



QUEST

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
[ANZUA]

DECEMBER 2001

President	Rev. Dr. Mark Allstrom
Vice President	Mark McGregor
Secretary	Darryl McCann
Treasurer	Rev Dr. Eric Heller-Wagner
Editor	Barbara Willow

The ANZUA Statement of Purpose

ANZUA will support and encourage all member groups in their continued development of Unitarian values such as freedom, reason and democratic processes, and the interaction of member groups with local communities in an ethical, responsible and committed way.

As Unitarians we affirm principles of justice, tolerance of difference, respect and equality for all people. With resolve and preparedness to struggle in atmosphere of interdependent relationship and inclusivity, we search for a greater understanding and wisdom, to reach out to each other and the wider community with love and compassion.

Through our sharing, may we gain a sense of our place in the complex web of creation and, as we radiate the joy of creative life, may we feel the spirit of freedom, peace and harmony.

QUEST

Greetings Everyone,

And, congratulations – we made it! Special thanks to the contact people and the extra work they undertook. I've put in the contact name and email address under each article. Don't be shy to use them – the more interaction the better. You'll notice that the newsletter contributions are arranged in alphabetical order.

It is sad to hear of Revd. Richard Beale's necessity to return to America. The enclosed article from him was written before his illness. I sincerely hope Auckland rallies together and keeps the energy going to attract another interim minister. Brisbane is hoping for a travelling minister around September 2002. It is heartening to hear that we are now 12 fellowships strong! Yes, Melbourne now has two groups, and Adelaide has an offshoot in Shady Grove.

Our radio group continues with its weekly half-hour programmes. The church contributes food regularly to a mission that feeds and distributes food to the homeless and displaced. We also knit brightly coloured teddy bears for young women and their babies in a crisis accommodation shelter. And a small group of men have been crafting safe wooden toys for the youngsters in the shelter. Yvonne Chisholm (Wellington) sent in an extra piece which provides interesting reading. However, I didn't publish it in this issue – but it gave me an idea for the next issue. More about that next year!

Thank you all once again for your energy and willingness to bring out another Quest. It is our platform and gives us a voice. May we be affirmed and strengthened. Now, at your leisure, relax, have a cuppa, put your feet up, and enjoy your newsletter.....

Best Wishes

Barbara Willow, Editor, Adelaide
bwillow@esc.net.au

ADELAIDE

In the four months since our last newsletter, we've had some good steps forward and a couple of reversals. It seems the terrorist attack on New York and Washington and subsequent War on Terror have thrown a pall over the whole world and each of us - in our own ways - have no doubt struggled to come

to terms with them. I had hopes of organising a conference in 2002 to explore ways to nurture Unitarianism in Australia and New Zealand, but the events of 11 September put it on the backburner.

Perhaps even more directly affecting my work as President of ANZUA (but not affecting the rest of the world), my computer crashed in late October which put a crimp in all my plans. I have a nagging feeling there are still a number of things I had promised people I would do but forgot because fully half - if not more - of my memory circuits are electronic and situated in a small box in my study. If you were affected, I am sorry. I know - for example - one person who regularly received my weekly email sermons. Only last week he emailed me wondering why I had stopped sending them.

I went to New Zealand's South Island in early October and had a wonderful time meeting the people from the Christchurch and Blenheim fellowships. Thanks so much for having me visit. I felt we accomplished a lot at the Kaikoura Retreat making arrangements for finding an interim minister and for sharing the Adelaide radio programs. At the time of this writing we are in contact with the American UUA exploring the options for short-term ministry.

The same arrangements were discussed in early November when I visited the Brisbane and the new Toowoomba fellowships at their annual retreat. It was good to see old friends on both these trips. Thanks for the opportunity.

The Adelaide radio programs are continuing and the team is producing some high quality work which can be used for outreach by any ANZUA group or, simply, for Adult Religious Education. I urge all groups to seriously consider both options. They are broadcast on 5UV, Radio Adelaide, 101.5FM at 9.30AM Sundays (Adelaide time), and can be heard off the web at that time if your computer has Realplayer. Simply go to the 5UV webpage at www.radio.adelaide.edu.au then click on the icon for real audio and then click on the icon for 5UV live.

