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THE ICUU HALL OF FAME

The Executive Committee of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists has announced that it will commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the organisation by honouring “15 very special people whose vision and foresight contributed significantly to the creation of the vibrant and growing international network”. Known as the ICUU Founders Vision Award, this is to be presented to the recipients either at the national conferences of their home organisations or at the ICUU Council Meeting in the Philippines in February 2012. The recipients are as follows:

Herman Boerma, President of the Canadian Unitarian Council (1988–90) and member of the planning committee for the foundation meeting that created the ICUU.

Rev. John Buehrens, former president of the UUA (1993–2001) and author. In his first years in office, he provided UUA funding for the ICUU project and attended the foundation meeting in 1995. Later, as a member of the UUA Board of Trustees, he obtained financial support for various ICUU activities.

Ellen Campbell, current Vice-President and past Executive Director (1990–2000) of the Canadian Unitarian Council. She was the CUC representative at the founding meeting of the ICUU and served as its Secretary (2001–03).

Rev. Polly Guild (posthumous), ICUU Program Coordinator (1995–2009) and longtime international worker for the UUA. With her husband, Rev. Ted Guild, she made contact with U*U organisations all over the world and helped to plan the foundation meeting of the ICUU. After that, they facilitated leadership training conferences (including one for ANZUA in Adelaide in 1994), developed the first ICUU website and worked with U*U groups in the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Philippines, Pakistan and India.

Christine Hayhurst, long-time Deputy General Secretary of the UK General Assembly and ICUU Member-at-Large 2003–05). She helped to organise the ICUU Theological Symposium in Oxford (2000), the Miguel Servetus commemoration in Geneva (2003) and the Council Meetings in Spain (2005) and Germany (2007).

Gevene Hertz, ICUU Vice-President (1997–2001) and President of the European UUs for two terms (1990–92 as co-president with her husband, John, and 1994–96 in her capacity). She represented the EUU at the foundation meeting of the ICUU and was its delegate at the early Council meetings. While she and John are Americans, they have lived in Denmark for 30 years.

Wolfgang Jantz, prominent leader of the German Unitarians, whom he represented at the ICUU's foundation meeting. He served two terms as a Member-at-Large on the Executive Council (1995–97 and 1999–2001) and organised the ICUU conferences and meetings that were held in Germany.

Carleywell Lyngdoh, General Secretary of the Unitarian Union of Northeast India (Khasi Hills Unitarians) and its successor, the Indian Council of Unitarian Churches for 33 years.

Rev. Kovács István of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania, ICUU Member-at-Large (2004–06). He helped organise the European Tour of 1999 and other programs in Transylvania, the USA, India and Argentina.

Rev. Jill McAllister, ICUU Treasurer (1995–99), President (1999–2003), Member-at-Large (2007–2009) and current Program Director. She has also held office in the UUA and headed last year's ICUU-ANZUUA Growth Workshop in Brisbane.

Rev. Kenneth MacLean of the UUA, appointed by Rev. John Buehrens as Special Assistant for International Affairs (1992–93) and for Interfaith matters (1994–99). He assisted the working party that formed the ICUU.

Rev. Clifford Reed, President of the UK General Assembly (1997–98), ICUU Secretary (1995–97) and chair of the first Theological Symposium at Oxford. He is also a noted hymnodist and writer of worship materials.

Rev. Rebecca Sienes, President of the UU Church of the Philippines (1988–2008 and 2009–). She was a member of the planning committee for the foundation meeting and represented the UUCP there.

Rev. Szabó Árpád (posthumous), professor of theology and Bishop of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania (1996–2008) and ICUU Vice-President (1995–97). He was instrumental in helping the ICUU understand the importance of our denomination's historical and theological roots.

Rev. David Usher, founding President of the ICUU (1995–1999) who first proposed an international U*U body in 1987 while serving as a minister in Manchester. Originally from Adelaide, he moved from the UK to the US and was a member of the planning committee for the foundation meeting that created the ICUU.

Much more could be said of these worthy people – and it will be in later issues.

GREETINGS FROM THE ICUU

Dear ANZUUA Conference Attendees,

On behalf of your UU friends around the world I send greetings and best wishes for a successful conference.

In this troubled world, your chosen theme *Standing on the Side of Justice and Compassion* is both timely and historic. Of course our faith in your land was founded on the solid grounding of justice works thanks to Catherine Helen Spence and others. It is good that the tradition continues mixing our liberal sense of outrage at injustice with compassion for those who are different, dispossessed and in need of our help and support.

And today our world is in need of your good work. If the task seems daunting, trust that you are not alone. Whether it's the struggle for GBLT rights in Uganda, the fight against poverty and environmental degradation in the Philippines or the intensifying battle for immigration rights in the USA, Unitarians and Universalists around the world are standing on the side of justice and compassion.

Dear friends, the world needs our effort and our concern. I congratulate you for taking up this vital theme at your conference and wish you fruitful discussions and positive outcomes.

Best wishes,
Rev. Brian Kiely
ICUU President

[My thanks to the ICUU Executive Secretary, Rev. Steve Dick, for asking Rev. Kiely to send us this.]



ICUU NEWS

Ministerial Training and Education

50 Years of the UUA



[From the Summer 2011 issue of Global Chalice.]

