

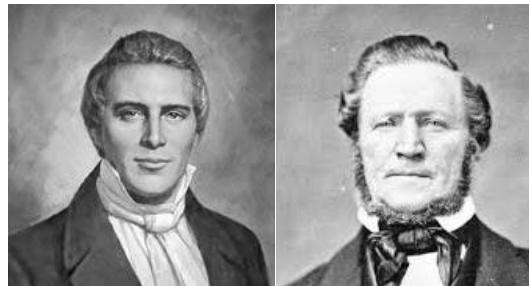


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JOSEPH SMITH AND THE LATTER DAY SAINTS

Two hundred years ago, some time in 1820, an American named Joseph Smith jr. (1805–1844, pictured at left) had an experience now known as his First Vision, which ultimately led to the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ('Mormons'). He later wrote that he had been praying in a woodland near his home when he saw an apparition of "two personages", presumably God and Jesus, who told him his sins were forgiven and that all contemporary churches had "turned aside from the gospel".

Smith was born in the small town of Sharon, Vermont, and moved with his family to western New York State in 1816/17. The region was a hotbed of religious revivalism at the time, as a result of what is called the Second Great Awakening, and Smith took an interest in religion from the age of 12. At the time of his vision, he was concerned about the welfare of his soul but confused by the conflicting claims of the various denominations.

In 1823, again while praying, Smith claimed that he was visited by an angel called Moroni and told to go to a nearby hill where a book of golden plates and other artefacts were buried. The latter included two 'seer stones' set in a frame, which he would later use to translate the text engraved on the plates. However, he was not given possession of the book until four years later, by which time he had married and was living in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Moroni then commanded him to translate the plates from what was said to be 'reformed Egyptian' and publish them.

With the help of three co-workers – Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer – the translation was completed and Moroni returned to take the plates away. The resulting *Book of Mormon* was published in 1830, written in the style of the King James Bible and with the same structure of books, chapters and verses. The books are the writings of a series of prophets, most of which detail the chronology of peoples who lived in North America between 590 BCE and 421 CE.

The narrative begins with a prophet named Lehi, who was told by God to leave Jerusalem in about 600 BCE. He and his extended family crossed the Arabian Peninsula, built a boat and sailed to the New World, arriving in about 589 BCE. There, they multiplied and built a civilisation, initially under the leadership of Lehi's son, Nephi, after the former died. As a result, the people become known as Nephites after they parted company with the followers of Nephi's rebellious older brothers, Laman and Lemuel. These Lamanites became corrupt and wicked, and in much of the narrative they sought to destroy the Nephites.

Over all the time until 1 CE, various prophets had spoken about the eventual coming of Christ and abjured the Nephites to be faithful to God's laws. In that year, there was a night without darkness and a new star appeared. At the end of 34 CE, after the destruction of entire cities and yet more portents, Jesus Christ arrived in adult form, converted the Nephites to his Church and appointed twelve disciples to lead them. The Lamanites were still numerous, however, and they exterminated the Nephites in 385 CE after 25 years of warfare. The last prophet, Mormon, compiled the sacred writings from Nephi's time onward, wrote his own book, and left it to his son, Moroni, to bury them.

In 1830, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery founded the Church of Christ, with chapters in three towns in New York State. The movement soon doubled its numbers when several Restorationist congregations in Ohio, led by Sidney Rigdon, joined. They established the church's headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio, and changed the name to 'Church of the Latter Day Saints' in 1831. Many of the adherents in New York moved there and a temple was built, even as a second gathering place was being established 1500 km further west in Missouri.

Smith had envisioned building a 'City of Zion' exclusively for his followers near the town of Independence, Missouri, but friction with the locals led to them being allocated their own county. They built the town of Far West and the church leadership relocated there in 1838. It was there that Smith announced further revelations that led to the movement being renamed as the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints'. Further expansion outside of the county precipitated armed conflict with non-Mormon settlers, after which the state governor ordered the Mormons to leave and charged Smith and other leaders with treason.

Some 10,000 Mormons moved to Illinois and founded the town of Nauvoo, joined by Smith and the leadership after they escaped from custody. Under his mayorship, a grand temple was built and also a university. He then proclaimed some of Mormonism's more controversial doctrines, such as polygamy and baptism for the dead. Once again, the non-Mormon locals became fearful of their theocratic claims and economic power, which came to a head when Smith ordered the closure of a critical newspaper. In 1844, he and his brother, Hyrum, were arrested and later killed in custody by armed vigilantes.

After a month of deliberation and debate, Brigham Young (1801–1877, pictured at right on p. 1) was overwhelmingly elected as the new leader by a general meeting of the Church. However, tensions with the non-Mormon community escalated and the state legislature revoked Nauvoo's charter as a legal community. In 1845, Young and the leadership negotiated a truce whereunder the Mormon's would leave for the frontier.