I opened up my mail the other day and discovered "UU&Me", the magazine for

QUEST

Unitarian children published by the Church of the Larger Fellowship (the UUA's department dedicated to bringing far-flung Unitarians and UUs together). Its cover-story was "Christmas Down Under" - a story about two children day-dreaming about Christmas in the summertime. The author writes, "Try to imagine your family celebrating its winter holidays in the Southern hemisphere, if you live in the North, or in the Northern hemisphere, if you live in the South." (Yeah, it took me a while to figure out what she meant too.) Anyway, I take it as a good sign that at least the Americans acknowledge Southern realities. It is good because we want to make our Northern cousins familiar with the fact that there are Unitarians in the antipodes. Every little bit helps.

We have received word that a new fellowship is forming in Melbourne and we all wish them success. I have always found that two Unitarian groups in one city never compete with each other for members. Instead they help each other grow by increasing awareness in the larger community of the unique and diverse contributions Unitarianism naturally offers. And, if you think about it, in a city of three million, there's enough room for a dozen Unitarian groups.

Here in the Adelaide area, another Unitarian group has formed as well. Since 1865 there has been a little Unitarian church in a pristine natural setting in the hills called Shady Grove. They offered weekly services until the beginning of the last century and the Adelaide church took it over and then offered Spring, Summer, Christmas Eve and Autumn services. But in 1998 we started offering monthly vespers services and while there were times when only eight or nine people showed up, we kept at it. Last year we became aware of five or six people in Strathalbyn (about 90 k's from Adelaide and 30k's from Shady Grove) who were interested in Unitarianism. They became involved in our services and we were toying with the idea of starting a new church in Strath. But in October we met and they decided they didn't really want to start a new church. Why couldn't we base the new group out of Shady Grove? No reason! So we started the group and are currently working on developing its own unique spiritual identity - one steeped in

the beauty of nature in the Adelaide hills. It just goes to show that new churches don't have to start in the conventional ways. It just takes a little imagination and the will to do something a little differently.

So we now have ten extant Unitarian groups in ANZUA - seven of them less than ten years old. Please email me at unitariansa@picknowl.com.au if you can think of ways to help us continue to grow. All it takes is a little imagination and the will to do something differently.

Best wishes for a very happy Christmas and 2002.

Mark Allstrom

AUCKLAND

Seasoned greetings, ANZUA Unitarians. First, the Auckland church and its new minister, Rev. Richard Beal, have mutually agreed to end Richard's ministry with us, due to his ill health. The congregation and Richard regret this turn of events and see it as the last resort. We wish Richard a heartfelt "fare well".

Rev. Beal's Halloween service was, to my memory, the first earth-based ritual done with the congregation in the Auckland church. The beautiful altar had numerous candles, objects of nature, and other symbols for the occasion. We called to the directions and sat within the circle around the altar. The service was quite favourably received.

Our Sunday school programmes meet monthly and we anticipate meeting more often next year. The children and some parents put on the bi-annual Haunted House as part of our Halloween potluck. This is becoming a tradition that everyone enjoys, especially the children. We also bobbed for apples and donuts (suspended by string from a pole). We all had a great time.

We continue to give food, clothes, and money to the Auckland City Mission, and the Christmas Eve offering goes to them. A member of their Board of Trustees spoke to us in October about their house for Aids sufferers and families affected by child abuse. We are proud to support these valuable, nonprofit activities.

We are doing lay-led services until an interim

QUEST

ministry can be arranged. There is strong support for finding an interim minister who can stay for more than six months, preferably a year. And we will work on finding a permanent minister.