The ICUU Task Force on Ministerial Training and Education is in Year 3 of a three-year project. With the aim of increasing access to ministerial education and training for U*U groups around the world, we have worked with member groups, theological schools and others, to produce a draft of international guidelines for ministerial credentials. This year three pilot projects are underway, to demonstrate the feasibility of a variety of pathways to ministry, in and among member groups. These include:

1. The UU Church of the Philippines has just launched its own 6-year program of ministerial education and training, beginning with a five-day live-in training in church leadership and organization for lay leaders, led by staff in the UUCP National Office. The main purpose is to strengthen and upgrade the knowledge, information and the skills of the current leaders and provide opportunity to the second-liners to learn/acquire ministerial skills when they will assume leadership in the congregation. The full program includes several people continuing on for theological training at a local university.
2. The Australia New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association is in the process of developing its own standards for ministerial credentials, and hopes to design a course of study and formation for potential ministers. ICUU Program Coordinator Jill McAllister visited with ANZUUA leaders in August 2010, in Brisbane, and has been offering ongoing consulting with them as they work on this project.
3. In Burundi, a short course of theological education was offered to leaders and members of the Bujumbura congregation in April 2010. In addition, a pilot project to create a cohort of ministry students in Africa will be undertaken in August 2011. The first group will be francophone, with students from groups in Burundi, Rwanda, Congo Brazzaville, and the DRC. These students will gather for a 5-day session of intensive courses in basic and comparative theology, introduction to the Bible, and introduction to UU History. Teachers and facilitators will be mostly local, with consultation from the ICUU. We hope to work with faculty at Meadville Lombard Theological School to adapt parts of the new Meadville Educational Model for supervising student peer-groups long-distance. In addition, these students will work together to design a multi-year schedule of training and education aimed at satisfying local standards for ministerial credentials, which will be under development at the same time.

The Task Force (Eric Cherry – UUA, Kinga Reka Szekely – Transylvania, Fulgence Ndagijimana – Burundi, David Keyes – UUA, Helpme Mormen – Unitarian Union of Northeast India, and Jill McAllister – ICUU Program Director) plans to deliver a final report and recommendations to the ICUU Council meeting in February 2012.

The recent UUA General Assembly, held in Raleigh, North Carolina, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America that produced the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations in 1961. From their beginnings in the 1800s, the two denominations had a cooperative relationship, realising that their similarities outweighed their differences. Some local congregations merged early on but several attempts to join ranks at the national level were unsuccessful. The smaller Universalist feared being ‘swallowed up’, while some Unitarians worried that embracing their more Christian-oriented confreres would stunt their growth.

In 1947, a Joint Commission was formed that led to a vote in which nearly 75% of Unitarian and Universalist congregations approved the formulation of a plan for federal union. A Council of Liberal Churches was set up in 1953 and took on the previous AUA-UCA functions of religious education, publications and public relations. By 1956, a Joint Merger Commission was appointed to thrash out the many legal and technical details, framing a proposal that was soundly approved by the congregations in 1960. Needless to say, the pre-merger fears and suspicions were seen to be unfounded and the new organisation was a dynamic success.

CONFERENCE UPDATE

'Standing on the Side of Justice and Compassion' will be the theme of the ANZUUA Conference being held in Brisbane this month. Workshops on this theme on Saturday 27th and on the afternoon of Sunday 28th will explore a wide range of topics including refugees, the environment, LGBT issues, marginalised, homeless and displaced people, indigenous people and their struggle for health, land rights, etc., and many other social justice areas. A service conducted by Peter Ferguson will be held on Sunday morning and the ANZUUA General Meeting will be held on Monday 29th with the Conference concluding around 3 pm.

The meeting will start with an address by Dan Furmansky, campaign manager with Standing on the Side of Love (SSL) in the USA. Standing on the Side of Love is a public advocacy campaign that seeks to harness love's power to stop oppression. It is sponsored by the UUA and all are welcomed to join. See their website (www.standingonthesideoflove.org) for more information. Dan will join us by videoconference from the USA, as circumstances have prevented him from joining us in person. We will have time to reflect and ask Dan questions that may contribute to what we decide to do as outcomes of the conference.

The UUA identified many social justice issues (see www.uua.org/justice/issues/index.shtml) and prioritised these down to four main areas that they agreed to focus on. These were:

- Bisexual Gay Lesbian Transgender Equality
- Environmental Justice
- Immigration Justice
- Reproductive Justice, with a focus on Comprehensive Sex Education

and a subset of these are focused on by the campaigns run by Standing on the Side of Love groups.

We expect the ANZUUA meeting in Brisbane will similarly identify a large range of social justice issues and we will develop a short list of targeted areas where we can collaborate and focus our attention on. We recognize that in Australia and New Zealand we are unlikely to be large enough to undertake significant projects on our own and therefore identifying ways in which congregations can make a significant difference themselves is important as well as identifying other groups to align with so that we can help strengthen areas of importance with our contributions.

Some congregations may wish to focus on different areas to others because of geographic needs, historical alignment with groups or active working strategies already in place. Sharing these stories within our groups will help to provide ideas and incentive for others to also contribute meaningfully to social justice issues.

We will also have time for focused discussion groups on other topics that are important to have at this once in two years event. Topics that have been raised include "What it means to be Unitarian in the 21st Century", which is an interesting topic to reflect on.

There will be a service on Sunday morning, so we have approximately 1.5 days to have these discussions and derive meaningful action plans. To be efficient about how this is run, we will have with us Dr. Ian Plowman, organisational psychologist and inventor of Meetings Without Discussion (MWD). Ian will guide us in using MWD and Open Space Technology (www.openspaceworld.org) to have highly productive workshop time on Saturday and Sunday. There will be a series of parallel discussion groups, each choosing one of the topics selected and then having a focus group on that topic to come up with action ideas and plans for the Conference.

One of the overall objectives is that we develop a small and manageable number of key social justice strategies that can be implemented by our congregations and at the same time leverage the strength of community, intelligence and passion of interested ANZUUA communities across Australia and New Zealand. Another is that we all learn the concepts of meetings without discussion and open space technology so that we can use these in our own groups for highly effective meetings to get more useful stuff done with less effort! And a third is that we use Standing on the Side of Justice and Compassion as a focus for practical application of the seven Unitarian principles to help make our world a better place.

James Hills, Convener

WRITERS WANTED!

The Australian and New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association (ANZUUA) is compiling an anthology of worship material suitable particularly for use in our Antipodean congregations, and we need YOUR input.

We would like songs and hymns and suitable material written by Unitarians to include in this anthology. We are looking for:

- Opening Words
- Chalice Lightings
- Meditations / Prayers
- Words for the Offertory
- Closing Words / Benedictions
- Words for Special Occasions
- Material for Children
- Songs / Hymns (original music would be great!)
- Other suitable readings.

