atheism, but most were devout believers who attempted to capture the value that they found in personal divine presence.

It's not really a book to challenge your own notions on the nature of God, but more an interesting exploration of what it means to doubt and to be part of the great majority of Britons - believing in something, sort of, but not exactly sure what or that the 'what' can even be defined. An illuminating read.

Angela Maher

## *Poetry Corner*

### **The Divine Image**

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
All pray in their distress;  
And to these virtues of delight  
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is God, our father dear,  
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,  
Pity a human face,  
And Love, the human form divine,  
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,  
That prays in his distress,  
Prays to the human form divine,  
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,  
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;  
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell  
There God is dwelling too.

William Blake

## *from Musings on Faith and Finances*

Saw this, and thought of us:

**What is faith?** Faith is a belief not based on logic, reason, or empirical data, but based fundamentally on one's own ideas and values. Most people immediately associate faith with religion, but faith is in fact a much broader term. Any time you believe something that you have no evidence for, it is faith.

I'll offer up an example of my own. I believe without question that every major problem facing humankind will be solved in the next two hundred years. Wars, famine, longevity: we'll figure out solutions to all of them by the year 2200, and every baby born then will have an equal chance of success - it will be up to them and them alone to "make" it. Why do I believe this? I have no empirical data for it, just faith...

...The truth of the matter is that **faith of any kind is a false hope if it is not accompanied by a journey**. If you are willing to follow the faith, grow in the faith, and build towards a greater understanding of yourself and the world around you, your faith will grow. If you sit idly by without really following your beliefs, the things that you have faith in will never be realized.

from Trent Hamm at [www.thesimpledollar.com](http://www.thesimpledollar.com)