



Quest



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Summer 2012



E.E. CUMMINGS, UNITARIAN POET

This year, we have a fairly recent event to commemorate – 03 September marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the man known to most of us as ‘e.e. cummings’. While it turns out that he never wrote his name that way, the format seems to fit his singular style of poetic writing. Cummings was not just a ground-breaking poet, however, as he also produced essays, novels, plays and even paintings.

Edward Estlin Cummings was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on 14 October 1894. His father, Edward Cummings, taught sociology at Harvard University and later became minister of the South Congregational Church (Unitarian) in Boston. His mother, Rebecca, had an artistic bent and was a descendant of the early Unitarian minister, Pitt Clarke. The younger Cummings was known by his middle name to avoid confusion with his father.

Young Estlin’s talents were evident early in his life, drawing competent freehand sketches when he was four and reportedly writing poetry daily between the ages of 8 and 22. After an unhappy time in a private school, he attended the progressive Agassiz School, where he liked to memorise the poems of Longfellow and Emerson (both Unitarians). In high school, he greatly enjoyed geography and languages (including Ancient Greek) but philosophy and logic did not engage him.

Cummings entered Harvard in 1911, where he developed a solid knowledge of Greek and English classics, also getting many poems published in campus periodicals. He graduated with honours in 1915 and gave the commencement address on the work of such contemporary artists as Matisse, Duchamp, Stravinsky and Gertrude Stein. In graduate school, he spent a lot of time with the Harvard Poetry Society and embraced the free verse styles of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Hilda Doolittle.

After obtaining his Master of Arts degree in 1916, Cummings spent three months working for a publishing firm in New York City, the only civilian job he would ever hold. Despite his profound opposition to World War I, he sought to avoid conscription by joining an American ambulance corps and went to France in 1917. After an enthralling month in Paris, he went to the front lines – only to be jailed five months later for criticizing the war effort. It took the personal intervention of President Woodrow Wilson to obtain his release and, once home, he was conscripted so near the end of the war that he never left the US. His first publication, *The Enormous Room* (1922) was a fictional account of his imprisonment in France.

Two of Cummings' friends from graduate school, Scholfield Thayer and J. Sibley Watson, purchased a foundering liberal magazine, *The Dial*, in 1919 and used it to feature the works of emerging poets and artists. This provided a steady outlet for his poems and drawings, even after he moved to Paris for two years in 1921. On his return to New York, he settled in Greenwich Village and published his first collection of poems, *Tulips and Chimneys*, in 1923. By then, his poetry had acquired such trademarks as the absence of capital letters, unusual spacing and creative (though sometimes incomprehensible) placement of punctuation. However, the publisher had only accepted 86 of the 152 poems in Cummings' manuscript, so he put the rest in two books, *XLI Poems* and *&* (yes, that was the full title!), which he published on his own.

In 1924, Cummings married Elaine Thayer, the ex-wife of Scholfield. Their daughter, Nancy, was his only child but the marriage didn't last long. He travelled to Paris a number of times in that decade, as well as to other parts of Europe, North Africa and Mexico, meeting such people as Ezra Pound and Pablo Picasso. A second marriage, to Anne Barton in 1929, was also short-lived. For all his personal trials, this was the time of his greatest productivity, including the collections, *is 5* (1926) and *ViVa* (1931), and an autobiographical play entitled *Him* (1927).

In 1931, Cummings travelled to the Soviet Union, recounting his experiences there in *Eimi* (1933). While the content was factual, the writing style was akin that of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In 1932, he met Marion Morehouse, a professional model whose career melded with his own (in the sense that they weren't conflicting) and they lived together, apparently without marrying, for the rest of their lives. He then self-published *No Thanks* (1935) after fourteen printing houses had rejected it and, in the same year, wrote a ballet based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that was never produced.

