



Unitarian New Meeting Church Birmingham

May 2010 Calendar

A church of open hearts and open minds

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is.

Gandhi

In late March, I was writing the Sunday service when there was a knock on the door. I opened the door to see a very smartly dressed woman standing there smiling at me, but in a way that showed that she was nervous; I assumed that she was selling something.

She asked me if I was going to vote this year, so I first thought that she was representing a particular party and was looking for votes. I soon realised that she was from a media company and was trying to find people who were willing to attend one of the Prime Ministerial debates. I must admit that this opportunity sparked my interest, especially as I was given the chance to ask a question. So by the time you read this leader you may well have seen your minister in glorious technicolour on your television!

I know that it is said that politics and pulpit should never go together and on the whole I believe this to be true; allegiance to a particular party or politician should never be preached. Church is not a place to ask for votes, but can be a good place to work out what it is that we feel we want for the world in which we live. It is our devotional life that informs the values we have and the type of society that we wish to live in. Our votes should be an expression of our spirituality.

So I hope within this season of election promises, we realise the importance of our democracy and vote in a way that helps bring about the vision that we have for our society.

Simon Ramsay

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Message from the Chair

Hello everyone, can I start by reminding you of the AGM on 16th May and asking you to come if you can? I won't labour the point further than that!

This may well be my last message to you as Chairman of the Vestry. I only say may because the Vestry probably won't meet in time to elect a new Chair before the next calendar deadline and so I might have to do the honours one last time then. I'm sorry not to be able to put myself forward for the next year but with twins due in June it looks as if coming to church, let alone to Vestry, will become rather difficult for a while.

I have enjoyed my time as Chairman although I don't think I have really done a great deal in that capacity. I brought no new vision and had no new plans. They didn't seem necessary to me as there are plenty of people

with things to say and do at UNM at the moment and all that really seemed needed was some gentle encouragement. I am sure that whoever takes over from me will have their own ideas and I shall do what I can to help. We have seen some changes over the last few years and doubtless more are on their way because that is what the world does; it keeps on changing in order to allow new life to have its chance.

But change allows us the chance for growth both spiritual and personal and we would be fools to try to avoid changes if they will do us good. The question for instance of the cross on the wall - does it help us gain members by showing them our background or does it discourage them by making

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

them think we are too set in our ways? This is one of the things we will discuss at the AGM so put your thinking caps on as we want you to make a decision about that!

Let's look forward to what the next year has to bring us and take change in our stride. Good luck and goodbye.

Owen Beale

Church subscriptions

It's time to review our financial commitments to the church. Standing order forms are available in the vestry for you to update or begin your regular contribution to the upkeep of the church.

Please speak to Roland Kay, our treasurer, if you have any questions about subscriptions.

Perhaps the symbols are not the point

I was interested in Allan Warhurst's piece in the April calendar, To me the question that he is asking is "how do we enlarge our congregation?" I believe this is what the AGM should be addressing if there is to be a discussion about Allan's comments. After all, our previous building in Broad Street looked exactly like a Christian church,

and was none the worse off for so doing, so I am not too sure that changing crosses for chalices achieves anything. UNM is a church, a place of worship, a Christian church and I am sure we would not wish to change that. Playing with symbols will not change that.

Perhaps we should be concentrating on the words “free thinking”, and asking ourselves how to get that message over? Perhaps Allan could expand on what brought him to the church in the first place, as it obviously happened despite the cross and

quotation, to see what we can learn from that experience?

If we accept my “reading” of Allan’s words, then I believe that his message is indeed timely.

Martin Kenrick

Why the cross should go!

The cross should be taken away because it is a sign of when Jesus was crucified. But there is no point because Simon hardly talks about Jesus. Its always God, God, God. God wasn’t hated by the Romans; God didn’t have to wear a crown of thorns; God didn’t have to carry a cross from one city to another on his back; God didn’t have a disciple betray him. The only time Simon ever talks about Jesus is when it is Christmas time.

Someone might walk pass and say, “oh this church only talks about Jesus. I will go to it.” But on a Sunday, that person comes back at service time, Simon starts talking about God and the person will not only get angry they may leave in the middle of the service and never come back! Then we will never become a big church. So take the cross down and put a chalice instead because we use it every week in our service.

Xaymca Barnes-Gordon (age 9)

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

May

Sunday 2	11am Worship with Kristian Wilkes
Tuesday 4	6.30pm Choir practice
Wednesday 5	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 9	11am Worship with Angela Maher
Monday 10	7.30pm Exploring spirituality
Wednesday 12	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 16	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Children’s activities during the service Agape Meal and AGM following the service
Tuesday 18	6.30pm Choir practice
Wednesday 19	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 23	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay
Monday 24	7.30pm Exploring spirituality
Wednesday 26	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 30	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay

In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it.