In what became known as the Mormon Exodus, some 70,000 people left Missouri in wagon trains in the spring of 1846, bringing with them portable boats, livestock, farming implements and seeds. A vanguard party led by Young set out first to flag a trail through what would become the Nebraska Territory to the Great Salt Lake in present-day Utah, then owned by Mexico, arriving in July 1847. The difficulties of fording rivers and crossing the Rocky Mountains cannot be minimised, but the Mormons were very well organised, setting up way stations and planting crops along the trail for those who followed.

As more settlers kept arriving, Young established what is now Salt Lake City and proclaimed himself governor of the State of Deseret. In 1849, he applied for his state to be admitted to the Union but the US government only agreed to create the Utah Territory and appoint Young as governor. (This was after the Mexican War of 1846, from which the US gained what are now its southwestern states.) Some US officials were sent to the Territory to assist in its administration, but they found Young's ecclesiastical government difficult to work with. As a result, they either left or complained to Washington about their situation.

In 1857, President James Madison appointed a new governor and sent 2500 US troops to enforce American law in the Territory. The Mormons resisted, leading to the largely bloodless Utah War of 1857/8, after which they were pardoned for their "rebellion" and things returned to normal. In 1869, the Transcontinental Railway was completed and many non-Mormon settlers arrived from California and elsewhere. Utah became a state in 1896 after the Mormons banned polygamy but, to this day, Mormons constitute 60% of its population (but not more than 41% of the residents of the capital).

Today, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has 17 million members in 31,000 congregations in 176 countries and territories. Salt Lake City is still its headquarters, which is famous for the immense Mormon Tabernacle and Brigham Young University. In keeping with its original structure, its governance is led by a president and a council known as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Book of Mormon, 150 million copies of which had been printed by 2011, has been translated – either in whole or in part – into 112 languages.



ICUU NEWS
UUA General Assembly
ICUU Council Meeting and Conference
News from the Philippines



The annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association, scheduled for 24–28 June 2020 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, will still take place on those dates but entirely in virtual form. Fortunately, the UUA has made provisions for many years for virtual participation in these events, so they are well equipped for this contingency – indeed, they hope to accommodate a wider, even global, audience this time.

The UUA writes: “All GA registrants have access to the GA Virtual Participation Portal, which combines multiple modes of participant engagement that include chat, Q&A, and polling. Registrants are able to watch and ask questions in live sessions including workshops and business sessions. Delegates are also be able to propose amendments in the live business sessions, participate in debates, and vote in general sessions.”

This year’s theme is ‘Rooted, Inspired, & Ready!’, which the UUA explains as follows: “To know where we are headed, we must be in touch with our theological and historical roots. A major focus of [the GA] will be partnership with Indigenous leaders in the Northeast to explore how to co-exist in right relationship with one another and the land we occupy. We will deepen our understanding of Unitarian Universalism’s role in European settlement, 400 years since our direct religious ancestors on the Mayflower landed in Plymouth and began the colonization of what is now New England.”

The keynote speakers will be: (1) Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, historian, writer, and Professor Emeritus in Ethic Studies at California State University, whose many books include *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*; (2) Dina Gilio-Whitaker of the Colville Confederated Tribes, lecturer of American Indian Studies at California State University San Marcos, and an independent consultant and educator in environmental justice policy planning; (3) Drs. Jean Mendoza and Natalie Martinez, who both worked on a version of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz’ book for young people; (4) Howard Bryant, author, senior writer for the ESPN cable channel and correspondent for National Public Radio; (5) Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, transqueer activist, Latinx scholar, and public theologian; (6) Rosemary Bray McNatt and Elías Ortega, presidents of Starr King School for the Ministry and Meadville Lombard Theological School, respectively; (7) Rev. John Buehrens, UUA President in 1993–2001.

As was mentioned in the last issue, there was great concern for the biannual ICUU Council Meeting and Conference scheduled for 26 October–01 November 2020 in Montreal, Canada. The ICUU’s Executive Director, Rev. Sara Ascher, has now confirmed that the event has been cancelled. She writes: “Given the persistent unpredictability of the coronavirus’ unfolding and its already devastating impact across the globe, the ICUU EC have decided to cancel our physical Council Meeting and Conference We have closely watched the assessments, information and recommendations being offered by the World Health Organization and several national governments, nearly all of which continue to recommend avoiding travel and large gatherings. We have concluded, in view of the wide-reaching travel restrictions and the ongoing impact of the continued spread of the virus, that it is simply impossible to hold our 2020 Council Meeting and Conference in-person.”

This will be a terrible disappointment to our Canadian confrères, as the CM&C has never been held in that country. However, Rev. Ascher’s statement appears to leave open the possibility of some virtual version along the lines of the UUA’s General Assembly. Again, this could make the event accessible to many more people than would normally attend. Any such plans will be reported in the next issue but anyone interested should check the ICUU’s website (www.icuu.net) periodically for any announcements.

As we go to press, the UUA’s International Office has issued the following statement: “In its funding round during the months of quarantine, the UU Funding Panel gave its full support to realize the Strategic Plan of the UU Church of the Philippines). ... The UUFPP funded innovations that support permaculture, which we shall begin very slowly: first, by maintaining the nursery of diverse native plants and trees that was launched with Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray in February this year when she and Rev. Alicia Forde of the UUA International Office visited the Philippines.” (Please see the next issue for a full report on this program.)