Despite these setbacks, Cummings was increasingly recognized in literary circles and the next decade clearly established his reputation. He produced *50 Poems* (1940), *1 x 1* (1944) and, after finally seeing his daughter again, he wrote a play called *Santa Claus* (1946). He won a number of literary honours – the Guggenheim Fellowship (twice!), the Shelley Memorial Award, the Bollingen Prize and the Fellowship of the American Academy of Poets. He was also given a guest professorship at Harvard in 1952, delivering the Charles Norton Lectures between then and 1955 (later collected as *i: six nonlectures*).

Cummings produced three more books of poetry in his final decade: *XAIPE: Seventy-one Poems* (1950), *Poems 1923–1954* (1957) and *95 Poems* (1958). Two more, *73 Poems* (1963) and *Fairy Tales* (1965) were published after his death. He spent the last decade of his life travelling, taking speaking engagements and retiring to a holiday farm in New Hampshire that his father had bought when Cummings was a boy. He died of a stroke on 03 September 1962 and his cremated remains were interred at the Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston. His funeral was conducted by Dana McLean Greeley, then president of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Marion Morehouse died in 1969 and was buried in an adjoining plot.

ANZUUA NEWS

After much deliberation, the workshop on lay ministerial training is now to be held in Melbourne early next year, led by ANZUUA ministers and perhaps an expert from overseas. ANZUUA will assist those who have to travel long distances to attend.

Pauline Rooney represented ANZUUA at the Special Meeting of the ICUU Council on 20 October, mainly held to establish its budget for next year. Other matters included a new band structure for financial contributions from member bodies and upgrading the position of Executive Secretary to full-time.

The music anthology, *A Southern Chalice*, is now complete and print copies should be ready by the end of this year. When printing costs are finalised, congregations will be notified of the amounts payable. Rev. Derek McCullough, head of the Editorial Board, intends to have additional copies printed for other parties, such as the ICUU.

The 2013 ANZUUA Conference will be held in Auckland on 25–28 October, which is the (New Zealand) Labour Day long weekend. It will commence on the Friday evening and end at midday on the Monday. Auckland UC is organising a retreat in January, where more detailed planning will be carried out.

Our Treasurer, Peter Abrehart reports that ANZUUA's accounts are in order and dues have been received from all member groups. An insurance policy has at last been settled on but may need to be reviewed next year if other needs are identified.



International
Council of
Unitarians and
Universalists

ICUU NEWS

Travel Opportunities

Unitarians of India



The ever-busy travel service of the UU Partner Church Council has organized a pilgrimage to the Khasi Hills in the northeast of India over 05–13 March 2013. This will be based in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya state, and will largely focus on the long-standing Unitarian communities there. In addition to a tour of the city and its Don Bosco Museum of indigenous cultures, there will be day-trips to the Jowai Unitarian Church, headquarters of the Unitarian Union of North East India, the Annie Margaret Barr ‘Children’s Village’* in Kharang, the spectacular hills and waterfalls of the Cherrapunji Gorge and a tea plantation. Participants from congregations that have partner churches in the region will be able to visit those villages.

For those who wish to see more of India, there is a pre-tour from 27 February that will take in (Old and New) Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. Highlights in Delhi include the Raj Ghat, where Mahatma Gandhi was cremated, the Jama Masjid mosque (largest in India), the historic Red Fort, the tomb of Emperor Humayun and much more. Agra is the site of the Taj Mahal and it, too, has a fort dating from the Moghul Empire. The trip to Jaipur in Rajasthan has a stopover at the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri, followed by an elephant ride to the Amber Fort and tours of the 18th Century Observatory and the Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds).

For more information, see: www.uupcc.org/tours.html. Note also that they also have a trip to the Philippines in March 2013 and a ‘budget’ tour of Transylvania in May. It may be possible to go on the pre-tour and not the main pilgrimage, but the connecting flight from Jaipur will land in Calcutta.