Material may be on any subject, including but not limited to:

- Seasonal material (for example, Christmas, Easter, solstice, spring) Unitarian / UU principles and heritage
- The world around us (for example, nature, community, social issues)
- Special Occasions (for example, weddings, namings, flower communion)

Please send any contributions or queries to the editor:

Andrew Usher
3 Hughes Street
Potts Point NSW 2011
Australia
(02) 9357 4336

or email (plain text preferred) to: aeru@bluebottle.com.

The deadline for submission is 20 November 2011. We wish to concentrate on material by New Zealand or Australian Unitarians, and preferably to include material free of copyright restrictions. Unfortunately no payment can be made, but copyright for contributions will remain with the original authors.

[Rev. Andrew Usher is the son of Rev. Geoffrey Usher, former minister, of the Sydney Unitarian Church, and nephew of Rev. David Usher (see p. 2). Also a PhD mathematician, his last job was lecturing at the University of Cork in Ireland. Andrew adds that he is also happy to receive original poetry and that he will be attending the ANZUUA Conference. (See p. 11 for more on the anthology.)]

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

... everything will calm down, the thoughts seem to stop, and the spiritual cathedral of a great silence will open before one's mind. The body appears to have a spiritual substance and spread to the infinity – and calm quiet, God's peace, sacred silence [are] everywhere.

And if you are so lucky, you will hear the Voice of Silence. Perhaps you will not understand it at first and you will be too surprised, but the impression which you will receive will give you more and tell you more than all talks and revelations written by letters.

Is it mysticism? It depends. For someone it is such a daily and natural experience as breakfast.

[From the translation of Norbert Fabian Čapek's (see p.7) book, *The Principle of Concord*. Altogether, he wrote six books and over 90 hymns, several of which became widely-known popular songs. He translated some 50 hymns from English and translations of his Czech ones are found in our own hymnals.]

UNITY OF EXISTENCE

By Jane and Clive Brooks

We often hear ecologists telling us that everything is connected to everything else. In the 21st Century, in Western society, we are re-discovering this, but it is really ancient knowledge that has been forgotten for a long time. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors really had no reason for seeing themselves set apart from the natural world because they were so completely immersed in it. It is only since the development of civilisation that some people have been able to live in a way in which they have little day-to-day interaction with the natural world.

We tend to regard the rest of the natural world as being there to sustain us, or being there for our use. The idea that humans are a special creation, set apart from nature, comes from the Old Testament of the Bible. Even though we are now a secular society in Australia, and most people accept that humans evolved from primate ancestors, the old idea that we are somehow 'above' nature is well embedded in our psyche.

We are becoming more and more aware that the way in which we in the Western societies live and the size of the human population are having a huge impact on our planet. Some people have the view that the Western world's overconsumption is the more concerning issue but the number of people on earth does matter as well.

Daniel Dennett, in his book, *Breaking the Spell – Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, writes about an engineer named Paul MacCready. He has calculated that, ten thousand years ago, human beings plus their domestic animals accounted for less than a tenth of 1% by weight of all vertebrate life on land and in the air. He estimated that there were only about 80 million people worldwide back then. Today, that percentage by weight, with almost 6 billion of us, and our animals – including our pets as well – is around 98%! That information about biomass illustrates how interconnected the web of life is. A change in one species impacts others as well as itself. It has become plainly obvious to us now that we are part of the natural world and not masters of it.

Dr. John Ruskin Clark, in his book, *The Great Living System*, says: "We need to understand our place in the Great Living System – our limitations as well as our potentialities. Otherwise we have the capability of making our planetary life support system humanly uninhabitable." Uninhabitable also for many of the other life forms with which we share our planet, we would add. Dr. Clark, who was a Unitarian theologian and minister, also pointed out our fate is bound up with the fate of the other creatures we dominate. He wrote that the continuity of being has become evident to us through understanding the process of evolution by natural selection. Biologists now believe that, if we go back along the unbroken genetic line far enough, we find that human beings share a common ancestor with yeast! What is significant, Dr. Clark wrote, is not that our species had such humble beginnings but that we are so intimate a part of the total life process. Dr. Clark suggested that Charles Darwin's Unitarian background – his grandfather, Erasmus, was a Unitarian – liberated him from the entrenched Biblical notion of creation so that he could seriously explore the possibilities of evolution.

The unity of existence goes beyond living things. All being exists in a continuum. There is a vague boundary between the living and the non-living, as shown by the nature of viruses. The continuum connects the animate with the inanimate and goes right to the depths of our being. All the atoms and molecules that are part of our bodies have been recycled many times. They have once been part of the plants and animals we eat. Our atoms and molecules have also been part of inanimate matter: the soil, rocks, mountains, the ocean, the rivers, the rain, and the air we breathe.

The unity of existence goes further than our planet. Almost all life on Earth is solar powered. The Sun provides heat, light and chemical energy in the form of plant life. Without the Sun, we would have no fossil fuel, which comes from ancient fossilised plant biomass. The Sun is not the only star which has made our existence possible. Apart from hydrogen and helium, created by the Big Bang, all the atoms making up our Earth, including those in our bodies, have been produced by nuclear fusion reactions occurring inside ancient stars, while they shone or when they exploded. The debris from those explosions, during which elements heavier than iron were formed, mixed with the clouds of hydrogen and helium which subsequently collapsed under the pull of gravity to form our Sun and its planets over 4.5 billion years ago.

We are made of star-stuff. Without the laws of nature that operate throughout the entire universe to make stars form, shine, and otherwise behave like they do, we would not exist. It takes a universe for life, including human beings, to exist. What would be a good word to describe a person who is aware of the unity of existence and has respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part? – a Unitarian, perhaps?

The President of ANZUUA, Rev. Peter Ferguson, presented a paper at the Growth Workshop for ANZUUA congregations in August 2010. He posed the question: Is the word ‘Unitarianism’ no longer a useful description of our beliefs? Should we jettison it and describe ourselves as religious humanists? One problem with that could be that not all Unitarians are humanists. Some are theists or believe in some other kind of supernatural beings. In his book, *Good without God*, Greg M. Epstein, the humanist chaplain at Harvard University, tells us that Humanists believe in life before death and that Humanism is about being good without God. Unitarianism has no creed, so no-one is required to believe, or disbelieve, in God in order to belong. If Humanism is about being good without God, as Epstein says, you couldn’t be a humanist *and* believe in God. So, if inclusivity is our goal, and surely it would be, for anyone acknowledging the unity of existence, then perhaps it would not be appropriate to jettison the words ‘Unitarian Universalist’ in favour of ‘Religious Humanist’.