Cheers – Barbara Thomborson
bthombor@voyager.co.nz

The following from Richard Beale:

Unitarianism and Universalism possess an extraordinarily rich tradition of stories. They come Great Britain, the United States, Spain, India, the Philippines, and, especially, from East Central Europe. Two of the most significant stories are relatively recent and come to us from Bohemia, now a part of the Czech Republic. One of them explains our unofficial but almost ubiquitous use of the flaming chalice as a symbol which draws us together and identifies us. It can be found now in the Khasi Hills of India, the centuries old Unitarian villages of Transylvania, and the emerging UU groups in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Latvia.

Our use of the flaming chalice as a symbol stems from its adoption by the Unitarian Service Committee during its work with refugees in Europe in World War II. But it harks back to the pre-Reformation martyrdom of Jan Hus, a reformer burned at the stake for advocating the use of the Czech language rather than Latin in church services and translation of the Bible, and the form of communion which included the whole church taking both bread and wine and not just the priests.

The other story has to do with our almost universal use of the Flower Festival (or, as we refer to it, the Flower Communion). Like the flaming chalice the Flower Communion is used in our churches all over the world and, as a ritual unique to Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists, draws us together and serves as a common reference point amidst our great diversity. It's this story I want to share in some detail, for not all of us are familiar with it.

The Flower Communion was created by Norbert Capek (pronounced Cha-peck, with the emphasis on the first syllable) and was

first celebrated on June 4, 1923 in the Unitarian Church Dr. Capek had founded in Prague two years before. He had been born in 1870 in Southern Bohemia, then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Very much a Catholic monarchy, Austria Hungary had an uneasy relationship with both the Protestant and the Orthodox minorities within it. In earlier time, especially during the reign of the Empress Maria Theresa, it had actively persecuted and sought to suppress and convert to Catholicism such minorities as the Unitarian Church in Transylvania. But by 1870 Protestant churches had begun to grow stronger, more numerous, and to assert greater autonomy. Capek was born into such a church, the Baptist.

His father was a tailor but Capek, an especially intelligent and thoughtful man, gravitated toward the ministry. He attended theological school in Hamburg, Germany, and was ordained to the Baptist ministry at the age of twenty-five. He rose rapidly and within a relatively few years became the Superintendent of all of the Baptist churches in that part of the Empire which, following the First World War, was to become Czechoslovakia. Always a liberal thinker he continued his questioning of dogmatic Christianity even as the Superintendent of Baptist churches. Prior to World War I he decided that he could not conscientiously remain in his position or his church and resigned to take up a career as a journalist. His free-thinking also marked his journalism and brought him to the attention of the authorities. He was forced to leave his country and went, in exile, to the United States.

During the war he had predicted would come he served in the U.S. Army intelligence service. He also became aware of the Unitarian church. When he returned to Prague after the war he went not only as a confirmed Unitarian but with the backing of both the British and the American Unitarian Associations who had become familiar with him and impressed by his abilities. In the aftermath of the war and the revolution in Russia much of Europe was in turmoil. This was true in Czechoslovakia and very much so in matters of religion. Without the backing of the Empire the Roman Catholic church lost its

QUEST

status as the national church and a new national church was created that retained many of the forms and rites of the Roman Church but was independent of the Papacy. But, confused by the rapid changes which had taken place and inspired by the possibilities of a new era, much of the populace, and especially the intelligentsia, rejected religion as it had been known.

This created a fertile ground for the propagation of Unitarianism. The church in Prague became the largest Unitarian church in the world, with an estimated five thousand members. Other Unitarian churches began to spring up about the country. Helpful in this regard was the fact that Tomas Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, was himself inclined to Unitarianism, in part because of his American Unitarian wife.

Capek himself was a theist, and in the Unitarianism of the time very much a liberal Christian. But the great majority of his congregation had been attracted to the Unitarian church because of its plain and very simple order of service. In reaction against what they had known they were uncomfortable even with the singing of hymns, much less with traditional prayer, responsive readings, or anything that smacked to them of ritual. In practice Capek's congregation was very Humanist and comfortable with the kinds of services which later came to characterize the fellowship movement in the United States.