SOME THINGS BEAR REPEATING

By Rev. Clay Nelson

[This is the text of an Address to the Auckland Unitarian Church broadcast on 20 July 2020.]

Some things bear repeating. Most of this musing is from a talk on racism I gave over a year ago. Sadly, it has not passed its use-by date.

Racism is like the Covid-19 virus, if it can be cured it will be a challenge. Scientists are working on it, but they aren't there yet. But they do know a few prerequisites. Racism is what Rudyard Kipling coined as "the white man's burden" – not just for colonisers, not just for Trump supporters, not just for people who dress up in bedsheets, not just for Americans, but all white people, even for Unitarians in their predominantly white faith movement with their first three principles which are the antidote to racism. Recognising the inherent worth and dignity of every person; seeking justice, equity and compassion in human relations; and accepting one another and encouraging spiritual growth in our congregations.

If you're white it was not your choice, but you are still subject to white consciousness, what Unitarian Charles Alexander describes as moderate white supremacy. "Moderate White Supremacy is systemic, invasive, and self-perpetuating, continually prioritising White cultural values and interests above those of marginalised people of colour. It permeates and corrupts our practices, systems and institutions, even corrupting the reforms we institute to bring about equality." As a black man, Alexander points out that it is the white people's burden to cure themselves.¹

The cure begins with understanding the source and dynamics of racism. Racism is layered. At the bottom is internalised racism. Even "good" white people have race-based beliefs and feelings. These feelings are inculcated in us from birth by the biases in our families, our classmates, and in our white culture including the pervasive effect of the media. It is important to note that no one is born racist. To become racist we have to be carefully taught. The more racist attitudes are normalised in society, the more they blind white people to their own attitudes and their impact on people of colour.

The next layer, interpersonal racism, is more blatant. This is bigotry and biases shown between individuals through word and deed. Those who express hatred to people of colour give moderate white supremacists cover. We can point our finger at them as "bad" white people and deny our own racial beliefs and attitudes which give support to a more insidious form of racism, institutional racism. Institutional racism involves discriminatory policies and practices within organisations and institutions that give preference to one race over another.

Here is one example of institutional racism from our Unitarian history. It is the story of the Reverend W.H.G. Carter, a big man with a big personality. Light-skinned, six-foot-two, a man of charm, energy, imagination, and learning. He trained as a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal church, but never served as a minister in that denomination. He disagreed with many beliefs of the African Methodist Episcopal church, starting with the divinity of Jesus. As an adult, Reverend Carter worked as a photographer, a mural painter, a teacher, a postal worker, a funhouse operator and a real estate speculator. Like his maternal grandfather, William Henry Gray – a free-born African American – Carter was a political activist.

Reverend Carter in 1918 founded a Unitarian Church in Cincinnati. Called the Church of the Unitarian Brotherhood, it was probably the only African American Unitarian church in America at that time. He also founded a fraternal order called the Grand Order of Denizens or GOD. A denizen is someone who lives in a place: a citizen is someone who has certain rights in a place. The Order provided food, money, clothing, and advocacy to poor blacks in Cincinnati.

At the time, other Unitarians knew about the church and its founder, but turned their backs because the church was African American and poor. Twenty years later, a representative of the American Unitarian Association came to investigate, but the conclusion of the official report was, "I do not recommend Unitarian fellowship for Mr. Carter or subsidy for his movement." In other words, there was no ministerial degree for Reverend Carter, and no money for his church. Shortly afterwards, the Church of the Unitarian Brotherhood closed down.

¹ The quotation is from an Address titled 'The Church in the Mirror' given by Charles Alexander at the UU Church of Silver Spring, Maryland, on 04 June 2017 – more about that on the next page.

The last layer of racism is systemic racism, the ongoing racial inequalities maintained by society. It puts people of colour at a permanent disadvantage in all aspects of life. They are going to lower decile schools, more likely to be incarcerated, have difficulty getting loans, suffer higher unemployment and when employed they are in lower paid jobs, live in unhealthier homes in more dangerous neighbourhoods, and have higher infant mortality and lower lifespans. This form of racism, supported by the three other layers, is by far the most destructive and prevalent. In New Zealand it falls most heavily on Maori and Pacific Islanders. It is maintained by those of us who are white either by our blindness to it or by the privilege it confers upon us. This includes social justice-oriented Unitarians.

I'm going to share a shameful story that has been buried in the annals of New Zealand history. It is the story of eugenics. Eugenics is a belief that the genetic composition of the human race can be improved by selective breeding. It judges certain genetic groups as inferior while promoting other genetic groups as superior. It is a movement that began in England. Its stated purpose was to protect the purity of the white race. It spread to Europe, America, Canada, and eventually to New Zealand. Sir Truby King, founder of the Plunket Society and a member of the Dunedin Eugenics Society, was a strong proponent, along with Unitarian Sir Robert Stout, a former Premier and Chief Justice. Eugenics was the founding purpose of the Plunket Society. King wrote, The Plunket Society was founded to improve the calibre of Caucasian New Zealand babies by a strict regime of scheduled feeding, exposure to sunlight, and cleaning. "The destiny of the race is in the hands of its mothers."