* Rev. Barr (1899–1973) of the UK worked in the Khasi Hills for decades, starting in 1938. She founded the Children’s Village as an orphanage and school in the early 1950s.

The Indian Council of Unitarian Churches (ICUC) was founded at the end of 1987 during the centenary celebration of the Unitarian Union of North East India at Jowai. A Full Member of the ICUU, it comprises the Khasi Hills Unitarians, the Unitarian Christian Church of Chennai (Madras) and three smaller groups in Hyderabad, Udaipur and Erode. The quarterly *ICUC Bulletin* is printed in English. The current president of the ICUC is Rev. Harrison Kingsley of Chennai.

The Unitarian Union of North East India, better known to us as the Khasi Hills Unitarians, was founded by Hajjom Kissor Singh in 1887. His family followed the traditional Khasi religion, which was neither Hindu nor Muslim, but he was educated in a Welsh Calvinist mission school. He found that form of Christianity unauthentic and unsuited to his country, so he attempted to devise a ‘Religion of One God’ that would better suit his people. Rev. Charles Dall, an American Unitarian missionary working in Calcutta, supplied him materials and put him in contact with the US and UK Unitarian bodies.

Singh walked all over the hills of Meghalaya, preaching the faith and establishing many loyal congregations. Today, the UUNEI has 9000 members in 32 congregations and five fellowships in Meghalaya state, and three more in neighbouring Assam. With some international assistance, they have their own schools and a monthly journal, *U Nongwad*. Rev. Derrick Pariat is the current president of the UUNEI.

The Unitarian Christian Church of Chennai was formed in 1795 by a freed Indian slave, William Roberts, who learned about Unitarianism in England (a great story that I will print in a later issue). Roberts, who took that name while in the UK, translated Theophilus Lindsey’s prayer book* into Tamil to develop a distinctly Indian liturgy. The church’s 225 members were still meeting in the original building when they celebrated its bicentenary in 1995, but storm damage in 2005 hastened its deterioration and a new church was built in 2009 with funds sent from all over the world. The church also has a school and an evening college that trains women in sewing and tailoring.

* Rev. Lindsey founded the first avowedly Unitarian church in the UK – Essex Street Chapel in London, where the headquarters of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches now stands.

Creating A World Where All Beings Thrive: The Great Shift from 'Empire' to 'Earth Community' Consciousness

By Sally Mabelle

An old Cherokee told his grandson, “My son, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all. One is anger, jealousy, greed, resentment, inferiority, lies, and ego. The other wolf is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy, and truth.” The boy thought about it, and asked, “Grandfather, which wolf wins?” The old man quietly replied, “The one you feed.”

One wolf’s name is ‘Empire’ and the other wolf’s name is ‘Earth Community’. Overfeeding the wolf ‘Empire’ and starving the wolf ‘Earth Community’ has brought us to a critical point in history – coral reefs are dying; rainforests are disappearing; and our polar caps are melting. Our financial system is failing and social unrest and instability are rampant around the world.

Neal Donald Walsch, author of the *Conversations with God* book series, poses a question in his essay, ‘The Overhaul of Humanity’: How is it possible for seven billion human beings to all desire the same things (peace, security, prosperity, opportunity, happiness, and love) and yet be unable to collectively produce it... even after trying for thousands of years? If this question produces no immediate answer, we move to an unavoidable conclusion: There is something we do not fully understand about life, the understanding of which would change everything.

It is my belief that we can find the key to this understanding about life by examining the stories that are shaping our lives. When we are young and impressionable, we are told stories about the world and how it works. Being so open, we naturally believe these stories to be true. It’s these stories, told by our parents, teachers, governments, the media and so on, that impact on how we form our values and principles and, subsequently, our behaviour.

Young people gobble up stories as a spiritual food. Some foods feed the wolf ‘Empire’ and other foods feed the wolf ‘Earth Community’. It seems we’ve been feeding the wrong wolf. If we have been feeding the wrong wolf, how do we start feeding the other wolf before it dies of starvation?

