

Calendar

October

Wednesday 28th 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

November

Sunday 1st 11am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay

Wednesday 4th 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

Sunday 8th 11am Service of Remembrance with Rev. Simon Ramsay

Wednesday 11th 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

Sunday 15th 11am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay

Children's activities during the service

Agape Meal following the service

3pm Alternative Afternoon Service

Wednesday 18th 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

Sunday 22nd 11am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay

Wednesday 25th 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

Sunday 29th 11am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay

December

Wednesday 2nd 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

Sunday 6th 11am Toy Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay

Wednesday 9th 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

Sunday 13th 11am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay

Children's activities during the service

Catered Christmas Lunch following the service, tickets required.

Wednesday 16th 6.30pm Meditation and Discussion Group

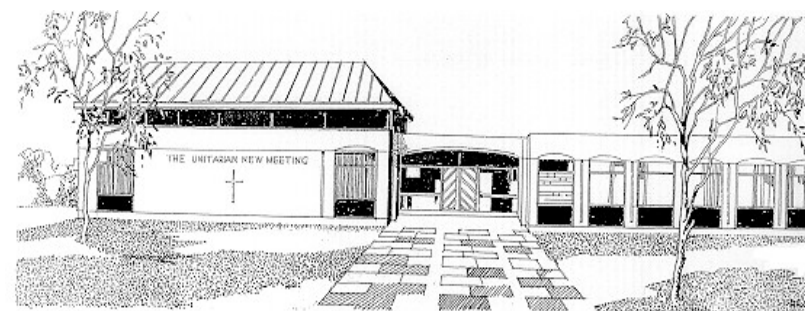
Sunday 20th 3pm Carols by Candlelight with Rev. Simon Ramsay

Friday 25th 11am Morning Service with Rev. Simon Ramsay

January

Sunday 3rd 11am Morning Service

Unitarian New Meeting Birmingham



November 2009

Last month, on the 11th of October we held an interfaith event at UNM that was entitled 'People of Faith in Civic Life'. This event was an extraordinary success as we had seventy six people (that were not Unitarian) attending.

There were a number of speakers that were experts in their own particular fields that explored the role that individuals from the liberal Jewish, non-conformist Christian, Quaker and Unitarian communities have played in the history of Birmingham. The programme was introduced by Dr Malcolm Dick, of the Centre for Birmingham and Midlands History at the University of Birmingham,

and the other speakers were Sian Roberts from the Archives and Heritage Department, Birmingham Central Library, Andy Vail who is researching Victorian non-conformists, Unitarian minister and Rabbi Dr Michael Shire, Principal of Leo Baeck College in London. The participants enjoyed a short walk as part of the programme, to look more closely at the statue of Joseph Sturge at Five Ways, a great campaigner against slavery and for civil and religious liberty. Some fascinating archives were also on display.

This history has been a great asset to the city, giving it a reputation for open mindedness and hospitality, in recent years offered to many thousands of asylum seekers. The event was organised by the Faith Encounter Programme, an innovative project that offers training to people of all faiths as 'Faith Guides', able to give a warm and professional welcome to many places of worship in the city. Winnie Gordon, our own 'Faith Guide' spoke eloquently upon the history of UNM and I gave a short talk on what Unitarianism is.

I would like to thank all those members of the congregation that gave up their time on the afternoon of the 11th as with their help we showed very good hospitality to our brothers and sisters from other faiths and of no faith.

Since the time of the meeting I have received a hearty thanks from those who helped to organise the day and also those people that attended. I have been also been asked whether we would be prepared to do hold another meeting and judging by the success of this one I have replied with a resounding yes!

Simon Ramsay

Please note that some of this article has been taken from the formal report of the day written by Ruth Tetlow.

Christmas at Unitarian New Meeting

If we are to have a church post this Christmas, volunteer "Postmen/ladies" are urgently required to sort and deliver christmas cards on December 6th, 13th and 20th. Please let Catherine White know (0121 454 3992) and she will bring the post box.

Saturday 5th December – Decorating the church

Come and help decorate the church for Christmas between 10am and 12am.

Please would someone take the responsibility for putting up the Christmas tree for the Toy Service (see below) on the 6th December, and let Catherine White know.

Sunday 6th December – Toy Service

Please bring one (or more) toys to be donated to needy children.

Sunday 13th December – Christmas Lunch

A traditional turkey lunch or vegetarian option will be served in the Priestley room after morning service on December 13th.

Adults £6 - Children £3 This year admittance by ticket only

Tickets will be sold on 2 Sundays :- November 29th and December 6th. Please see Catherine White to buy your tickets or contact her on 0121 454 3992.

Sunday 20th December – Carols by Candlelight

Join us for carols by candlelight at 3pm.

Wayside Pulpit

Religious tolerance is not religious indifference. Tolerance means to value the right of another person to hold beliefs that you know are absolutely wrong.