In a submission to Parliament prominent New Zealand eugenicists argued, "It has rightly been decided that this should be not only a 'white man's country,' but as completely British as possible. We ought to make every effort to keep the stock sturdy and strong, as well as racially pure. The pioneers were for the most part an ideal stock for a new offshoot of the Mother-country. The Great War revealed that from their loins have sprung some of the finest men the world has ever seen, not only in physical strength, but in character and spirit. It also revealed that an inferior strain had crept in and that New Zealand was already getting its share of weaklings. Surely our aim should be to prevent, as far as possible, the multiplication of the latter type."

Overseas, eugenics principles were adopted to terrible ends. The theories took their most horrifying manifestation under Nazi Germany. But even as the full extent of Nazis' racial cleansing programmes were being discovered, the idea of ridding the race of the mentally ill or "feeble-minded" was still doing the rounds in New Zealand.

The horrors of the holocaust essentially marked the end of the eugenics movement in New Zealand, although vestiges of it remain, especially in some Pākehā attitudes toward Māori and Pacific Islanders as inferior races and social policies that put them at a disadvantage. An example is how racism undermines Maori self-image. Studies have shown that it is not uncommon for Māori to buy into racist stereotypes. In one focus group a Māori man said, "if they going to keep writing bad things about us then we are gonna be bad because we feel like we are meant to be bad... Māori are meant to be in jail anyway."

Statements like this break my heart and motivate me to unburden myself of racial attitudes that cripple a Māori or Pasifika child's chances to have the same chances in life my white race has given me.

If we are to find a cure for racism it is going to have to begin with examining our internalised racism. We need to understand that our internalised racism is a spiritual crime against ourselves that burdens and blinds us. Racism is a choice and empathy and honest self-awareness go a long way towards curing it. The more we put ourselves in the other person's shoes scientific studies show the less racist we become.

[Rev. Nelson has both Anglican and UU ministerial qualifications from the US and worked for both denominations there and in Auckland. He served for nine years as Associate Priest at St. Matthew-in-the-City after he arrived in New Zealand, during which time he spoke once a year at the Auckland Unitarian Church. He then retired from the Anglican ministry and went on to lead the Unitarians.

The UU Church of Silver Spring, Maryland, is in an unincorporated community near Washington, DC. Though the congregation existed for some time prior, it was officially admitted to the UUA in 2010. It has 246 adult members and its Religious Education program has five classes ranging from -pre-school to Grade 8.

Charles Alexander has been a member there for more than 13 years and, in addition to speaking at services, he is noted for singing in the capella group. He also served on the church's Diversity Team, which qualified him to give the Address cited – you can see the full text at: [https://uucss.org/sermons/the-church-in-the-mirror/.](https://uucss.org/sermons/the-church-in-the-mirror/)]

DO UNTO OTHERS

I was a pig
My world within an iron frame
Never even had a name
Couldn't walk or turn around
Just chewed the bars, made little sound
Fed and watered twice a day
Could only dream of games I'd play
And when I reached optimum weight
At last, went out thru iron gate
Electric pulse flowed through my head
And in an instant, I was dead.

I was a chicken,
Brown feathers didn't look so neat,
My life was short, but never sweet,
Grew so fast in wooden crate
Nought to do but eat and wait
Food was doctored, kept me well
But fresh clean air, I'd never smell
Then came day number forty two,
Men forced us out, and we all knew,
Limbs malformed it felt so sore
Then blood flowed thru my veins no more.

I was a sheep
Born in spring, in valley green
Where only sheep and cows are seen
Played with other lambs new born
White coat grew thick to keep me warm
Grazed until I reached my prime
Then rounded up at harvest time
Crowded truck, then out to sea
Stench of death surrounded me
Took us from that hellish boat
Sharp steel blade across my throat.

I was a whale
Born in waters warm and blue
On mother's milk I quickly grew
Headed South, as all whales do
Calves and mothers two by two
Water spouts and splashing tails
Learned to dodge the Killer Whales
A decade passed, so much I've grown
Now have baby of my own
But then I made my final trip
Met 'scientific' whaling ship.

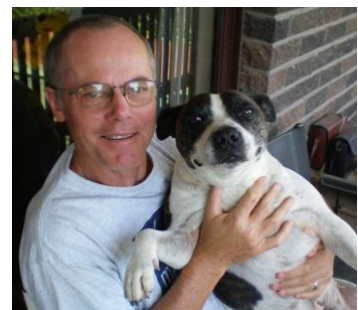
I was a monkey
My home was a laboratory
They did such cruel things to me
Chemicals that caused me pain
Dripping down into my vein
Destroyed my body and my brain
And just for Corporation's gain
So much money is invested
All their products must be tested
With my eyes I tried to say
There has to be another way.