One man who is feeding ‘Earth Community’ with new stories and solutions is David Korten. Founder and President of the People-Centered Development Forum in the US (www.livingeconomiesforum.org), he is an author, activist, and former Harvard Business School professor. He left Harvard when he realised that what he was being asked to teach about economics was unsustainable and unhealthy.

Dr. Korten refers to the age we’re living in now as ‘the great turning’ (a phrase he adopted from [Dr. Joanna Macy](#)). We’re in the midst of a great turning from Empire consciousness to Earth Community consciousness. One of the keys to making this shift is in telling stories which paint a new picture of how the world works.

Empire stories propagate a model of society which has prevailed for some 5,000 years. Empire feeds off stories which encourage increasing consumption and control of Earth’s precious resources. It feeds off stories that ‘success’ means being ‘better than’ others. Empire organises itself by principles of elite domination and competition to appropriate the resources of society for the exclusive benefit of the few. Earth Community stories paint a different picture. They envision a model of society which organises itself by principles of partnership and shares resources equitably to grow the potential of the whole.

Let’s look at some examples of stories from an Empire perspective and then from an Earth Community perspective. These stories come from the story matrix on David Korten’s website and are listed here with his permission:

Empire Story: Obedience to God the father, creator, and ruler of all is the path to salvation and eternal bliss in the afterlife. **Earth Community Version:** The image of God as human patriarch is an invention of Empire. All of Creation is the manifestation of an integral universal intelligence. We are all interconnected.

Empire Story: It is our right and responsibility as humans to populate, subdue, and dominate the Earth. **Earth Community Version:** It is our responsibility as humans to honor the living Earth as sacred and to live in balanced, respectful, and creative partnership with all beings that comprise Earth’s web of life.

Empire Story: Money is the measure of wealth and those who make money are society's wealth creators. **Earth Community Version:** Most money exists only as numbers stored on computer hard drives. Wall Street's ideal is to grow these numbers through financial games that produce nothing of real value, which is a form of theft.

Empire Story: Unregulated markets assure the optimal use of resources and maximize the well-being of all. **Earth Community Version:** Markets without appropriate rules are an invitation to the unscrupulous to engage in unethical behavior that violates basic market principles.

Empire Story: We all do best when we each focus on maximizing our personal financial interests. **Earth Community Version:** Humans survive and thrive only in community. We all do best when we each contribute to the well being of the whole.

Empire Story: The sole purpose and responsibility of business is to maximize profit. **Earth Community Version:** The proper purpose and responsibility of business is to serve the community. Profit is a means, not an end.

Let's look into a specific, timely example, the Olympics. The Olympics are a wonderful sporting event that celebrates excellence in sport and unites nations in friendship. Is this an Empire story or an Earth Community story? Let's take a closer look. Writing in *The Telegraph*, its London editor Andrew Gilligan suggests that this is an Empire story. He writes:

"Billions of pounds are taken from poor and middle-income taxpayers to build temples to a corporate and sporting elite. Grassroots sport is stripped of money to fund the most rarefied sports imaginable. The police and the state are turned into the enforcement arm of Coca-Cola. The main sponsors of the Olympics – the taxpaying people of Britain – are largely excluded from the event they paid for. Not just the Games sites themselves, but many other parts of their own city, are sealed off from them. Some Londoners are evicted from their homes and their houses destroyed to make room for the games. Others find overnight and without warning that their homes are to be converted into military missile sites to protect against potential terrorism at the games. Protestors against any of this are arrested and detained on the flimsiest of pretexts. Almost every promise ever made by the organisers – from the budget to the 'greenest games ever,' from the number of jobs that will be created to the number of new houses that will be built – turns out to be false."

