

*The Black Country Group of
Unitarian Churches
Chairman: Mrs P. Rose
Correspondent Mrs. BS Russell*

The Black Country Group of Unitarian churches was formed when three Midland Union churches joined together for mutual support. These churches are Dudley, Oldbury and All Souls' Wolverhampton.

The congregations meet in the Old Meeting House, Wolverhampton Street, hidden behind 'Kentucky Fried Chicken' and guarded by fearsome looking iron gates. But come through those gates on the First or Third Sunday of each month at 3.00pm, go through the porch and into the church and you will find a gem, light, airy, warm and welcoming.

Although the church dates back to 1690 and is a listed building, thoughtful refurbishment has made it a most inviting place of worship for a faith that delights in openness and free thinking, in a belief in one universal power which some of us call God, and a recognition of the worth of the teachings of Jesus and of other great men and women.

Our worship is led by lay speakers and we invite you to join in as much – or as little – as you wish.



June



July

*The Black Country Group
Of
Unitarian Churches*

*Meeting at the
Unitarian Old Meeting House*

*Wolverhampton Street
Dudley
Contact 01902 650168*

Our first Service in March was taken by Bronwen Taylor

(Shrewsbury), who chose 'Lent' for her theme. She said that while she thought it was a time considered less important in Unitarian worship than in other denominations, nevertheless observing it could play a role in our spiritual wellbeing. The idea of 'giving up something' for Lent was good discipline, and even better if the 'something' was not material –e.g. chocolate!- but something within ourselves that we may feel we would be better without. I am sure we all took her point to heart, for most of us have some little niggle we could rid ourselves of, if we tried. A serious subject, but leavened with Bronwen's gift for humour. Thank you Bronwen, -and it seemed no-one had given up cakes for Lent!.

Sue Woolley, our District Facilitator, chose 'Spring' for

her theme. One of her appropriate Readings was from 'The Wind in the Willows' which brought back, for me at least, memories of childhood. Sue spoke of the upwelling of new life and the returning loveliness of trees and flowers. And, of course, Spring Cleaning, but, she pointed out, the most important was the spring cleaning of our own hearts and minds, to throw away outworn ideas and take a fresh look at the good there is around. Our thanks, Sue, for reminding us that we can help ourselves.

The Festival of Easter was celebrated with the help of

Gavin Lloyd and Ritchie Shaw. Gavin led a most thoughtful service; one of the Readings was the

Many Thanks

What is this life, if full of care
We have no time to say a prayer?

No time to thank the Lord above
For family and friends we love.

Not a word of gratitude
For the unknown multitude

That takes our bins and brings our mail
And sees our lighting does not fail.

Far too many to make mention-
Yet we'd all miss their attention.

Not grateful for those gadgets which
Obey us at a touch of switch?

For warmth and shelter, food and drink;
Hot water at the kitchen sink?

And at least a hundred more
Things we should be thankful for!

For every gift and blessing, Lord
For all your love and care afford

We'll try our truest thanks to give
By living as we ought to live.

BS Russell (inspired by WH Davies & Dr. P. Forder)

impassioned plea of St. Paul to the Corinthians for a belief in the risen Jesus, a belief which some find hard and others, impossible. But Gavin wondered what the disciples had seen, or experienced, that turned them from fishermen to bold preachers, risking life, or at least severe punishment, to take the message that Jesus had left to sometimes hostile people. Whatever it was, their subsequent influence quite literally changed the world. Although our Unitarian belief places more importance on the life and words of the living Jesus, perhaps Easter should not be dismissed too lightly, perhaps we should sometimes wonder about an unknown but momentous occurrence. Thank you, gentlemen.

We were delighted to welcome Rev. Penny Johnson to take our last service in April. Her theme was 'The unexpected sometimes happens' and was able to use her return to the Midlands as an example. So many roads that she thought she knew well were now one-way streets or had roundabouts, turning what she expected to be a straight forward journey into an exercise in map reading. How we dealt with these changes, events that happened in life as well as on the roads, was sometimes a test of our faith, Penny said, for often decisions had to be made quickly. A moment spent in prayer or quiet reflection, could lead to the right decision being made and perhaps save a lot of heart searching afterwards.

Penny's first visit on this day had been to our Coseley Church, where she met Ann Hughes and her fiancé. Ann had, at one time, been in charge of Dudley Church and the BCGUC take this opportunity to send her and Ken best wishes for a future filled with happiness.

Penny was accompanied by her husband, another Ken; both joined us at traditional tea-table to enjoy the delicacies provided by Irene Hickman, Pam Rose and Evelyn Cowley, who had also looked after us at the three previous services – our thanks, ladies.

Thanks, too, to David Mearman from Stourbridge, for the music.

Pam had organised a charming 'arrangement' for Penny, presented as a token of our pleasure at welcoming her back, for a little while, to her earliest ministerial pastures.

Dates of Future Services:-

6th June Phil Niblock from Shrewsbury

20th June Sue Woolley from Northampton

4th July Oldbury's **ROSE SERVICE**, in which as many friends as possible join to celebrate SUMMER –Come if you can - 3.30pm!

18th July Gavin Lloyd from Oxford.