I am ashamed
And if a species from deep space
Happens to invade this place
Their technology far superior
Consider humans so inferior
8 billion of our species crude
No use to them, except for food
Factory farms process our meat
For aliens to cook and eat
We plead for mercy, but they say
"We're treating you, the 'human' way".

Alan Clarke (2020)

Our member, Alan Clarke, is a writer who founded Street Mission in 1998, a self-funded organisation which feeds and provides life essentials for the homeless and disadvantaged in society, with an emphasis on young people. In addition to their Street Mission Café, they fund and support the welfare programs of several other local charities and organisations.

It has been a while since we featured one of his poems but this is certainly an appropriate time to do so. Alan is also a passionate environmental activist and a seasoned traveller.



THOUGHT FOR TODAY

We must fight against the spirit of unconscious cruelty with which we treat animals. Animals suffer as much as we do. True humanity does not allow us to impose such sufferings upon them. It is our duty to make the whole world recognize it. Until we extend our circle of compassion to all living things, humanity will not find peace. – Albert Schweitzer

A BEER WIITH NO PUB

In Two thousand twenty
Few things were funny
St. Patrick was kicked to the curb¹
Complete sterilization
Replaced socialization
In every city and burb

No one supposed
Pubs and restaurants closed
Times have rarely been worse
You could hear people moan
I must drink on my own
When quelling a powerful thirst

(Chorus:)
But there in the lonely quiet
In every saloon pub or bar
Slowing dying with time
Is fresh beer in the lines
Never reaching a 16ounce jar

No bartender tips
No foam on the lips
No conversation or cheer
Live music is canned
At least YouTube's not banned
And hoarders haven't targeted beer

My waistline is thinning
I don't feel like I'm winning
I'm missing the solid pub grub
My tears are not average
As I think of the beverage
A lonely Beer with no Pub



Donal O'Shaughnessy (2020)

¹ A reference to the cancellation of the annual St. Patrick's Day parade.

This delightful and highly topical song is reprinted with the express permission of the writer. I chanced upon it quite by accident while searching for the words of another Irish song, which I found on Donal's website (<https://www.irishsongs.com/>). Unfortunately, it hasn't been recorded yet, so I don't know what the tune is.

Surprisingly, Donal is 67 and a native of New York City, where he obtained qualifications in Nursing and Respiratory Therapy. Though he comes from a musical family, he only started playing music 25 years ago – now his self-taught repertoire includes instruments as various as guitar, fiddle, keyboards, pipe organ, bodhran drum and mandolin. He played with an Irish band for five years before embarking on a solo career that also includes pop, country and swing era songs (as well as his many originals), comedy and storytelling.

He has performed in five countries and 14 states in the Northeast and Mid-West, recorded three albums (including one of comedy) since 2002, and won awards in the 1996 *Fleadh Cheoil* (Music Festival) Mid Atlantic Regional Irish Singing Contest. He also leads guided tours in Ireland, Scotland, France and Italy.

Donal now lives in the small city of Binghamton, New York, an agricultural community near the border with Pennsylvania. His website is well worth looking at, as it contains the lyrics of an extensive list of Irish songs. My personal thanks to him for making this song available to us.

DON'T MOURN – ORGANISE

By Marion Harper

[Text of an Address at the Melbourne Unitarian Church on 04 February 2017.]

Don't mourn – organise! These were purported to be the last words of Joe Hill, well-known union activist, who was wrongly executed by the US in November 1915. If ever there was time to heed the words of Joe Hill, it must be now. If we don't organise, if we turn aside and don't challenge the direction of government, the imposition of neoliberalism, the ensuing poverty, the rape of our environment, the attacks on our civil liberties, then we consign future generations to a world of misery, subjugation and perhaps destruction.

Is this a new role for Unitarians? Absolutely not! And not just in this church or indeed in this century. Let me remind you all of a passage from a book I have quoted here many times, *A Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England*, by Raymond V. Holt. Holt outlined in this book the social justice role played by Unitarians of that time in the Industrial Revolution: parliamentary reform, local government, health, housing and education. In education, for example, he said:

Unitarians have shown an enthusiasm for education that has amounted to a passion. They have devoted time, energy and money to the spread of education in every form except denominational education ... This is quite natural, he said, for if men are to be freed from reliance on an external authority, they must be educated to be independent in judgement if they are to be responsible citizens, they must be given knowledge.

'Given knowledge'! We all know that the information we are given is heavily biased, strongly politicised and amounts simply to propaganda for those in power. Who of us has not watched the news and said to ourselves, 'That's rubbish'! As Unitarians and concerned citizens in this modern age, what are our responsibilities? We in this church take very seriously the argument that people must be educated to be independent in judgement and must be given accurate knowledge.

We come to this church not just for spiritual enrichment, not just to be with friends, but to be informed, to be challenged, to be involved – because we care. We care that our freedoms are being deliberately eroded in the name of fighting terrorism, terrorism that is being practised by the very people who claim to be protecting us from it. Terrorism is not just blowing people up (although our governments have had a very good record of doing this!). They have blown up innocent people around the world at the behest of their 'ally', the USA, and continue to do so today. That is violent terrorism. But terrorism can also be defined by acts of state violence, violence which destroys lives not by bombs but by policies. Let's look at some of these, that I call terrorist acts by our government against civilians in pursuit of their political aims, which of course are for maximum profit for their big business allies.