At the 2008 Beijing Olympics thousands of people were made homeless and entire areas starved of water for the duration of the Games so that the Olympic areas could look 'fresh and green'. England is one of the unhealthiest country's in Europe, yet one of the biggest fast food giants in the world, McDonalds, is the main sponsor for the London Olympic Games.

Reporting for *The Guardian*, Crime Correspondent Sandra Laville noted that "one former London 2012 commissioner of the 'Olympics Sustainability Watchdog group', Meredith Alexander, quit her role earlier this year over the awarding of a £7 m. Olympic sponsorship deal to Dow Chemical. Dow owns Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), responsible for the 1984 gas disaster in Bhopal, India, which killed 25,000 people." And what happens to people that challenge the Empire Story? The former commissioner was behind a small theatre performance protest designed to highlight the problems of corporate sponsorship of the Games. The police arrested six of the performers on suspicion of criminal damage for...'spilling custard'.

While we were watching the Beijing Olympics, 61-year-old Chinese activist, Ji Sizun, took advantage of a promise made by the Chinese Government to the international community. The promise was that, during the games, people or protesters who wanted to express their personal opinions could do so in line with common practice in other countries. The Government even established three official protest zones in Beijing where groups and individuals would be free to peacefully demonstrate without fear of official reprisals.

According to Phelim Kine, reporting for foreignpolicy.com, on the day of the opening ceremony, Ji entered a police station in Beijing's Xicheng district to file his application to protest peacefully. But, as a veteran activist, Ji took precautions. He contacted several foreign correspondents and asked them to wait outside the station while he entered to pick up his permit. About 90 minutes after Ji entered the police station, those reporters watched aghast as several men escorted him out of the building into an unmarked car. That was the last time anyone heard from him for five months. Later, Ji was sentenced to a three-year prison term.

The Associated Press reported that, eight years after the 2004 Athens Games, many of the Olympic venues Greece built at great expense remain abandoned or rarely used. They are the focus of great public anger as the country struggles through a fifth year of recession and nearly three years of a debt crisis that has seen a surge in poverty and unemployment.

The Olympics ran for 17 days this year. During each of those days an estimated 50,000 people died of starvation or waterborne diseases – 85% of those were children. This is one person every two seconds. At the closing ceremony, the death-list over those 17 days had reached 850,000 people. I wonder what the 14.4 billion dollars that London spent on the Games could have done for those people. What choice would you have made if the call went out to humanity for a vote? Spend the money on a two-week sporting event or save 850,000 lives, mostly children?

What we have been told, and sold, about the Olympics is an Empire Story. Some people think that ‘it’s more complicated than that’- 14.4 billion would not put a dent in the world hunger issue. This, sadly, is an Empire story which leads people to justify the continuing elitism and lack of bold action. There is a place for the Olympic Games – but, in an Earth Community, those games are not held until everyone is fed.

Empire’s ultimate instrument of control is cultural power – the ability to control the defining stories of the public culture. Who controls the media controls the stories. Whoever controls the stories controls the culture and the behaviour of people. World media are dominated by a handful of corporations. The result is a cultural trance. This trance numbs us out to our essential impulse to connect with each other and leads us to believe we need to compete to survive. Advertisers have become masters of the art of cultural manipulation, creating an individualistic culture of material excess that now threatens human survival.

What is the cultural story of human nature that we’ve been told which blocks the Great Turning from Empire to Earth Community Consciousness? It’s a story that promotes fear because fear makes populations more vulnerable to manipulation.

Here’s the Empire Story of human nature:

Because it is our nature to be fearful, violent, greedy, and individualistic our wellbeing depends on a system of hierarchy to impose order and channel our destructive impulses to constructive ends. There is no alternative. Indeed, although it may bring pain and hardship to the losers, it is in fact all for the good, because the brutal competition of war and the unrelenting pursuit of individual profit builds character, drives innovation and leads to greatness. It has been the key to human success since the beginning of time and ultimately works to the benefit of everyone.