Instead of abandoning the word, ‘Unitarian’, Rev. Ferguson, suggested redefining it to mean that we acknowledge that all of being is unitary, and that we are all part of a single interdependent web of existence. He sees ‘Unitarian’ as more inclusive than ‘Humanist’. It includes everything – all the other forms of life which inhabit the Earth, from the humble plankton to the rhinoceros. ‘Universalist’ is also a very inclusive word. It was inclusive in its historical usage, which was for the belief that all of humanity would have salvation. ‘Universalist’ would be a very suitable term for one who acknowledges our interdependence with the universe; the awareness that, if the universe did not behave as it did, we would not exist – we, like all life on Earth, are made of star-stuff.

Considering that the last of the seven principles affirmed and promoted by the Unitarian Universalist Association and its member congregations is “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part”, the unity of existence is already acknowledged and valued within Unitarian Universalism. The issue we wish to raise is, should it be placed at No. 1, rather than No. 7 in the list of UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) affirmations?

We (Jane and Clive) believe that the Rev. Peter Ferguson has given us an inspiring suggestion that ANZUUA should offer to the world community of Unitarian Universalists. It would help all of us with our ‘elevator stories’ – a concise answer to the questions, “What is Unitarianism?” or “What do Unitarians believe?” Instead of getting bogged down by the old historical definition and talking mostly about what we don’t believe in, we could offer a positive, inspiring statement about what we *do* believe in, even though we have no creed.

If there are others in our ANZUUA community who agree that we have something to offer, then we will need to plan how we might initiate a wider campaign for re-defining Unitarian Universalism. Perhaps there may be an opportunity for discussing this within the broad platform of ‘Justice and Compassion’, the theme of the 2011 ANZUUA Conference in Brisbane. It requires the capacity to have empathy in order to feel compassion, and be motivated to fight injustices, whether they are social, political or environmental. Could there even be such a thing as empathy without having a deep respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part?

[Jane and Clive Brooks are long-time members of the Adelaide Unitarian Church –they were even married there. Jane has served three terms on its Board of Management and represents the church on the ANZUUA Council. Both have worked on AUC’s ‘Expanding Horizons’ radio program for about ten years.

Just with the books Jane refers to, Daniel Dennett is an American philosopher and cognitive scientist, considered one of the ‘Four Horsemen of the New Atheism’ (along with Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens). He is a leading professor and Co-Director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University in Medford/ Somerville, near Boston. John Ruskin Clark wrote two books on science and religion, as well as three biographies of famous American UUs. Greg M. Epstein is the secular humanist chaplain at Harvard University and contributes to *The Washington Post*’s online blog, ‘On Faith’.

YOU ARE THEIST, I AM HUMANIST

(To the tune of 'Sixteen Going on Seventeen' from *The Sound of Music*, originally a Broadway musical produced by Oscar Hammerstein II (lyricist) and Richard Rodgers (composer) in 1959).

You are theist, I am humanist,
I think that you're naïve;
You have no proof to offer as truth –
You simply say, "I believe."

I am theist, you are humanist,
You're locked inside your head;
You're existential, self-referential,
Claiming that God is dead.

New Age bubbles get you in trouble,
Lost in a feel-good fluff;
True understanding is quite demanding,
Praying is not enough.

Occam's razor, Pascal's wager,
Soul-less tautology;
Wisdom traditions, not erudition,
Make much more sense to me.

Totally unprepared are you
To make a case that's plain;
Maybe those pagan chants and drums
Have ruined your poor brain!

Totally unprepared are you
To let go of your mind;
How 'bout a leap of faith, my friend,
You may like what you find!

You need someone saner and wiser
Telling you what to do;
You are theist, I am humanist,
I – will think – for you!

When you find that you're out of answers,
You won't know what to do,
I am theist, you are humanist,
I – will pray – for you!

(together)

We cannot agree on anything,
Each has a point of view;
I am theist – I am humanist,
That's why we're UU!

[Reproduced with the kind permission of the authors, Scott and Meg Bassinson of the First UU Society of Albany, New York. You can see and hear this clever piece performed by Joyce Dowling and Connie Coombs of the Davies Memorial UU Church in Camp Springs, Maryland, at: www.youtube.com – just search the title of the song.

THAT'S AMORE



When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie
That's amore.

When an eel bites your hand and that's not what you planned
That's a moray.



When our habits are strange and our customs deranged
That's our mores.

When your horse munches straw and the bales total four
That's some more hay.



When Othello's poor wife, she gets stabbed with a knife
That's a Moor, eh?



When a Japanese knight used a sword in a fight
That's Sa...mur...ai.

[Found on: www.humormatters.com, a website supposedly belonging to one Dr. Steven M. Sultanoff, Mirthologist and Clinical Psychologist, whose practice is in Irvine, California. While Desdemona was strangled by Othello in Shakespeare's play, she is stabbed Rossini's operatic adaptation.]

Z HLUBOKOSTI VOLÁM (OUT OF THE DEPTHS)

*Z hlubokosti volám Tebe,
Bože posil duši mou,
at' vytrvám v každé době,
než se mraky přezenou.*

*Rázem všech a všeho zbaven,
čím jsem byl a co měl rád,
na svém srdci stesků kámen,
kde bych útěchu měl brát?*

*Tys jediný zůstal při mně,
Těšitel a Přítel můj,
mluviš k srdci sladce, jemně:
"Utiš se a důvěřuj."*

*Co Tvůj čas a Tvoje bolest,
na vesmírném orloji,
pouhý kmit a dávný šelest
ve vzpomínkách po boji.*

*Ještě s jednou prosbou spěchám
k Tobě, Těšiteli můj,
všechny, po nichž v touze vzdychám,
ve své lásce posiluj.*

*Zvláště všechny moje milé,
jichž se dotknul úd můj,
prosím, Bože, mocný v síle,
ochraň, potěš, posiluj.*

Out of the depths I call to you:
God give me power today.
In this dark time, let me be true,
Till storms have blown away.