Capek, now the minister of a rapidly growing and influential church knew that more was needed than simply a lecture format if the church was to survive as a church. As a religious community. He slowly began to introduce liberal hymns and other forms he had become familiar with in the United States. A rugged individualism and independence was required by a free church but was inadequate to the development of a feeling of belonging to a covenanted community and identifying with a faith tradition, however democratic. He was aware of the power of communion in bringing people together. As a symbolic act of eating and drinking together, of "breaking bread," it was a universal practice. But he knew that his parishioners would be unable to accept anything involving

the use of the traditional elements of the mass, the bread and wine. Nor did he venture to use the word "communion." Instead he experimented with a "Flower Festival," inaugurating it as the center of the closing service of the year in 1923.

It was immediately popular and from then until today has remained the service which closes the church year in Prague. Before World War II Prague received many Unitarian visitors from abroad and many people either witnessed the Flower Festival or heard glowing reports about it. Various churches in other countries began to use elements and adaptations of it. We know that our Harvard Square church, the First Parish in Cambridge (USA) introduced it as a regular part of its church year in 1940. But it was after the war that its use began to increase markedly. Partly this was due to the influence of Czech refugees and partly because humanism became a more dominant force in Unitarianism and the Flower Communion served the same purpose in new Humanist congregations for which Capek had created it in Prague.

The use of the Flower Communion might not have spread as quickly or become a feature of so many Unitarian and Universalist churches had Capek's life not ended as it did. As a martyr to Unitarian values and principles. His story became known and elicited a great pride in Unitarian churches all over the world. For he died at Dachau, one of the most forbidding and feared of the German concentration camps. He, and his younger daughter, had been arrested by the Germans and their Quislings in Prague because of Capek's unrelenting and outspoken opposition to the Nazis and everything they stood for. Not least for their treatment of the Jews, some of the more assimilated of whom had constituted a fair percentage of the membership of Capek's church.

Many of the survivors of Dachau remembered Capek as a force for hope and courage there. He had, in effect, continued his pastoral ministry among his fellow inmates, and they recalled his ability to retain his faith in the intrinsic goodness and value of the world and humankind even surrounded as he was by

the most atrocious examples of its failures to live up to its potential. He retained and witnessed to his faith by being a constant presence of caring and concern for everyone he encountered regardless of their background, religion, or condition. Survival was a tough and disciplined matter in the camps, and Capek survived by dint of his courage and willingness to serve others.

Some stories recount his death as a result of medical experiments performed on him. Others simply speak of an execution, presumably because of his unshakeable spirit and continued opposition to the Nazis and their inability to respect human life and humanity's universal value. In either event, as his story became known he joined that long list of Unitarian martyrs to a larger and more inclusive faith.

As time's distance from World War II dims our knowledge of both its horrors and its heroism, Capek's story is no longer as well known to us. But he is present in our consciousness, however faintly, every time we celebrate his Flower Festival. Because, for him it was not merely a repeated action but a ritual. A ritual which he had understood as a means of bringing us together in - rather than in spite of - our diversity. A ritual of thankfulness and wonder, of tolerance, of individualism in community, of the growing strength of our churches, of the beauty and harmony we can create together, and of the splendor and hope even a small arrangement of flowers can symbolize and represent.

Norbert Capek, Catherine Vogel, David Ferencz, Michael Servetus, Joseph Gatchell, and so many many others whose faith in our message of the unity and universalism underlying all of our existence, a faith they were willing to lose their lives to testify to, are present with us whenever we hold a Flower Communion. Are present as we ourselves are present, as witnesses to a larger faith, hope, and love. These three. And all the beauty, wonder and promise subsumed within them.