Let's begin with the environment. Isn't it a form of terrorism when coal mining and fracking are for political and profitable aims and not for the good of the people? Isn't it a form of terrorism when all of our utilities are privatised for political and profitable aims, costing us more and diminished in service? Isn't it a form of terrorism when governments refuse to recognise global warming for political and profitable aims? Look at the example of the Adani mine project. *Four Corners* exposed Adani for his various criminal indictments in India and many articles expose his environmental vandalism. Articles from Indian journalists exposing him are ignored despite clear evidence and yet our governments, both Labor and Lib/Nats, determine to give this environmental vandal the green light to build his coal mine and even planning to provide a billion dollars of our tax money to help him destroy our environment. The Queensland Labor premier says we need the mine for jobs. So, we provide jobs and destroy the environment and our Great Barrier Reef in so doing. Surely this is environmental terrorism.

Then there are people's services and privatisation: severe cuts to almost every area of public need, including health, housing, education, energy, postal services, public transport, nursing home services, universities – the list is endless and each attacks and destroys the rights and lives of Australians. Surely these all constitute a form of acts of terrorism against the Australian people by the Australian government. These acts are continuing as we speak, and we have an urgent responsibility to expose them and fight them or we are indeed sadly diminished.

Privatisation, selling off the people's property to large capitalists is a form of terrorism. It increases prices and lowers services. It makes huge private profit and destroys people's ability to utilize the services. If the

established churches in Australia ever come together to make a clarion call for action, it should be against privatisation. Overwhelming evidence clearly demonstrates that privatisation has been a disastrous failure for the people and a huge financial success for big business. Yet governments from both sides continue to support it. There is not one area of privatisation of public assets that has assisted the mass of the people, and it can't do so because its very reason for existence is profits for its shareholders. Worldwide, progressive people, thinking people, are starting to stand up against this robbery of the people's assets whilst governments are adept at hiding the real impact of privatisation and handsomely pay consultants and bureaucrats to conceal the truth.

Then there is the terrorism against innocent men, women and children fleeing violence in their countries, violence that our government is complicit in. We bomb their countries to rubble, force them to take their children and flee, then when they reach out to us on our shores pleading for asylum against the mayhem we have caused, we lock them up in concentration camps and reward the criminal politician responsible for doing so by giving him an increased portfolio and one where he can do even more criminal damage to the community.

The history of Unitarianism is rich with examples of our involvement in social justice issues and our determination to fight for a better world. Two previous ministers of our church shone the light that determines our path today. Rev. William Bottomley, minister of this church from 1926–1949, was one such man. In one of the earliest issues of our journal, *Beacon*, he said:

We are influenced more than we care to acknowledge by current ideas and party platforms. Those who take an independent line become the objects of suspicion and attack by those who think and act in grooves. The independent thinker is beset by thorns and briars on every hand. On religious grounds, our journal *Beacon* only expects to appeal to those who are seeking a new and better way of life and thought. It will have no interest for those who are indifferent to the great issues that confront the human race in every field of its activity.

In *Beacon*, December 2008, we said:

All will not be right with the world until courageous people stand together and say enough! *Beacon* continues to call on people to unite around a common demand for a genuine democracy, for social justice and a dignified life for all.

The struggle for justice continues and is growing, but governments continue to rule in the old way, which should no longer have a place in today's world. Parliamentary politics have failed dismally. There is nothing democratic about voting every four years for a group of people we don't know, we don't like, we don't trust, and who consistently sell out our best interests over and over again regardless of their label.

In its latest report, Oxfam tells us that it would require approximately \$20 billion per year to provide life-giving fresh water, education, health and housing to every person in the world. This money is not available, yet we can find ample money for war and destruction. In total, countries around the world splurged \$1.686 trillion on arms in 2016 (a 0.4 per cent increase on 2015). The United States remained at the top of the military spending league last year with \$611 billion. Imagine a world where disputation was dealt with by negotiation instead of weapons and bombs, the way forward, but our Federal Government just announced that we will become part of the major armaments industry. A killing industry.

What can we do to become more effective, more influential, more impactful on the calculating decision-makers? What are your ideas for action to combat decisions that will have a deep impact on not only our lives but the lives of our children and grandchildren? Who can we unite with and on what basis? We must remind the unions, for example, that despite vicious legislation denying them the right to represent their members as they should be able to, they urgently need to work together with the community to combat the drive to excessive neoliberalism and austerity, and worse, legislation that is becoming more and more repressive?