From everything and everyone,
From all life left alone
Alone, despairing, faith undone,
My heart has turned to stone.

Beside me only you remain,
My comforter and friend.
Your faithfulness my heart sustains:
"I know this night will end!"

The struggle of my life and pain
Fades in the cosmic scheme:
A glimmer in a drop of rain,
Lost in the battle's dream.

Again, I come to pray in haste,
O, God, thanks be to thee.
May all who suffer find your grace
and may I thankful be.

Norbert Fabian Čapek (1870–1942)



The Czech words are those of a hymn written by Norbert Čapek, founder of the Czech Unitarian Church, while he was imprisoned in Dachau during World War II. Its title is opening line of Psalm 130 ('From out of the depths I call to Thee, O Lord') and the English translation was done by Rev. Richard Boeke of the UK General Assembly and Bodhana Hašplová (Čapek's daughter and wife of his successor, Karel Hašpl). We don't know why it has one less verse but it is a loose translation in order to rhyme in English.

Born into a Catholic family in Bohemia, Čapek became a Baptist at 18, worked as an evangelist in Germany and Moravia, then went on to found almost a dozen churches from Budapest to the Ukraine. Over time, his faith became more liberal – especially when his research of Moravian archives revealed that the traditional religion of his region had actually been 'Free Christian'. Čapek played a significant role in the international organisation now called the International Association for Religious Freedom, founded in 1900 by Unitarians.

Čapek and his family moved to the US in 1914 and joined a Unitarian Church in New Jersey in 1921. Later that year, they returned to the newly independent Czechoslovakia, where they founded the Religious Liberal Fellowship. In just twenty years, the Unitarian Church in Prague had 3200 members, making it the largest Unitarian congregation in the world. The national membership was 8000, including six lay-led 'mission stations' (fellowships) in other cities and towns.

Čapek was arrested by the Gestapo on 28 March 1941 and convicted of listening to BBC broadcasts, a capital offence, and high treason on the basis of some of his sermons. An appellate court in Dresden acquitted him of treason and recommended only a short prison term for the other offence in view of his age. The Gestapo ignored these findings and sent Čapek to Dachau. Details of his subsequent death were unclear for decades but it has now been established that he was taken with some other invalid prisoners to Hartheim Castle in Austria on 12 October 1942 and killed with poison gas. So died the great religious leader, prolific author and hymnodist, whose hymns we sing to this day and whose beautiful Flower Communion is an important feature in our annual calendar.

WRESTLING AT JACOB'S CREEK

By Rev. Peter Ferguson

I have based this article on a strange story from the Book of Genesis which tells of the patriarch, Jacob, wrestling with an unnamed stranger. Some of you may recall from your childhood days how the smooth-haired Jacob had cheated his hairy brother, Esau, and then fled for his life into another country. Many years later, Jacob, now wealthy, decides to return to his native land and make peace with Esau.

That night he camps along the banks of the brook Jabbok which marks the frontier to Esau's land. And it is here on this side of the creek that the struggle takes place. The story reflects the ancient belief that boundaries were guarded by local gods, so if you wanted to cross over you had first to deal with the local demon. Out of the shadows of evening comes his adversary and they wrestle fiercely throughout the night.

As the sun comes up, however, the story comes to its dramatic climax. The demon throws Jacob to the ground and puts his hip out of joint. Then, paradoxically, he blesses Jacob, the usurper of his brother's birthright, and gives him a new name – no longer the cheat, but Israel is now his name – a prince of God. And so Jacob crosses over and meets Esau, who welcomes him as a long lost brother.

At a psychological level we know that a very powerful truth lies at the heart of this story. If we want to go beyond our boundaries, there is a price to pay – we have to be prepared to wrestle with our demons, whatever they may be: ignorance, racial prejudice, addictions and all the things that confine and restrict us – that make us mean of spirit.

Some of what I share here is autobiographical. It's about how we struggle with ideas and attitudes that are sometimes too small, too unhealthy and sometimes just plain stupid. Personally, I believe that all gods are human constructs and the products of the wonderful human imagination. This being the case, then I would suggest that instead of the gods manipulating us, it is the other way around.

The gods are the ventriloquists' dolls and we, humans, are the manipulators. We are the ones who decide which words or comments the gods may utter. The gods are the concepts and ideologies that claim power over us. The writer of the letter to the Ephesians expressed these ideas within the religious thought-forms of his own times:

“Our wrestling is ... against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Whenever some so-called 'higher authority' tells you what you ought to believe, he is using god as a ventriloquist uses his doll. It is the ventriloquist who decides what the god may or may not say. So, whether he's a good decent god or a rotten one depends on the ventriloquist.

We spend much of our lives wrestling with a whole host of authorities and powers that try to persuade us that they know the truth and whom we can trust with our lives. An example is the tobacco industry and its vigorous promotion of the sale of one of the most addictive and lethal of all drugs – an industry that levelled its advertising propaganda at the innocent, the unwary and the young. More than half a century ago the cigarette manufacturers were aware that smoking causes lung cancer and a host of other life-threatening diseases.

When the perils of smoking first came to light, they brought out filter tips and claimed that they eliminated any dangers, then slimline lights, next the mentholated cigarettes – all to persuade people it was safe to smoke. Also they bribed doctors and cynically set up supposedly 'independent' studies to refute the scientific findings and to conceal the toxicity of their products. They hired film stars such as Bob Hope, Ronald Reagan, Sir Laurence Olivier, Kirk Douglas and Bing Crosby to join them in their advertising crusades.

The U.S. Surgeon General's Report on the direct causal relationship between smoking and lung cancer was first released in 1957. Since then there have been many millions of preventable deaths in the USA and around the world. As litigation proceeded in court cases across several countries, executive after executive of W D & H O Wills and other tobacco companies swore under oath that they had never heard of any connec-

tion between smoking and cancer. It took more than 20 years to get governments to take action and even now it is still a legal product.