Anon.

About the congregation

Unitarian New Meeting Church is a loving and caring community that values freedom of belief and religion, worshipping in the heart of Birmingham. You are warmly welcomed to any of our services or events.

We are affiliated to the General Assembly of Unitarians and Free Christians, and the Midland Unitarian Association.

You can find us in Ryland Street, Birmingham B16 8BL

Tel: 0121 455 8818 Website : www.birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk

e-mail: info@birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk

Minister: Rev. Simon Ramsay

230 The Avenue, Birmingham B27 6NU

Tel: 0121 243 1560 Mobile: 07915 618549

e-mail: ramsaysimon@btinternet.com

Secretary: Ms Jill Hudson

100 Elizabeth Road, New Oscott, Sutton Coldfield, B73 5AS

Tel: 0121 605 0389

About the calendar

Editor: Angela Maher amaher@theiet.org

c/o Unitarian New Meeting Church, 31 Ryland St, Birmingham B16 8BL

Contributions are most welcome. The next deadline is 15th November.

All views expressed in this calendar represent those of their author(s) and not necessarily the congregation. By convention, any unsigned articles are written by the editor.

Message from the Chair

I want to talk this month about acceptance. By this I mean our willingness to embrace people who want to join our congregation. We have always prided ourselves on our professed willingness to open our doors to those who want to join us. In this we differ from the British National Party, but it was the fact that they were ordered by the courts to change their constitution to allow people of non-white ethnic backgrounds to join that made me think about the topic. I think that people who belong to such divisive parties are working on the basis that they can only really find a sense of identity by defining themselves by what they are not, i.e. not so much by saying they are Caucasian as by saying well we are not black or brown or any such colour. This is a sad way of looking at the world and not one that I would ever want to agree with. Our little community is so much the greater because we have people from all walks of life sharing a part of their sense of community with each other and our refusal to define by way of creed let alone race adds to that rather than lessening it.

Of course every so often we find ourselves surprised by something that one of us says or does. After all if there is no set creed then we won't always agree and we tend to discuss our tolerance rather than our individual views or values. When we do discuss them we find sometimes that we don't agree and that is exactly as it should be. When I was at school and I tried to explain to someone of my own age about our religion they tended to say something like "But what if someone comes along who wants to make human sacrifices?" I didn't have a very good answer then except to say they were being silly. But the question remains - what do we do when we disagree with someone who is a fellow member of the congregation?

This is when our ethos of openness becomes harder to follow than

simply to say. We have sometimes to think about Voltaire's statement that he disagreed with what someone had to say but would defend to the death their right to say it. Freedom of speech and of religion are of equal value and in our church are really one and the same, but every right has its counterpart. We have no more right to say something that will greatly upset our fellow members than they have to order us to be silent. We all of us have an obligation to say to ourselves what will be the effect if I say this thing? How will people feel about it? Will they be hurt or will they be gladdened?

The more important an issue, the higher people's feelings will run and in religion, feelings often do run high. In Swift's classic book, Gulliver's Travels, the little people of Lilliput have been engaged in war with their neighbours and it turns out all to be over which end of a boiled egg you should open - big end or little end? One of the things I think Swift was trying to say was 'look at your disagreements, are they really more important than the things you agree about?'. Normally you will find they are not and so can agree to disagree.

Equally we do have the right to say to other people that we disagree with them and there may be times when we must say so. However, I doubt if we can insist that we are right and they are wrong – in the really big issues, personal faith plays such an important part and actual proof remains elusive. But perhaps what we can say that we each have the right to state our views, but not the right to do so in a way that upsets others, if you do I shall reserve the right to say that you have done so. But before taking such a step I intend to ask myself - are we not just arguing over which end of the egg we open? More often than not we are doing just that and so do not need to say anything at all!

Owen Beale

Activities for children attending church

On Sundays when we have our Agape meal, there will now be children's activities – we look forward to seeing you there.

Unitarian Experience Week

It's 50 years since the first family conference, so a golden theme flavoured the whole week.

It started with the chapel service on Sunday when David Shaw spoke of things more valuable than gold using the King Midas story to illustrate this.

The three theme talks during the week further illustrated this. We heard about the golden age of medicine – the last 50 years showing great advances. Also we heard of golden moments in Unitarianism by Alan Ruston and Vernon Marshall spoke about the golden essence in world religions.

There is never a dull moment at Unitarian Experience Week. There are a huge variety of workshops organised by willing participants. These ranged from colour in arts to golden gardening and a film showing golden moments of Unitarian Experience Week and its predecessor, the family conference. I really recommend Unitarian Experience Week to anyone. The wet weather did not prevent it being a golden holiday.

Hazel Reynolds

Change of Address

Mrs Betty Ellis has moved to Rosemary Lodge, 154 Alcester Road South, Birmingham B14 6AA, tel: (0121) 444 5525.