Marianne Williamson

June

Tuesday 1	6.30pm Choir practice
Wednesday 2	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 6	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay
Monday 7	7.30pm Exploring spirituality
Wednesday 9	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 13	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay
Tuesday 15	6.30pm Choir practice
Wednesday 16	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 20	11am Worship with Rev. Simon Ramsay Children's activities during the service Agape Meal following the service
Monday 21	7.30pm Exploring spirituality
Wednesday 23	6.30pm Midweek Meditation
Sunday 27	11am Worship with Sarah Warhurst
Tuesday 29	6.30pm Choir practice
Wednesday 30	6.30pm Midweek Meditation

Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.

Malcom Forbes

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

Maybe we still have need for a cross?

One of the things that drew me to Unitarianism was the welcoming acceptance of differences and stalwart determination to stand up for religious freedom. I came with my questions and doubts, with my struggles and preconceptions, and some have been calmed, while others I still find contentious. The cross is one of those. The symbolism of the cross to resurrection and salvation is lost on me. But a sign symbolising the teachings of Jesus (to love one another, forgive one another, treat all as equals or as you want to be treated), that we think about, consider, discuss and follow those teachings here, is why I think maybe the cross should remain.

Our chalice is a beautiful symbol of a stand for freedom, designed and used in the World War II underground system, to aid in the freedom and perseverance of life of those being persecuted (very much like Jesus). And although a chalice can be seen in many ancient religious context, it is still relatively new as a symbol of Unitarianism. Just as the cross can put off many seekers so too can a sign (our chalice) that has no real meaning to those not familiar with its history.

I hate using the word tradition because just because it always been done this way doesn't mean it should always be that way, nor does it justify a continuance of something out-dated. If that is all it is then the cross should go. Yet, I am going to ask you to consider the word tradition. Tradition. It is a word hated by the young as stopping progress and loved by the old for its familiarity. But tradition is eventually superceded by new revelations and modification. If you read an article in a national paper about Unitarianism it is always criticised for its lack of depth or lack of symbolism.

Letting go of our cross will lose another symbol of our history, of our traditions, of our ethos. We lose the joy of explaining to visitors that we are a movement rooted in an older tradition. We lose a symbol that unites us with others. Is that not also what our name means, being in unity? Yes, many of us have moved away from the old dogmatic belief of what the cross represents- a persecution, resurrection and salvation. But many still attend that believe in a symbol that unites; that represents a willingness to sacrifice by standing up for one's belief, and represents the need for fairness and justice that can lead to right action. Alfred Hall suggested that Jesus' death was an example of bigotry, iniquity and weakness of men. Let our cross stand for a religious, spiritual place that fights such prejudice.

I am strongly for retaining whatever little symbolism we have that proclaims us as a religious movement. I am staunchly for anything that symbolises us as a place where Christians and Non-Christians can come together and worship together. I am keenly for proclaiming that we are a religious movement that came out of true Christian theology and an ethos (like Jesus) of service to others. The many works of UNM ancestors illustrates our ethos of service. A chalice alone, will not replace the meaning or depth behind the history that we have grown up from. A cross is still an internationally recognised sign that we need, for it tells our history without the need for words, and of our struggle to be good people. Therefore, may I suggest a compromise:- let us include a chalice too, for it tells of our future hope, of love, warmth, joy and peace for the world.

Winnie Gordon

Unitarian New Meeting, Birmingham

Forthcoming events

Worship Studies Course Foundation Step

Where: Kingswood Meeting House, Worcs. B47 5DQ

When: Saturdays 22nd May, 12th June and 10th July 2010

10.00am to 4.15pm. (coffee and tea from 9.30 a.m.)

Total Cost: £29 (to Midland Unitarian Association delegates)

Further details from Sue Woolley on 01604 870746 or

sue.woolley@virgin.net

Open Day Weekend at Hucklow

When: Friday 28th May to Monday 31st May

Where: Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Further details from Stella Burney on 01298 871218

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

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

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About the calendar

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

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

Poetry corner

Throw yourself like seed

Shake off this sadness, and recover your spirit
sluggish you will never see the wheel of fate
that brushes your heel as it turns going by,
the man who wants to live is the man in whom life is abundant.

Now you are only giving food to that final pain
which is slowly winding you in the nets of death,
but to live is to work, and the only thing which lasts
is the work; start then, turn to the work.

Throw yourself like seed as you walk, and into your own field,
don't turn your face for that would be to turn it to death,
and do not let the past weigh down your motion.

Leave what's alive in the furrow, what's dead in yourself,
for life does not move in the same way as a group of clouds;
from your work you will be able one day to gather yourself.

Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo
1864 – 1936