My personal involvement in the struggle came in 1964 at the Synod of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, where I served as a priest. I proposed a motion calling on the then Federal Government to ban the advertising of cigarettes. The motion was passed overwhelmingly by the Synod, but fell on deaf ears when it reached the government. Taxation revenues were at stake. The money mattered more than people's lives.

Some years later my father, a heavy smoker, died from lung cancer – not very peacefully. Thank goodness those ads depicting beautiful young women on luxury yachts and handsome men in Porches are gone. Still, it's sad that both major political parties have until very recently solicited donations from this toxic industry.

We human beings appear to be genetically hardwired to respond favourably to the authorities and powers, such as political advisers, advertising agencies and a wide range of religious preachers. You only have to look at Hitler. The powers with the most to gain are the ones who make the loudest noises – saying that we should believe them. Never believe anything until you have checked it out first.

Here are some examples from the scripture texts common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. From the Book of Deuteronomy:

And the Lord God said 'If a man be found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die.' (Deuteronomy 22: 22)

If upon marriage it is discovered that the bride is not a virgin, the men of the city shall stone her to death. (Deuteronomy 22: 21)

If a son is stubborn and won't obey his parents, then his parents will bring him to the elders and the men of the city will stone him to death. (Deuteronomy 21: 18-21)

When it comes to who may enter the assembly of the Lord, the same scriptures have this to say:

No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off, shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 23:1)

Those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted to the assembly of the Lord – even to the tenth generation. (Deuteronomy 23: 2)

This is an appalling concept of God. Tragically, it still gives authority and legitimization to successive generations of religious leaders, who without pity execute similar bloody ideas. Contemporary examples of this hideous belief system are the suicide bombers and the Jewish settler who told the journalist that the land that had recently been captured from the Palestinians actually belonged to Israel in the first place – God gave it to them thousands of years ago.

So we need to doubt the authorities in cigarette production, pharmaceutical production and god production. We must always find out for ourselves what is good and what is evil. If we don't choose for ourselves, we'll fall into the trap of believing all the advertising companies, the politicians and the preachers, and believe they are trying to empower and enrich us, whereas in fact they are trying to empower and enrich themselves.

So check it out for yourself and find that it wasn't God telling you it was good to go to war – it was the politicians, the spin-doctors, and big business with their own hidden agendas for you to follow and fit into. Maybe, some of them even believe their propaganda and advertising.

So what happens when we realise they are not true? What happens when we discover that some of the claims are bogus? Well, if that's where you are in your life right now, you will have to pay the high price that comes when you wrestle with the powers that be and seek to cross that particular frontier. Wrestling with your particular demon will always be a painful experience, especially if it involves some of your cherished beliefs and prejudices.

If your ideas about life are wrong, what then can't be wrong? How can you ever again find moral certainty? Do you then lose faith in the idea of truth or justice or goodness? Certainly avoid that road because it leads only to cynicism and nihilism. The tragedy for people like ourselves is that every time we find politicians

lying, every time religious claims are shown to be false and every time a self-serving manufacturer's claims are proved false, we lose some of our innocence and trust.

To wrestle with the powers that be can land you in a state of disillusionment. In my 38 years as an Anglican priest, I seldom encouraged my parishioners to question their concept of God. I was afraid they might become disillusioned and stop coming to church. But upon reflection, isn't it better to be disillusioned than to be illusioned? Isn't it magicians and wizards who illusion people? And I'm not going to be a magician any more.

It was only 11 years ago that I finally reconciled with my heavily compromised intellect and finally fought the demon and crossed that creek. And while my name has not changed it has been a blessed experience. Crossing that frontier and moving forward has given me a whole new sense of belonging. I no longer see myself as the pinnacle of creation mediating salvation and eternal life to those around me who choose to listen. Rather, in the spirit of The Desiderata, I see myself as "...a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars".

So, in closing, wrestling with the power and authorities bestows upon us a task: to check out the claims that those in high places make for themselves, their products and their beliefs, to check out that they will empower and not weaken us or keep others in chains. Part of our spiritual growing up is coming to the sometimes painful realization that most of our gods are not divinities at all but rather the ventriloquists' dolls of the politicians, the corporations and preachers. So continue to wrestle at the frontiers even if the ordeal leaves you with a limp. One thing is for sure – we will be blessed!

[This is a reworked version of Rev. Ferguson's address to the Adelaide Unitarian Church on 10 July 2011 – the original title was 'Leaving Eden'.]

MORE BIBLICAL MATTERS

Just while we're on this subject, it may be of interest that 2001 marks the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible, also known as the Authorised Version. Commissioned by King James I in 1604, he assigned six panels of scholars to do the work: three for the Old Testament, two for the New Testament, and one for the Apocrypha. Two teams met respectively at Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster Abbey – 47 men, in all. While the translators were instructed to consult the original Greek and Hebrew texts, the king ordered them to use 'church' in place of 'congregation' wherever possible.

This version, while by no means the first in the English language, has given us many expressions that are used to this day. To name just a few: 'salt of the earth', 'a broken heart', 'a sign of the times', 'at his wit's end', 'a house divided against itself will not stand', 'apple of his eye', 'as old as the hills', 'bite the dust', 'the blind leading the blind', 'by the skin of one's teeth', 'cast pearls before swine' and even 'a little bird told me'. It is argued that the KJV has contributed more to English phraseology than Shakespeare did.

However, since Rev. Ferguson has asked those of us who had Christian upbringings to remember your early Sunday School lessons, please try the following little quiz:

- Q. Who is the greatest financier mentioned in the Bible?
A. Noah, because he floated his stock while the rest of the world was in liquidation. (A minor contender was the Pharaoh's daughter, who went to the [B]ank of the Nile and got a little prophet.)
- Q. Who is the greatest showman mentioned on the Bible?
A. Samson, because he brought the house down.
- Q. Where are motorcars mentioned in the Bible?
A. In Genesis, when God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden in a [F]ury; also in the Book of Acts, when the Apostles 'all left in one [A]ccord'.
- Q. Where is baseball mentioned in the Bible?
A. In Exodus, when Rebecca went to the well with a pitcher.