Richard Beal, minister, the Auckland Unitarian Church,
with the assistance of materials supplied by
Janette Todd

BLenheim

We have now reached our thirteenth year with a, largely, elderly membership. Our growth in this small, somewhat isolated, and conservative town has been only modest. However, we continue to meet regularly on the 1st and 3rd Sundays and maintain a planned programme. A recent highlight was the weekend shared with the Christchurch Fellowship at the Takahanga Marae in Kaikoura, (an annual feature). Despite less than favourable weather and competition from the Kaikoura Seafest this was an interesting, pleasant, shared occasion. The Rev Mark Allstrom, President of ANZUA and minister of the Adelaide Unitarian Church conducted the Sunday service and a workshop. The presence of Mark and his wife Louise provided stimulation and a 'lift' to the weekend. We must also thank Mark for his readiness to 'out-reach' in various ways, not least by sharing his sermons via e-mail. What issues have been addressed in the regular Sunday services? Stephen Vallance spoke on Monotheism and Brian Robinson from Christchurch will ask, Is Religion Relevant in the 21st Century? Several members attended the seminar by Professor Lloyd Geering, based upon his book, 'The World to Come'. He discussed the need for a new global spirituality. Terry Ford helped us to Explore Wonder and the Rev Rod McConnachie, padre at the Air Force Base joined us to share his experiences in East Timor. So we do not find it too difficult to provide an interesting programme which addresses various issues from a liberal religious perspective. However, we are less successful in attracting new members. Any ideas are welcome. Better still, move to Marlborough and enjoy a great outdoor life-style which is the envy of many.

Doug Stafford

We send best wishes for Christmas and the coming year to all at the Unitarian Church of South Australia. from the Blenheim Unitarian Fellowship.
Unitarians and Universalists of Marlborough

From Doug and Joyce

dougjoy@xtra.co.nz

BRISBANE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

- The Fellowship retreat was held the weekend 9-10-11 November. This was at Alexander Park Conference Centre about 1½ hours north of Brisbane. Despite the non-stop rain we did have an enjoyable and constructive weekend. Rev Mark Allstrom joined us once again. We get so much out of his visits and express our gratitude to the Adelaide Congregation for allowing him to join us.
- During the Retreat we were pleased to be joined by Peggy Rector-Guthrie who we understand used to be a part of the Adelaide Congregation. She is now living just north of Brisbane.
- At annual general meeting (during the Retreat) we agreed to meet 1st and 3rd Sundays. This was done to align with Toowoomba who meet every 2nd Sunday. On the months where there are 5 Sundays we will attempt to have a combined social gathering of Brisbane and Toowoomba members. We are keen to see how this will develop.
- All are disappointed that the negotiations for our travelling Minister for early next year did not eventuate. We are encouraged however that there is the potential for another visitor – we understand this could happen September 2002. We anxiously await more news.
- One of our members, Tsung-Wei Lai came up with the wonderful idea of producing Christmas Cards. Assisted by Wendy Eastwell they produced about 120 or so and these are for sale to members and all others who would like them. They look fantastic. Inside is an inscription by Unitarian statesman and layperson Adlai Stevenson: "There's nothing to fear in difference...without it life would

become meaningless..."

- We are currently discussing the possibility of producing our own "Banner". Whilst early days there a number of people who are keen to see this to come to fruition. We are keenly awaiting the next developments.

The Brisbane Unitarian Universalist Fellowship would like to wish all other congregations warm wishes for the Christmas period and all the best for the coming year. We hope to catch up with more of you as time goes by.

Leo DeGroot
morelli.degroot@uq.net.au

CHRISTCHURCH

Contribution not available at time of publishing.

MELBOURNE

Rev. Eric Heller-Wagner spoke at the Melbourne Church on the occasion of the 149th Anniversary, his address was very well received and appreciated by all. Eric also participated in a discussion with interested congregational members on the re-establishment of the Sunday School in the new year, his expertise in this important part of Church life is of particular value to us.

The Interfaith peace group of which the Melbourne Church is a member will be holding a family day in the Treasury gardens on Sunday 9th December. We will join with our Islamic, Roman Catholic, Buddhist, Quaker and other Protestant friends in a celebration of religious tolerance and the common goal of world peace.

Regards, Peter Abrehart
pklg@bigpond.com

QUEST

PERTH

We (here in Perth) are still meeting on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. We have about 35 'members', and a pretty regular attendance of 20+. Four newcomers arrived last Sunday. Things are going well.