What is the contrasting story of human nature that has the power to shift our world culture and transform our society? This is a story that promotes love because love is our true nature and when we are feeling love, we are more connected to ourselves and each other and so less vulnerable to manipulation.

Here’s the Earth Community story of human nature:

We humans have a natural capacity and desire to be loving, peaceful, generous, and cooperative. Despite our wondrous cultural differences, at the core of our being, the majority want a world of healthy happy children, families, and communities living in peace and cooperation in a vibrant natural environment.

We have scientific proof that cooperativeness is inherent in human nature: In 2006 scientist Felix Warneken at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, conducted a study on the human impulse to care in 18-month-old babies. The babies watched him struggle with ordinary tasks such as hanging towels – over and over, he would ‘accidentally’ drop clothespins and each of the 24 babies offered him help with in seconds. If he deliberately threw pins on the floor, they didn’t help, but if he looked like he needed help, the babies toddled over quickly, grabbed the pin and eagerly handed it to him. Warneken purposely did not thank the babies to test if their motivation was altruistic OR motivated by expectation of praise. It turns out, they were simply responding to a stranger’s need for help.

In 2002, neuroscientists at Emory University in Atlanta used a new technique, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), to look at what happens in people’s brains when they choose to act out of greed OR to act out of mutual benefit. What they found made the brain light up in its pleasure centres most noticeably was when people chose cooperative and win-win strategies over winning for themselves only.

We're wired for reciprocity and mutual caring more than selfishness IF we feel we have the choice. Otherwise, under stress or artificial scarcity conditions, we may not act naturally. As Lynne McTaggart, a best-selling author, researcher and lecturer says, "What's required now is a major change of story about who we are. We need to reframe the Darwinian idea that in order for someone to win – someone else has to lose."

According to **Jack Canfield**, co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Souls* series, instead of celebrating 'go-getters', we need to start celebrating 'go-givers'. Scientific evidence shows that we are a choice-making species and that emotionally and morally mature humans are naturally cooperative, compassionate, and peace loving. It is our nature to create and live in caring, cooperative community. Those who seek meaning and identity in a brutal competition for wealth, dominating power, and material excess reveal the disabilities of an immature human consciousness.

It is no accident that the pleasure centers of the human brain are wired to reward us with happiness when we engage in acts of loving service to the community of life. It is our nature. So what can we do to start turning our stories and our world around? What strategies can we use to translate our positive visions into powerful stories capable of shaping a new culture?

One man who is telling new stories is **Dr. Sharif Abdullah**, Professor of Conflict Resolution at Portland State University and a societal transformationist. Abdullah is the author of three books: *Seven Seeds for a New Society*, *The Power of One – Authentic Leadership in Turbulent Times*, and the award-winning *Creating a World that works for All*. Abdullah says, "While it is easy to blame multinational corporations, power-mad politicians, racial/ethnic elites, gender politics and other factors, the bottom line is that 'WE', ordinary people, create this world by: our actions, our inactions, [and] our acquiescence to the bad leadership of others."

One NZ organisation which is leading the way in telling new stories is The Awareness Party, a political movement for social transformation based on seven founding principles:

1. **Oneness** of all life, one people on one planet;
2. **Awareness** of the earth as a 'self-regulated' living being;
3. **Kindness** in thoughts, words, and actions;
4. **Compassion** for all living things in all situations;
5. **Self-responsibility** for everything we do, say, and experience;
6. **Balance** in all areas of society and the environment;
7. **Community** collaboration and operating in groups as the way for humanity to move forward.

One New Zealand publication telling new stories is *Happyzine* (www.happyzine.co.nz), an e-zine with the purpose of inspiring positive social and environmental change by spreading good news. *Happyzine* is 'solutions journalism' showing that for every perceived obstacle, there are countless ways of moving through, around, or over it. It provides a forum for flexible, positively expectant thinkers to express their world-views about each other, our society, our environment and our ideas.