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS – A TEMPLATE FOR OTHER ANZUUA PROJECTS?

By Rev. Derek McCullough

With the appointment of Andrew Usher as editor, the project to produce an anthology of home-grown music and prose is now a reality. It has been suggested that looking at the process of how this project proceeded might be useful when looking at how we might approach other projects in the future.

The first stage of the project happened when a motion was passed at the Sydney conference that ANZUUA commit resources and energy to producing an anthology of our own. With that go-ahead from the conference delegates the details of the project, such as funding and format, were worked on by the Management Committee.

Three sources of funding were targeted – the UUA’s International fund, the Wellington Fund, which is available to the NZ groups, and sales to each of our congregations. A fourth source – international sales – was identified but not included in the budget. If these eventuate they will be considered a bonus.

At the Brisbane workshop on growth and vitality last August, there was enough commitment from the ANZUUA groups to warrant filing applications to the other sources. This was duly done, and both were successful. As a bonus, the UUA International Fund granted us an extra US\$1000 from the retiring chairman as her discretionary option. The Auckland, Blenheim and Christchurch groups also were able to forward their money, so the threshold was achieved to continue to the next stage.

At this point an editorial board was appointed by the Council to oversee the project. Comprising Derek McCullough (Christchurch), Christine Whelan (Auckland) and Renee Hills (Brisbane), and with the help of the Secretary, James Hills, this group set about the task of looking for an editor and drawing up a contract.

This is the point in the story where good fortune struck, in the form of Andrew Usher. He had just returned to Australia from the UK and was keen to involve himself in just such a project. He had the pedigree, the experience and all the necessary skills that we were looking for, so we wasted no time in signing him up. Since then he has called for submissions and started on looking for some external contributions to include.

I am pleased to be able to announce at the upcoming Conference in Brisbane that we are on track with both the timeline and budget to have the book available early next year. In getting this far, I think that three things played an important role:

1. Getting congregational buy-in from all the member groups through a conference motion.
2. Targeting and obtaining external funding so that the financial risk to ANZUUA was minimised.
3. Having a small committed group drive it so that there was accountability.

These enabled the project to proceed to this point. I think this could be used as a template for future projects that ANZUUA might want to embark on.

OTHER ANZUUA NEWS

Understandably, the most recent ANZUU Council meetings have been dominated by matters affecting the Conference in Brisbane. In addition to the official program, there will be a few meetings of ‘special interest’ groups in the early evenings.

The lengthy deliberations over public liability insurance have finally come to fruition – a provider has been chosen and the policy will also cover those attending ANZUUA Conferences and other meetings.

The Sub-Committee for Ministerial Training has made progress toward a regional curriculum, with high-level academic support (and, possibly, funding) available from the ICUU. The question of how any such qualifications can be accredited will be discussed at the Conference.

It has been pointed out that the Religion section of the Census recently conducted in Australia classified Unitarianism under ‘Christian’ rather than ‘Other’.

UNIVERSALISM – OUR OTHER HALF

By Mike McPhee



The 50th anniversary of the formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association in the US is as good an occasion as any for Unitarians to consider the oft-neglected second strand of our historical tradition. While it was only in North America that a Universalist denomination developed and flourished under that name, people of that persuasion lived (and still live) in many other countries where they complemented and contributed to their Unitarian counterparts.

Like Unitarians, with their doctrine of a singular deity, the Universalists can trace their belief in universal salvation to early Christian sects whose ‘heresies’ were stamped out after the Council of Nicaea in CE 325. Similarly, both concepts were resurrected in Europe in the 15th and 16th Centuries and led a parlous existence during an era of official state religions. Finally, both movements redefined themselves in post-Christian terms in the 19th Century, with Unitarians stressing the unity of religious truth and Universalists proclaiming the validity of all religions – truly, ‘opposite sides of the same coin’.

In Britain and Europe, universal salvation (or universal reconciliation) was a repudiation of the Calvinist doctrine that only a small number of predestined individuals (the Elect) would go to Heaven. Some adherents rejected the cruelties of Hell outright while others saw the need for actual sinners to spend some time in a place more like Purgatory before being admitted to Heaven. Both tendencies regarded eternal torment and/or annihilation of the soul as repugnant to their conception of a just and loving god.

The English Civil Wars of the 1600s were a time of great religious turmoil, with radical movements that made the Puritans appear moderate. Universalist sentiments were first expressed in print by Gerard Winstanley (1648), a ‘True Leveller’ (Christian communalist) who later became a Quaker, Richard Coppin (1652), an ex-Anglican, and Jeremy White (1712), who had been Oliver Cromwell’s chaplain and left his works unpublished in his lifetime.

The first Universalist churches were founded by James Rely (1722–78), who also preached in America, in the early 1750s and by American-born Elhanan Winchester (1751–97) four decades later. Rely’s churches became a denomination, whereas Winchester joined the General Baptists, who rejected the Calvinism of the Particular Baptists, and promoted his ‘restorationist’ Universalism within their ranks. At about the same time, a Universalist movement formed in the Scottish Borders region and spread north over time to Edinburgh, Glasgow and elsewhere.

Both the Relyites, who believed in immediate redemption, and the Universalist Baptists, with their concept of a ‘remedial hell’, were sufficiently Trinitarian to be tolerated at a time when Unitarianism was still illegal. After the passage of the Unitarian Act of 1803, that movement grew rapidly in both England and Scotland. The three denominations exchanged speakers and doctrines, and eventually all of the other congregations came under the Unitarian ‘umbrella’.

In America, the first Universalists of note were George de Benneville (1703–1793), a British ex-Huguenot, and the aforementioned Elhanan Winchester. Dr. de Benneville had studied medicine (and also preached) in Germany, so he made contacts with German immigrants in Pennsylvania whose ‘Pietist’ denominations verged on Universalism. (More about him on the next page.) Winchester had a tendentious career as a Baptist minister in New England, then preached to slaves and formed a mixed-race congregation in South Carolina. His drift toward Universalism was all but complete when he returned north and met de Benneville in Philadelphia in 1780.

