



## **Unitarian New Meeting Church Birmingham**

### **June 2010 Calendar**

A church of open hearts and open minds

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## **Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham**

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### **Rest and recuperation**

For three weeks of this month I am holiday. Although I feel a little anxious that I will not be at the church to keep up the momentum of the good progress we have recently been making. I know that we, as a congregation, are moving from strength to strength. We are in a very fortunate position to have competent and willing people in the congregation to take the services whilst I am away and I am sure that you will all do what is needed to support them.

That aside, I am also looking forward to taking some time out. Not because I want to get away from the church as I am passionate about our future together, but because sometimes in taking a break we can glean a clearer perspective and fresh insights. When I come back from my time away I hope that I will be energised to work with those fresh insights and build upon the good work already done.

Owen said in our AGM that a church is not the building but the people. I whole heartedly agree. To become a stronger and more vibrant church is a collaborative effort. Each of us has something that we can bring to the common table and when do this it lightens the load for others; when we do so we are rewarded in often surprising ways. One thing is certain that when invest ourselves and our energy in something positive we come to know ourselves a little more and feel better for the experience.

So while I am away try to see those things that you might be able to do to make our community better for each other and for those people who have not yet found a home with us. Although I am the Minister of UNM each of us has a ministry to conduct. So whatever

you do, no matter how small and insignificant, it is your ministry and an expression of your own spirituality. Whilst I am away I will miss, but I know I can relax because UNM is in safe and loving hands.

Simon Ramsay

## Message from the Chair

I'm not really sure what to write about this time. As I sit at my keyboard we have just had all the excitement of the election but that is hardly going to still be news by the time you read this and besides which it seems rather inapt to discuss matters political in a church newsletter. But I couldn't help noticing that whilst the politicians from all sides were speaking to the media about the advantages of coalition government very few of them spoke from anything other than the narrow viewpoint of their own political party. They weren't telling anyone why it would be good for the other person, just why it would be good for their party. This started me thinking about religions

because of course we do exactly the same thing when we talk about religion. It is very hard not to simply find that you are telling people that your way is best, simply because it is the way you think it should be.

Unfortunately this is a circular argument that gets nobody anywhere at all.

Even Unitarians, whose very ethos is centred on the idea that everyone needs to find their spiritual truth themselves tend if not careful to find that they are just braying at the world, be one of us we're best! Really what we ought to do is to say "Think for yourself and then when you've done that see if we aren't the

## Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

religion for you." After all there is some truth in all religions if you look for it but how can anyone actually be sure that what they have to say is what someone else needs to hear? I wonder if we should not do a little more listening to others to see what they have to say that we need to hear. If you sit back and think about some of the arguments you have had in your life wouldn't it be true to say that some of them started from not actually listening to what someone had to say but hearing what you thought they said? The trouble is that by the time you are able to work that conundrum out the argument is long over and there's no one left to explain that to!

A politician once said 'Society needs to condemn a little more and understand a little less,' but I think he was entirely wrong. Until you have an understanding of why someone has acted the way they have you are hardly entitled

to condemn them. This does not mean that we have to approve of someone's actions if they seem wrong to us but that we need to consider what their motives might have been. This lack of insight of course is at the centre of most thrillers in which the lone hero finds themselves fighting against a world that fails to understand why they are acting as they do. Film makers make it easy for us by letting us see what the world cannot and putting us in the position of the central character. I wish life was that easy.

So the next time you get cross with someone just stop and ask yourself "Do I know why they did that? Do they know why I did this?" Take a little time and explain yourself! Take a little time and understand what they have to say to you. You can still disagree with them because

it's a free world after all. But at least you will do so from an informed position. I always feel silly when I find myself saying "I'm sorry, I didn't understand

that..." and that's because I'm normally the one to have missed the point.

Owen Beale

## 2010-2011 Vestry committee

As a Unitarian congregation we are independent and autonomous. At our annual general meeting (AGM) we elect a committee called the Vestry committee to run the church on our behalf. The recent AGM brought the following changes.

Jill Hudson, who has been serving as our church secretary, will be moving away from Birmingham in the summer. Kristian Wilkes was elected to replace her. Roland Kay was re-elected as Treasurer, Angela Maher was re-elected as Calendar Editor, Hazel Reynolds was re-elected as Warden. Catherine White was re-elected to serve on the Vestry committee.

All other Vestry members are in the middle of their terms of service so did not need to be nominated for this year. Simon Ramsay, has a non-voting membership of Vestry as our minister.

Owen Beale has previously announced that he will be standing down as Chair of Vestry. The committee will elect a new chair at their next meeting.

Angela Maher

## Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

### Asparagus lunch at Evesham

There were 40 participants at this excellent event this year. If people can travel from Shrewsbury, Oxford and Northampton why is it that I am the sole participant from Birmingham? Yes, I know some of our members work, but.....

Anyway, our National President Neville Kenyon led the Oat Street Chapel Service. It featured the delightful theme of pathways, both mountain and spiritual. Neville chose hymns for their words so two of them were less well known but the congregation sang them well.

After the service we go to the Chapel Gatehouse for a splendid lunch. This year asparagus featured in two of the courses. We have short after dinner speeches and votes of thanks. The toast to civil and religious liberty is always included as the event has a long history, dating from the time when Unitarians were really persecuted for their beliefs. We leave just after 3pm.