Graham Ferguson
fergusong@ccgs.wa.edu.au

An extra word from the Minister Peter Ferguson

"Putting the X back into Xmas" (X signifying the sense of mystery and the unknown)

Unitarians

- acknowledge that they may never know all the answers, but want to be free to keep on looking;
- believe that life is unitary: that humankind is also part of the interdependent web of nature;
- are convinced that reason and faith should go together.

SHADY GROVE, Adelaide

I have not heard of QUEST so am somewhat unsure about what is required. However to fill you in regarding the Strath Group I am able to give you the following details.

We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at my home (17 Commercial Rd. Strathalbyn). We are a mixture of liberal thinkers from various denominations including Baptist, Uniting Church, Anglican and Unitarian. Because we are a mixed bunch we don't consider ourselves to be a Unitarian Fellowship and prefer to call ourselves the Wednesday Night Discussion Group. I am concerned about putting people off if we adopt a denominational label. However I think we are Unitarian in the way we think about things.

22 people have attended the group during the past year (some only once). 7 if the group have a Unitarian affiliation and the average attendance is about 10. Next year we plan to explore some other faiths starting off with Islam.

We meet for a shared tea at 7.00pm and then

discuss from 7.30 to 9.00pm as we would be very pleased to welcome any interested people to our group.

Please contact me if you require further information. Best Wishes

Heather Carrangis
hcarrangis@chariot.net.au

SYDNEY THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN NSW

We are still in the throes of the building development and therefore have had a year of ups and downs. One "up" was the installation of a stained glass window of a chalice (Mark ensured everyone had a chance for input). A definite "down" was finding that the Minister's flat was not ready on the date designated, thus requiring the Heller-Wagner family to again go into temporary accommodation.

Some of you have heard before how we attended the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras behind our new bright yellow banner. On the whole it was enjoyable, harmless fun. A contentious point was whether some overt sexuality could have been omitted since the theme was "Gay Families" and there were children in the march. We marched with a group of other churches. Amnesty International, of which our Church is a member, was prominent on the march.

We have also continued our affiliation with the UN Association and continued to send a donation to the Madras Unitarian Church (which they used last year for the children's Christmas party) and to a Unitarian Association in North India where a \$200 donation contributes substantially to the salary of one teacher for one year in their educational program.

We have continued our policy of individuals signing letters to government authorities as part of our social action. The Children's Fun Club rewarded us with muffins for signing a protest against the NSW Government's proposal to spend a very large sum of money on a new women's prison rather than using a community detention approach.

Our service after September 11 became a memorial for those lost. We also sent cards to the Bahai and Ahmadiyah

QUEST

Muslim communities reminding them of our friendship because there had been a small spate of unpleasant actions against people of Middle Eastern appearance in Sydney. We received grateful replies and are inspired to revive our Interfaith Service next year.

We also revived our Views from the Pews service in which a variety of members of the congregation give a short talk on a topic near to their heart. When our Minister takes the Fun Club once a month one of our members gives the address.

We have continued to benefit from Eric Heller-Wagner's services which enlarge our view of Unitarianism. A Committee Task Force has been working on a new pamphlet for the Church and there has been so much excellent material we are going to have to have a longer booklet as well as the usual pamphlet.

Eric experimented with a new seating arrangement with the seats around the speaker. It didn't suit a couple of people with hearing difficulties so we have reverted to the traditional structure.

We have an end-of -year celebration with a Christmas tree but no Christmas Day service. At the celebration there are some musical items, poetry readings and other readings.

Jan Tendys
jtendys@triode.net.au

TOOWOOMBA UUS

We meet once a month for a service, but have decided to meet at another time each month for a shared meal. Our fellowship is very small, but we want to focus on meeting needs within it rather than on 'church building' in a numbers sense.

Jed Perkins from our group is licensed to perform weddings, and recently did that for a couple on a beach in northern NSW. The advantage of doing this as a Unitarian is that Jed can structure the ceremony and its content according to the conscience of those involved: there are no set prayers or religious conditions that need to be imposed. Anyone from our part of the world who wants to make contact with us or with Jed please phone (07) 46320626.