Another publication spreading new stories was created by the 'Positive Futures Network' is *YES! Magazine* (www.yesmagazine.org), which reframes the biggest problems of our time in terms of their solutions. Online and in print, *YES! Magazine* tells stories about real people working for a better world and empowers people with the vision and tools to create a healthy planet and vibrant communities. They do this by: reframing issues and outlining a path forward; giving a voice to the people who are making change; and offering resources to use and pass along.

As Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." It's up to us to envision, to collaborate, and to create the change we want to see in the world. Let's wake up and start questioning the stories we're told and that we're repeating about ourselves.

Going back to the old Cherokee story of the battle between the two wolves, Empire Consciousness and Earth Community Consciousness, I'd like to leave you with this question: Which wolf are you feeding? Because the wolf you feed, is the wolf that determines the quality of your life, the quality of our community, and the quality of our world.

[Abstracted from an address at the Auckland Unitarian Church on 05 August 2012 – you can read the full text on her website: www.sallymabelle.com. Sally is a member of AUC as well as a professional speaker, coach, facilitator, and trainer in leadership communication and personal development. Formerly an actress and singer, she is from Pennsylvania, via Colorado and Hawai'i, and came to New Zealand in 2004.]

O CHRISTMAS TREE

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
How murderous and wasteful
To end your life so carelessly,
So thoughtless and distasteful.
We carry on traditions vile,
To honor Superstition's child.
O Christmas Tree, I feel for thee,
How murderous and wasteful.



O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
How brittle are thy branches.
It matters not a damn to me
You came from farms or ranches.
In parking lots you waste away.
That's where you spent Thanksgiving Day.
O Christmas Tree, it saddens me,
How brittle are thy branches.

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
I oftentimes am wond'ring
How beautiful this world could be,
If Man would cease his squand'ring.
He listens well when "Profit" sings,
With no respect for living things.
How beautiful this world could be,
I oftentimes am wond'ring.



O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
This year it is official:
To show my deep regard for thee,
I'm buying "artificial".
I'll work for change, I promise thee,
For only Man can save a tree.
Long life to thee, O Christmas Tree,
I'm buying "artificial".

Jerry Phillips (1997)

Little is known about Jerry Phillips, save that he wrote a number of such 'anti-carols' in the same year and assembled them into an on-line document entitled *The Humanist Hymnal*. Exhaustive Internet searches have only yielded some dormant websites but it appears that he lives in New Mexico.

The actual carol has a number of English versions but the melody is an old German folk tune and *Tannenbaum* (fir-tree) lyrics date back to 1550. The best-known of those was written in 1824 by the Leipzig organist and composer, Ernst Anschütz (1780–1861).

We'll close with some 'Christmas corn' from the American humorist and wordsmith, Richard Lederer, whose website (www.verbivore.com) is well worth a visit:

James Fenimore Cooper wrote about the life of Santa Claus. Naturally he titled it *The Deer Sleigher*. He could have also called it *The Abdominal Snowman*.

Santa's elves are subordinate Clauses. ... And anytime he wishes, Santa can give them the sack.

He loves sliding down chimneys because it soots him. ... Since Santa has to go up and down a wide variety of chimneys on Christmas, should he have a yearly flue shot?

if everything happens that can't be done



if everything happens that can't be done
(and anything's righter
than books could plan)
the stupidest teacher will almost guess
(with a run
skip
around we go yes)
there's nothing as something as one



one hasn't a why or because or although
(and buds know better
than books don't grow)
one's anything old being everything new
(with a what
which
around we come who)
one's everything so



so world is a leaf so a tree is a bough
(and birds sing sweeter
than books
tell how)
so here is away and so your is a my
(with a down
up
around again fly)
forever was never till now



now i love you and you love me
(and books are shuter*
than books
can be)
and deep in the high that does nothing but fall
(with a shout
each
around we go all)
there's somebody calling who's we