Prior to this, John Murray (1741–1815, pictured top left) was converted in England by James Rely and emigrated to America in 1770. He became an itinerant preacher, travelling between New Hampshire and Virginia, before founding a Universalist church in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1774. He became the pastor of the First Universalist Church of Boston in 1793, in which year he founded the Universalist General Convention, along with Winchester and others. The most prominent of the ‘second generation’ was Hosea Ballou (1771–1852, pictured top right), who abandoned his Calvinist Baptist upbringing in his teens and became a preacher in 1791. Possibly the first Universalist to reject Trinitarianism, he founded the weekly *Universalist Magazine* in 1819 and a less successful scholarly journal in 1830.

The American Universalists differed on the question of whether salvation was immediate or delayed, but did not consider that a major issue. The Unitarians, on the other hand, rejected universal salvation outright and Ballou debated with the legendary William Ellery Channing on the subject. (However, he greatly respected the Unitarians’ commitment to reason, which was also a Universalist principle.) Through his children and descendants, Ballou is the most famous name in American Universalist history, though others of note were Olympia Brown, the first female Universalist minister (1863), and the missionary, Thomas Starr King.

The General Convention became the Universalist Church of America in 1942, by which time it had congregations all over the US and was more Unitarian in its thinking. (To be fair, the Unitarians had also evolved past the parochial attitudes that divided them from the Universalists a century earlier.) Despite ever warmer relations and active collaboration, it was almost two more decades before the two denominations formalised their common cause in the merger of 1961. To this day, some churches in the US and Canada use the Universalist name. Other Universalist churches formed in the Philippines and Japan.

[Our thanks to the UK historian and hymnodist, Andrew Hill, for his most helpful paper on Universalism in Britain. Andrew wrote the hymn, ‘Honourable Saints’, about Michael Servetus, Faustus Socinus and Francis David, and has served as president of the Unitarian Historical Society.]

AN INTERESTING STORY

George de Benneville was the son of a French nobleman who fled the fierce persecution of Huguenots (Protestants) and took a position in the court of King William III. He became a midshipman in the merchant navy at the age of 12 and went to North Africa, which changed his perception of Muslims for the better. Back home, he had a vision of burning in Hell and suffered a year of severe depression; then he had another vision in which Jesus assured him he would be saved. He concluded that, if someone as sinful as himself was to be redeemed, everyone must be – for which he was expelled from his Calvinist church.

At 17, he felt the call to preach in France and was arrested shortly after his arrival in Calais, imprisoned and then driven from the city. He ministered to an underground Protestant group in Normandy for two years, was arrested near Dieppe and condemned to death. With his head literally on the executioner’s block, he was reprieved by King Louis XV. He preached in Germany and Holland for the next 18 years, near the end of which he became gravely ill. Feeling himself “dying by degrees”, he hallucinated being escorted through Heaven and Hell and woke up in a coffin 42 hours after being pronounced dead!

Understandably, his faith in his mission was reinvigorated and his reputed ‘return from the dead’ drew larger crowds than ever before. This alarmed both the religious and secular authorities, earning him another brief imprisonment. He left for America with some other European emigrants in 1741.

[You can read the full story (and many others) on the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography website: www.25.uua.org/uuhs/duub. It lists many existing articles but also others that are in the process of being written or for which writers are sought. Your editor hopes to post an article there, one day, hopefully about a Unitarian leader in this part of the world.

We have an article on Thomas Starr King in our files and will print it in this journal on some future occasion. For now, we’ll give you a famous quote of his that sums up the differences between the two denominations at the time: “We Universalists believe that God is too good to damn us. You Unitarians believe that you are too good to be damned.” (*Caveat*: These may not be his exact words.)]

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC had a visit from the ANZUUA president, Rev. Peter Ferguson on the first weekend in July, during which he led their Sunday service. On Sunday, 07 August, their Shady Grove congregation had an outdoor Aboriginal smoking (i.e., cleansing) ceremony as part of its afternoon service, conducted by an Elder of the local Peramangk people.

Auckland UC has a new Visiting Minister arriving from Ireland at the end of August. Rev. Bill Darlinson, Minister Emeritus of the Dublin Unitarian Church, and his wife will be there for three months.

The Marlborough Unitarian Fellowship (in Blenheim on the South Island) will be represented at the ANZUUA Conference by one of its own members, for the first time in many years. It is hoped that said person will become their member on the ANZUUA Council, thereby relieving Christchurch's Rev. Derek McCullough of the dual role.

The Unitarians of Christchurch report that they are still enduring major aftershocks after all this time. Many of their members attended the Dalai Lama's visit to their city. They held their AGM on Sunday, 14 August.

Melbourne UC has voted not to accept either of two lucrative offers to purchase their building. They also had a visiting minister from the US as a guest speaker.

Perth Unitarians held their AGM on Sunday, 07 August.

MORE AMORE

Just a few more from other sources – firstly, for our friends in Glasgow:

If your Firth's in the north and it isn't the Forth
That's a Moray.

If your favourite first course swims in Béchamel sauce
That's a Mornay.

And one I wrote myself:

If an Indian sage writes wise words on a page
That's [Rabindranath] Tagore.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I did promise to produce a 16-page issue for the occasion of the 2011 Conference, though I can assure you it wasn't easy! I'm even willing to try to do it again in the December issue, which will come out well before Christmas (assuming I'm still in this position). Unless you hear otherwise, please keep sending your articles, poems, jokes or anything else to me at: michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au.

I am very thankful that the ICUU president, Rev. Brian Kiely, was good enough to send an official greeting to our Conference. Rev. Kiely is the previous president of the Canadian Unitarian Council and minister of the Edmonton Unitarian Church in Alberta, which my mother's family attended decades ago.

Our *Quest* is getting yet more international exposure over time. After Sally Mabelle's article, 'What Is Your Net Worth: Exploring *Real* Wealth' was printed in the last issue, the Glasgow Unitarian Church asked if they could reprint it in their monthly *News & Views* magazine.

As always, the intention is that *Quest* be made available to the general membership of the ANZUUA groups and my offer stands to provide folded-and-stapled copies to any congregation that request them. Alternately, groups can circulate the electronic files when they are sent and/or refer their members to the ANZUUA website when a new issue is released.