

Message from the chair

Hello everyone.

I wrote this on Valentine's Day when Winnie Gordon had taken the service in Simon's absence (get well soon Simon!). She gave an inspired sermon that started where the Rev Bob Wightman's (current President of the GA) had left off the week before. He had asked us to look at where the Unitarian Movement would go in the future and Winnie asked us to write down what we thought the church could have done by our centenary year (2073) and then asked us to think about where we thought we would be in 2 years time and whose help we would need to achieve our goals. Winnie made the point that we needed the help of others to get where we wanted to be and that even

the biggest changes started with just one or two people.

As well as inspiring us to think about the future she made the point that a congregation is only as forward looking as its members and that's us! I would like each of you to look at the next twelve months and to think what you can do for New Meeting in that period of time. Now for those of you reading this at a distance, clearly you will be limited in what you can do. But if you plan to visit Birmingham in the next 12 months make sure to pay us a call in that time and if you can spare a little money in the meanwhile, that will be appreciated given our budget problems!

For those closer to home, if you don't often manage to get to church can you squeeze in an extra Sunday? We are the

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

congregation and whilst we all look around the church and think it would look better with more people, the only way we are going to do that is by getting up and going to church on a Sunday!

We have a limited amount of time before our income runs out. We keep the church going on the income that accumulated in years. gone by, it doesn't pay its way at the moment and we need to look at that problem. We took the decision to fund a Minister (and you're worth every penny Simon!) in the expectation that numbers would increase and we could increase the church funds. Numbers are increasing and all credit to Simon and all our new members for that, but we are still running at a deficit. I don't mean to scare you off from coming to church I'm just asking you to consider what you give to the church, and whether you can increase it.

Money though, is not everything and we need people to help us keep the place running from week to week. Our newer members may not know (and some of our older members may have forgotten) but the coffee after church depends on someone setting the crockery out and making the drinks and washing up afterwards. There is a rota for those who make the coffee and if you'd like to give something back then this is a good way! The same goes for the flower arrangements that decorate the church and we even need volunteers for our pastoral care looking after those members who need a little time and contact. If you feel the call then we need you!

And what if we know we can't add in money or time to what we already do? Well let's remember to come to church with a smile on our face and

enjoy our time with each other.

Now comes confession time. One task I haven't kept on top of, is writing to welcome our new members. I haven't said hello properly or explained how the church keeps itself running. Although our Minister will feel otherwise, we don't expect him to do it all by himself! The church is actually run by the Vestry who meet 5 or 6 times in a year to make decisions about church matters. There are sub-committees of the Vestry:

- House (to look after the premises)
- Ministry (to look after the Minister!)
- Finance (to worry)

Membership of the Vestry is open to all members of the church and nominations are now open. These are elected posts but our problem is

finding enough volunteers to fill the posts. So sign up!

The only post that is not open for election yet is that of Chair as they are elected at the first Vestry after the AGM. I've been Chair for two years now but we expect our little family to expand in the summer if all goes well and I just won't have the time to carry on as Chair. No one needs to tell me how uneasily this sits with everything I've said here, but I did say that we all had other commitments. I'm sure that someone will come forward to take my place as I'm now needed elsewhere! And before Tracy gets cross let me add that I told her this before I told you. I will still try to find ways I can help I promise.

Owen Beale

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

About the Minister's Article

You may have noticed that there is no article from Simon Ramsay, our minister, in this month's calendar.

Unfortunately, Simon has been ill during February and we felt that we would prefer it if he focused his energies on getting better, rather than writing for the calendar.

Hopefully, he will be back to full fighting fitness in March.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is on Sunday 16th May. We will be finishing the service about 15 minutes early, to allow us to have our Agape meal, and then aim to start the meeting at 1pm.

If you have anything that you would like to see discussed at the AGM, it would help if you could speak to either Owen Beale (Chair), or Jill Hudson (Secretary) in advance.

As Owen mentioned, at the AGM we will be electing members to the Vestry, sign

up sheets are in the Priestley room, so put your names down if you would like to help run the church, you will also need to find two people to propose and second you. If you think someone else would make a good addition to the Vestry, please ask them first, before you write their names down.

March

Wednesday 3	
Sunday 7	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Stewards:
Wednesday 10	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 14	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Stewards:
Wednesday 17	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 21	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Children's activities during the service Agape Meal following the service Stewards:
Wednesday 24	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 28	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Stewards:
Wednesday 31	6.30pm Midweek Meditation

Be Content with what you have; rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you.

Lao Tzu

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

April

Sunday 4	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Stewards:
Wednesday 7	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 11	11am Worship with Stewards:
Wednesday 14	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 18	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Children's activities during the service Agape Meal following the service Stewards:
Wednesday 21	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 25	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Stewards:
Wednesday 28	6.30pm Midweek Meditation

Smile, breathe and go slowly.

Ticht Nhat Hanh

Poetry corner

A Light exists in Spring
Not present on the Year
At any other period —
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad
On Solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,
It shows the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to you.

Emily Dickinson

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

The church film is nearly finished

It's not quite as exciting as it sounds. I attended the Unitarian Communication Coordinators Network in February, where John Wilkinson and James Barry helped everyone to make short films about their congregations. Each film has a selection of still photographs with a voiceover. Ours isn't complete, because I think that we can get some better photographs in a handful of places, but I'm planning on showing the film after the one of the upcoming services and get your ideas on how to improve it.

As well as the new acting role, I also picked up a few tips and ideas for improving our communications and met a lot of other lovely people who are also trying to grow their Unitarian congregations. I'll be going back again next year, as I managed to accidentally volunteer to lead a workshop. If anyone is interested in working on any publicity or communications ideas with me, please let me know – either by email (amaher@theiet.org) or by chatting after one of the services.

Angela Maher

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 03

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 March.**

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.

31 Ryland Street, Birmingham B16 8BL
www.birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk

Forthcoming events

Unitarian Christian Association Synod and Annual General Meeting
When: Saturday 6th March 12.30 to 4.30 Where: Kingswood Meeting House, Packhorse Lane, Hollywood
Further details from Ken Howard on 0161 330 1295

American Patchwork Quilting Retreat
When: Friday 19th to Sunday 21st March
Where: Nightingale Centre, Hucklow, Derbyshire
Further details from Stella (Nightingale Manager) on 01298 871218

Midland Unitarian Association Annual General Meeting
When: Saturday 27th March 10.30 to 4.00
Where: Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham
Further details from Sue Woolley on 01604 870746 or sue.woolley@virgin.net

Annual Meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarians
When: Thursday 8th to Sunday 11th April
Where: University of Nottingham
Further details from Andrew Mason on 0207 240 2384

FOY Society Conference: Exploring Humour
When: Friday 30th April to Monday 3rd May
Where: Nightingale Centre, Hucklow, Derbyshire
Further details from Joan Partington 01228 670 565 or partingtons@gmail.com