Greg Spearritt
Spearritt-d-g@131.aone.net.au

UNITARIAN COMMUNITY VICTORIA



A group of us in Melbourne both old and new to Unitarians have come together to form a new fellowship in Melbourne. Our vision for the Unitarian Community Victoria (UCV) is to create and foster a functioning, harmonious and growing community of Unitarians in Victoria and to enhance the credibility and integrity of Unitarian beliefs as a body of thought and practice relevant to contemporary and global societies through research, debate and publishing.

At a time of great change and turmoil in our world, the explosion of interest in religion and spirituality, especially amongst the ex-secular young, is washing past the old churches. We Unitarians pride ourselves on their ability to evolve with the spiritual world around us and Unitarianism in Australia must change if it is to grasp this golden opportunity to re-engage, build upon and share the vast possibilities this religion has to offer our society. If a faith is worth having it is worth sharing.

We in the UCV have taken the opportunity of starting afresh to look at Unitarianism afresh, indeed the whole idea of a religious community afresh. Like our Australian culture we like our religion relaxed, casual, low key, friendly and fun.

Some of us like intellectual stimulation of our peers and guests, other like the uplifting yet peaceful nature of Unitarian worship, others like the collective engagement in the great

QUEST

issues of our day and others the celebration of the bounties of nature's table. Some of us want them all. The essence of our new community is the idea of seeking a dynamic balance, in our celebration, in our governance, in our worship, in our pursuits, in our daily lives and in our community.

The first way we balance is to meet every fortnight. So those who attend other churches can do so, others prefer to have at least some Sundays pyjama clad at home, others find Sundays are best spent in a darkened bedroom, after the night before. Six Sundays every season balanced in what we do. We finish each season and start the next by celebrating with our friends and family in a festival of music, food, drink and merriment. The next Sunday we gather to create a learning, teaching and sharing environment for all ages to ask the great questions about religions, philosophy and life. Other Sundays are outdoors, planting trees, walking, BBQs and enjoying, respecting, honouring in the web of all existence of which we are a part. Other Sundays are times for self reflection and meditation, sharing our experience, our skills, our creativity. Other Sundays are spent visiting our fellow communities of faith, whether it be Church, Synagogue, Sangha or Mosque, sharing our common human religious heritage. Other Sundays are times of worship, of readings, ritual, sharing of joys and sorrows and remembrance of our connections to each other and to all of life. It is the time when we gather round our flaming challis, symbol of the light of truth, the warmth of love, the heat of passion, the creative spark that bears many names: God or Goddess, Truth, Love, Spirit of Life, Ground of Being, First Cause.

The first of our festivals is on the 3rd of February 2002, a few days after Lammas, the ancient Harvest Festival. We formally bring to life our venture by baking and breaking bread together under a vast fig tree and planting another along side that will one day take the old trees place. Thus the wheel of our year begins to turn. Each year we shall go back to our tree and break bread together to celebrate our Foundation Day, our harvest of the past year and our hope for the year to come.

Jock MacKenzie
jockmackenzie@yahoo.com.au

UNITARIANS OF WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

Effects of "Quest"

The arrival of the previous issue of *Quest* prompted us to plan some of the social contact we had decided to continue when the group went into recess in February. For a number of reasons nothing came of these plans, and with the Christmas rush now upon us, we have deferred getting together until early next year.

The distribution of *Quest* by our contact person, rather than from a central point, has had a couple of bonuses for us: an updating of our mailing list and allowing us to include local material at no extra cost.

Our item on the location of the records of the Wellington Church prompted an e-mail from Andrew Hill of St Mark's Unitarian Church in Edinburgh who, for 20 years, has been identifying for the Unitarian Historical Society where British (including Commonwealth) Unitarian churches keep their records and archives.

