**Rosemary, Humanist, Primary**

1.  Introduction to me.

Hello.  My name is Rosemary.  I call myself a Humanist and I'm going to tell you something about what that means to me.

As a child I was very lucky.  I grew up in a very happy home, schools gave me some problems, but were by and large OK.  My father brought me up to be a Christian.  Later on, when I had seen a lot more of life, met lots of different people, read and listened a lot, I decided that I was no longer convinced by the Christian religion and that the best word to describe me was Humanist.

2.  My key beliefs and practices

One key belief of mine is that human beings are wholly part of the natural world.  When I say 'natural world' I am thinking of the universe - unimaginably vast, yet made up of bits unimaginably small.  I don't believe there are any gods or spirits, either inside us, or anywhere else.  That is because I can't find any evidence that they exist.

I believe that humans with their brains, consciousness, and their 5 senses can learn a great deal about how this world works, can imagine, invent and create all kinds of wonderful but also dreadful things, and can work out how to treat each other, how to live together, what is wrong and what is right.

I think we should value and respect the world of which we are a part and each and every human being.  I think each human being matters as much as each other human being.

So what about right and wrong?  I think the way to decide is: 'How do I want to be treated?  Treat others the same way'.  Interestingly this is not an original idea of mine, or something that only Humanists believe and try to practise - it's a guiding thought in all religions and belief systems.

So I say: let's remember what we agree on.

3.  My special object

Finally, I'd like to introduce you to a small creature that is very special to me.  When I tell you the story, you will understand why and a little bit more about me as well.

When I was 11 - not much older than you are now - my mother took me to Paris for the first time.  We spent a happy few days exploring Paris together.  On the last day she took me into a large shop and said I could choose some small souvenir to remind me of Paris.  I looked around and with no hesitation chose this little cat.  In those days, 70 years ago, it was fet black, it had a strong, upright, purposeful tail and a jaunty bright green emerald bow round its neck.

'Don't you want something more typical?' asked my mother.  What about a book of pictures of Paris, or a miniature Eiffel tower?

'No', I said. 'I like the cat.  I found it in Paris, so it's a Parisian cat and it's what I would like.'

Mum accepted that.

So why is this cat still important to me, after all this time?  It symbolises, stands for something.  That something is the 11 year old Rosemary making her own choice, independently, then having the choice respected by someone who mattered to me.  That was a very special feeling.