Not long ago, I attended a protest at Longford in Victoria by maintenance workers employed by Esso, whose parent company, Exxon Mobil, is the sixth largest company in the world. Yet, despite their huge wealth and enormous profits, they are trying to cut the wages of their workers to increase profits even more. The stoppage entered its 200th day while I was there. Last year this company paid no company tax on the \$8.5 billion profit made in this country by Australian workers. Yet the company is demanding a 30% pay cut, significant cuts to allowances, reduction of annual leave, and harsh anti-family shift rosters that would change one week on, one week off, to five weeks on, one week off. What clearer example of attacks on workers' working standards and living conditions is there than this? What better example of greed?

We must build a movement for peace, justice and democracy. The trade union movement has been deliberately targeted and shackled to allow governments to destroy workers' rights, adequate pay and conditions. The right to strike, to withdraw one's labor, is now illegal – does that not make us no better than inadequately paid slave labour?

I challenge each and everyone here today and those who will be listening on our Radio 3CR program to think about these issues deeply, because each day in their glass bubble, isolated from the needs of the real people, undemocratic, unsupported and vastly unpopular politicians make decisions based on the lobbying of powerful conglomerates who have no interest in our needs, no interest in democracy, no interest in our future, but only on profit, power and greed.

Sometimes, when I listen to people like Hanson and Dutton on asylum seekers and the owners of this land, or Leyonhjelm on guns, or others on global warming, I wonder why we don't have a psychiatric team assessing these lunatics, and when I listen to parliament and hear Turnbull, Joyce and Shorten screaming at each other about stupid irrelevancies that have nothing to do with real life, I feel anarchistic in my desire to remove them from political life altogether.

When I feel these things, I take to reading some of my favourite writers to restore my sense of normality in this crazy 'Alice in Wonderland' upside-down world. One such passage I will share with you now. It was written by the then Dean of Canterbury, Rev. Hewlett Johnson, in his book, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*. He said this:

All human beings are at heart moral beings. The moral sense may be twisted and perverted by the circumstances of life or the immoral character of society. With war impending, men may be taught the art of killing as if killing were the supreme object of life. Ferocity may be developed as a virtue and bayonet practice may teach men the refinements of brutality. But such things are outrages on innate moral feelings, it requires strict discipline to inculcate brutality.

An essential part of fundamental moral feelings is the sense of kinship with one's fellow beings and with the world at large. Part of our feelings of rightness of things depends upon our sense of community and comradeship. If that is wanting, we are stunted beings. The harmony of life becomes a discord.

The world of financial capitalism produces precisely this sense of disharmony and the root cause lies in the fact that modern industry treats men and women as a means not as ends. They are treated like machines and their only function is to play their part in the making of profit.

Politicians of all sides and of all shades inhabit a different world to us. They are cocooned in a world of privilege; they are highly paid, protected, pampered and corrupted by capitalism. They care about two things, serving capital and getting re-elected. The people, on the other hand, want very simple things: a peaceful world, a secure job, the right to healthcare and education for their families, an affordable and secure home, and the opportunity to exert some control over their lives.

Whatever your political views, it simply isn't right for a few people to control the finances and future of the world when the majority are denied basic needs and rights. These rights will not be given to us – history has demonstrated that. There is a constant struggle to obtain justice and human rights – they are never given. It is our responsibility as a church and as individuals to organise and defend those basic rights and work toward a better society.

"Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you." – Pericles, 430 B.C.

[At the time this Address was given, Marion Harper was the Honorary Secretary* of the Melbourne Unitarian Church, which position she relinquished about a year ago after what she describes as "a very long time". She became involved with MUC when she married her husband, Jim, in its previous building in 1952. She was their office manager for several years and, at 87, is still a member of the Committee of Management and an editor of MUC's monthly journal, *Beacon*. Her daughter, Julie, has worked with the Sunday School and the Unitarian Extension Movement, was on the CoM, and is now also on the editorial board of *Beacon*.]

* As opposed to the Secretary, who is their paid office manager.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The pandemic has made abundantly clear that we live in an interdependent web of all existence. That is not always something to be celebrated when a deadly virus has gate crashed that web. It has turned the world upside down, wreaking havoc, death and destruction around the globe. We weren't prepared for its arrival and did not take it seriously enough when it showed up on our doorstep with bags packed for an extended stay.

We have had to scramble to protect public health, preserve the economy and find new ways to carry on with what we used to think was just routine. How we work, shop, socialise, exercise and worship have had to change, either by mandate or just because it is common sense.

None of this is news to anyone. But I would like to share how our UU faith movement has sought to cope with these extraordinary times. A whole lot of the attraction of belonging to a congregation is the connection we feel belonging to a community. How have we managed that when we can't physically get together? In various ways. Some have relied on phone contact and emails. Others have turned to Zoom technology to have virtual worship services, Circle groups, committee meetings, Adult RE, and daily check ins for those feeling isolated.

This has required a steep learning curve but it has done wonders for building and broadening community – an unexpected outcome. For instance, our experience in Auckland with Zoom broadcasts of our services has seen visitors from around New Zealand and the occasional drop-in from Australia and the US.

Our individual experiences inspired the ANZUUA Executive Committee to not cancel the Annual Conference but to see if there was interest in a modified conference online. We held an experimental service on Sunday, 23 August, with nearly 60 attending. UU Kiwis and Aussies worshipped together, followed by spending time getting to know each other. They shared a little about their congregations, how they became UUs and how their UU values are sustaining them through the pandemic.