Historical *Visit of the Rev Wyndham Heathcote, 1921* My plans to do some research on the opening of the Wellington Church building and the Rev W Tudor Jones have been thwarted by other demands on my time. However, I do have some information about the 1921 visit of the Rev Wyndham Heathcote, a former Anglican Minister and member of the Salvation Army. I found about the visit by looking at the booklet the National Library has containing the four talks he gave during his visit.

Eighty years on, the talks are still well worth reading. They are lively, reveal his personality and reflect his experiences. He must have caused controversy with statements such as "The death of Jesus, as a social reformer using direct action, has been transmuted into the death of a God dying for the world".

His second talk, based on Isaiah's asking God to "cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" entitled "A Prophet in a Cynical Mood" is interesting and, I suspect, tells as much about him as its subject. After

QUEST

describing Isaiah's despondency and retirement from public life after his call for Jerusalem to become "a reformed and ideal city" had been rejected, he states:

"But after a time his genius stirred within him again, and he issued new oracles. The tone of his message is greatly altered, the note of cynicism has gone, but the note of enthusiastic optimism has gone too. He has lost, and he has gained; he has lost his enthusiastic optimism but he has gained wisdom and deeper knowledge of human nature. To expect much is folly, to expect nothing is cynicism but to expect a little is wisdom..."

He later says

"The social order reflects exactly the moral and intellectual capacity of the individuals that comprise it. The appeal in this direction (i.e. for reform) by Isaiah was rejected, and has constantly been rejected, but sooner or later will be responded to, and a new and perfect society, so far as it can be perfect or new, will come, and can come only by individuals being morally and intellectually recovered and made strong, happy and free within through their own spiritual natures."

I have searched the Internet for more information on Wyndham Heathcote, but have found very little. He is listed as having *My Salvation Army Experience* published in 1891. In October 1916, he debated with Adela Pankhurst (youngest member of the family of British suffragists and pacifists) in Melbourne and according to the *Women's Voice* thousands of people were turned away "despite the large seating capacity of the building." He was Minister of the First Church of Ottawa, Canada between December 1921 and May 1922.

The Wellington Church Building Here is a description of the Wellington Unitarian Church Building, the site of Wyndham Heathcote's talks. It is based on the architect's plan submitted to the Wellington City Council and photographs we have located.

Arriving, you stand across the road, looking at the main door which is flanked by two sets of two stained glass windows, with a light above. There is another stained glass window high above the door set in the recessed part of the outer wall. You notice the building is made of brick and if you measured it, you would find that it is thirty-nine feet wide and one hundred

and one feet long.

After crossing the road, glancing at the foundation stone and the board listing services on the right of the entrance, going up six steps and through the main doors, you enter the vestibule. The library is on your left, the swing door to the church in front of you and the cloakroom on the right. The ceiling is twelve feet high.

Having left your coat in the cloakroom, you follow others into the church where you find there are plenty of seats – nineteen rows of pews are set out in three sections. You notice that the floor slopes slightly, being three foot higher at the back than the front. You also notice that the ceiling is much higher than in the vestibule – twenty-three feet at least.

In front of the pews is the organ, flanked by the choir stalls. In front again, set in the middle, is the pulpit which is reached by going up the six steps on either side.

At supper time you make your way through the door to the left of the pulpit (the door to the right leads to the vestry), into a small lobby, turn right past the lavatories (the one for men behind the one for women) and the kitchen (complete with gas) to the servery. You drink your tea in a large room that is also used as a classroom. You notice that the stud is back to twelve feet, explaining why daylight comes through the windows on each side of the pulpit.

After finishing your tea you have the choice of leaving the way you came in or going out via the exit that leads to a side street.

A comment and a request It would be interesting to compare this recreation with an actual description. I will do so after I find one. If anyone knows more about the church (building or otherwise) or Wyndham Heathcote, please let know. My e-mail address is yvonne.chisholm@paradise.net.nz Finally, The Unitarians of Wellington wish you a happy and enjoyable Christmas-New Year break. We hope you have plenty of time to relax and enjoy the company of family and friends and that you resume your usual activities in 2002 restored, invigorated and optimistic.