Once more, a really enjoyable event. Will we get more Birmingham members going next year if I am able to offer a lift?

Hazel Reynolds

### Changes afoot after the AGM

After a long but amiable and well-mannered discussion, valiantly facilitated by Owen Beale as outgoing chair of the Vestry, the congregation voted as follows.

- To add the word 'Church' after 'The Unitarian New Meeting' on the side of the building.
- To remove the biblical verse from the window above the doors
- To remove the cross, and have no symbol on the building's side

Angela Maher

## Makin' a noise for Noah

Noah is a 2 year-old Birmingham boy who has been diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia – you may remember me cycling from Rugby to Birmingham in March to raise money for him.

Noah has battled through four brain operations, aggressive chemotherapy, 11 lots of radiotherapy and a bone marrow transplant. Unfortunately the Leukaemia is back in his central nervous system.

On Friday 28th May 2010 at 8pm there'll be a concert at

the Margaret Rose Abri Café, 58 Cheapside, Digbeth to raise money for Noah. The night will feature live music (including yours truly on bass), comedy and a raffle.

Please let me know if you'd like to come along. Tickets are £5. We're also looking for raffle prizes (tickets for the raffle are £1 each or 5 for £4). You can also donate directly by going to [www.justgiving.co.uk/denis-jacobs](http://www.justgiving.co.uk/denis-jacobs)

Allan Warhurst

## Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

### Forthcoming events

**Unitarian Youth Bridging Weekend** for ages 16 to 21 (ish)

When: Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th July

Where: Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Cost: £45

Further details from Sarah Warhurst on 0796 815 8939

**Over Sixty but Young at Heart**

When: Monday 12th to Friday 16th July

Where: Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Further details from Stella Burney on 01298 871218

**Unitarian Youth Programme Fun Days Away** for ages 12-17

When: Sunday 8th to Friday 13th August

Where: Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Further details from John Harley at [jharley@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:jharley@unitarian.org.uk)

**Unitarian Music Society Annual Conference**

When: Friday 13th to Monday 16th August

Where: Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Further details from Adrienne Wilson at [adie@adiewilson.co.uk](mailto:adie@adiewilson.co.uk)

**Unitarian Society for Psychological Studies**

When: Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th September

Where: Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Further details from Jo Rogers via <http://www.unitarian.org.uk>

Find out about more Unitarian events by signing up for Uni-News:  
<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/info/email-subscribe.shtml>

## 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](http://www.birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk)

e-mail: [info@birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:ramsaysimon@btinternet.com)

Secretary: Kristian Wilkes c/o Unitarian New Meeting Church, 31

Ryland St, Birmingham B16 8BL

## About the calendar

Editor: Angela Maher [amaher@theiet.org](mailto:amaher@theiet.org) c/o Unitarian New

Meeting Church, 31 Ryland St, Birmingham B16 8BL

Contributions are welcome. **The next deadline is 15th June.**

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.

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**31 Ryland Street, Birmingham B16 8BL**

**[www.birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk](http://www.birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk)**

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### Poetry corner

#### from *The Prophet*

And an orator said, "Speak to us of Freedom."

And he answered:

At the city gate and by your fireside I have seen you  
prostrate yourself and worship your own freedom,

Even as slaves humble themselves before a tyrant and  
praise him though he slays them.

Ay, in the grove of the temple and in the shadow of the  
citadel I have seen the freest among you wear their  
freedom as a yoke and a handcuff.

And my heart bled within me; for you can only be free  
when even the desire of seeking freedom becomes a  
harness to you, and when you cease to speak of  
freedom as a goal and a fulfillment.

You shall be free indeed when your days are not without  
a care nor your nights without a want and a grief,

But rather when these things girdle your life and yet you  
rise above them naked and unbound.

Khalil Gibran

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**tel 0121 123 1234**  
**email: [info@birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk](mailto:info@birminghamnewmeeting.org.uk)**

## June

Wednesday 2	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
<b>Sunday 6</b>	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay
Monday 7	7.30pm Exploring spirituality
Wednesday 9	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
<b>Sunday 13</b>	11am Worship with Angela Maher
Wednesday 16	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
<b>Sunday 20</b>	11am Worship with Kristian Wilkes Children's activities during the service Agape Meal following the service
Wednesday 23	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
<b>Sunday 27</b>	11am Worship with Sarah Warhurst
Wednesday 30	6.30pm Midweek Meditation

Respect a parliamentary king, and cheerfully pay all parliamentary taxes; but have nothing to do with a parliamentary religion, or a parliamentary God.

Religious rights, and religious liberty, are things of inestimable value.

Joseph Priestley

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## July

<b>Sunday 4</b>	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay
Monday 5	7.30pm Exploring spirituality
Wednesday 7	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
<b>Sunday 11</b>	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay
Wednesday 14	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
<b>Sunday 18</b>	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Children's activities during the service Agape Meal following the service
Monday 19	7.30pm Exploring spirituality
Wednesday 21	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
<b>Sunday 25</b>	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay
Wednesday 28	6.30pm Midweek Meditation

Truth never yet fell dead in the streets; it has such affinity with the soul of man, the seed however broadcast will catch somewhere and produce its hundredfold.

Theodore Parker