It was successful enough that the Executive Committee will explore having several such events during the year. It may even become one component of our common life, well after the hopeful eviction of Covid from the web.

In the meantime, stay caring, stay strong, stay safe,

Clay Nelson

[The ANZUUA service Rev. Nelson wrote about can be viewed at: <https://aucklandunitarian.org.nz/anzuua-service-connection-and-disconnection-the-story-of-our-lives/>.]

SECRETARY'S REPORT

As well as building greater community across Australia and New Zealand, we hope to build connections with our Unitarian friends across Asia Pacific. This year, there have been a number of services conducted over Zoom with UUs joining from Australia and New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong and North-east India (Khasi Hills).

On 13 June, a very powerful Black Lives Matter service was led by Rev. Tet Gallardo, President of the UU Church of the Philippines, with speakers from the USA: Rev. Alicia Forde of the UUA, Rev. Sophia Hayes-Jackson United Church of Christ, Rev. Anthony Mtuaswa Johnson of the Humboldt UU Fellowship in Bayside, California, and Kuji Mah Ajani, a Sufi Muslim working for the homeless.

On 27 June, the Singapore Unitarians celebrated and informed us about Pride Month and Pink Dot there, supporting freedom to love and sharing the challenges experienced by their LGBTQI community. The Tokyo UUs have invited interested ANZUUA members to join their next gathering on 13 September.

James Hills

[More over page.]

A recording of the Black Lives Matter service is on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/uucphil/videos/733263680776175/UzpfSTeZODEwMjE5NTM6Vks6MTUzMDk5NDk5MDQwODU5MQ/>.

Upcoming Asia Pacific UU services and details are posted on the Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/UUAsiaPacific/>.

Details of the Tokyo UUs' gathering will be posted on that page when we receive them.

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

It appears that most, if not all, of our groups ceased holding services in mid-March. A few of those began immediately to experiment with on-line services, as you have seen from Rev. Nelson's report above. Some additional news reported to Zoom meetings of the ANZUUA Council follow:

Auckland UC resumed weekly services in July, with a 10 a.m. meeting in person followed at 11 a.m. by a Zoom service. They are not planning to let go the latter, as these are picking up about 20% more people.

Brisbane UUF have conducted both services and Chalice Circle discussion groups via Zoom with encouraging results. James Hills reports that they have been very well appreciated and attended by people outside of their normal catchment area, as well: "On the Sunday service, as well as a usual members joining, we had an ex-Brisbane couple from Colorado, USA; one of our members living on a yacht off the central coast of Queensland; Tet Gallardo from the Philippines and Julie Steinbeck from the East Coast of the USA, who we have met in connection with the Philippines and in other circumstances. Rev. Stephen Furer from the USA is an annual visitor to Brisbane and it was good that he could continue the tradition virtually."

The relatively new Canberra UU Fellowship (not yet a member of ANZUUA but granted observer status at the Council meetings) has also been meeting via Zoom calls. Paula Morelli reports: "We are taking turns among our members offering a service. Generally, we meet about once every four or five weeks – and we are looking forward to when we can meet together again. We have a 'summer house' where we meet outside and a 'winter house' where we meet inside. Between 8 and 10 dedicated folks turn up regularly, and we have an active Facebook page."

First Melbourne UUF have also been having virtual services. Connie Gibbons reports: "The need to conduct our services via Zoom has provided a wonderful silver lining for us, moving us from a monthly congregation to a weekly one. We've been meeting twice a month to discuss our Fellowship's ethos statement – who are we and what we stand for. Ralph Catts, a member of our congregation and a Unitarian minister, has skilfully led our discussions. We have also had some fascinating sermons on gratitude, Helen Keller, nurturing spirituality, the Winter Solstice and the 7th Principle, as well as a monthly meditation service. We're looking forward to the time when we can meet in person again but valuing our connection during this time of isolation."

Melbourne UC have held virtual services via Zoom on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Peter Abrehart reports: "We allow time both before and after the Service for catching-up chat (both idle and profound). We had one month in between different restriction levels where our monthly journal, *Beacon*, was mailed out in normal print form but we have now returned to soft copy mode via email and the Church website. Our internal and outreach activities continue in earnest, albeit in modified pandemic form.

Perth Unitarians resumed monthly services in July after being in recess from 05 April. Kathy Nielszen reports: "We emerged again on 05 July for our Annual General Meeting and an address by our minister, Rev. Peter Ferguson. On the weekend of 07 August, eight members attended our Annual Retreat at the New Norcia Monastery. We had a meeting at a member's home overlooking the Swan River while our usual venue, Drabble House, was being refurbished."

Spirit of Life UF resumed services in August, meeting on three Sundays each month. These started with an address by their minister, Rev. Geoff Usher, titled 'The World in Our Hands'.

Sydney UC resumed weekly services in July. These included a Music Service in August, featuring harp soloist Kate Moroney playing pieces by Claude Debussy and others.