we're anything brighter than even the sun
(we're everything greater
than books
might mean)
we're everything more than believe
(with a spin
leap
alive we're alive)
we're wonderful one times one



e.e. cummings

* shut-er; i.e., more shut

This poem's original title was just 'XIV', so it was probably published in *Tulips and Chimneys* or one of Cummings' private publications. Despite the typically erratic style, it has a consistent rhyme scheme and stanza structure. (I think the latter has the cadence of a skipping-rope song.) It appears to express the exhilaration of love, the oneness of the loving couple and of the world, the freedom of nature experienced at first hand, and more that is best left to professional analysts (see 'Acknowledgements' on the last page).

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN HERESY BEGIN WITH THE BIBLE (PART 2)

By Rev. Peter Ferguson

(continued from the previous issue)

Michael Servetus was always in trouble. The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Jean Tagault, at the University of Paris, suspended him for his views on astrology. In fact, Tagault called for the death penalty against Servetus but the Court, more lenient, ruled that his book on astrology be withdrawn from publication. From then on he only published anonymously. Paris became too risky, so he moved to Montpellier to finish his medical studies. (It is uncertain that Servetus ever actually completed his medical degree.)

After a brief stay in Charlieu, he locked horns with another doctor and wounded his attacker in a sword fight. Servetus spent several days in prison for this incident. He then moved to Vienne, where he commenced his medical practice. He was well respected and was appointed as the Archbishop's personal physician. These were productive years and Servetus travelled and published extensively across a wide range of subjects, including three editions of the Bible, Spanish poetry, stories from the Old Testament and children's stories. In 1548 he became a French citizen.

In 1553 he published his book, *The Restoration of Christianity*, in which he became the first European to describe the pulmonary circulation of the blood. His book not only rejected the doctrine of the Trinity but also that of predestination, which teaches that God condemns souls to Hell before they are born. Servetus sent a copy to John Calvin in Geneva. Calvin was incensed and from then on sought to prosecute Servetus. Through intermediaries, Calvin doxed Servetus in to the Inquisition pointing out his heresies. (Calvin, himself, would have been burnt as a heretic if the Inquisition had got their hands on him!)

In Vienne, the Inquisition arrested Servetus and held him in custody pending his trial for heresy. But he had a lucky break and it is suspected that the Archbishop of Vienne arranged for Servetus to escape. For reasons unknown (perhaps he was guided by his astrological charts), Servetus made his way to Geneva where he attended worship in Calvin's church and was recognised.

Geneva, at that time, was Calvin's 'City of God' and a theocracy, Calvin being the Protestant Pope! The rights of private conscience and personal liberty did not exist. Apart from hangings and other forms of execution, at least 60 people were burnt at the stake under Calvin's rule. A Genevan doctor, Gerome Bolsec, had publically criticised Calvin's view on predestination. He was threatened with a whip and driven out of Geneva. Three men who laughed during a sermon were thrown into prison for three days. A young girl who had slapped her parents was beheaded to vindicate the dignity of the Fifth Commandment: *Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you*. A man was thrown into prison for wanting to call his son 'Claude', after a Catholic saint.

At his trial, the most damning evidence against Michael Servetus was his overt use of Koranic texts against the Christian Trinity. Radical reformer that he was, Servetus' view of Islam was not that of an enemy – very unlike his contemporaries who viewed Islam as an unmitigated evil. Luther's successor, Melancton, complained that Servetus' Mohammedan teachings had spread to Poland. What follows now gives us a clue to the reason why so much hostility was directed at Michael Servetus and anyone who showed the slightest tolerance towards Islam. It was like the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA.

From its beginnings in the 6th Century, there had been strife between the two religions. In the 16th Century, memory of the Crusades was still very much alive for both Christians and Muslims. It needs to be remembered that, only 100 years before the burning of Servetus, the armies of Mehmed overthrew Constantinople, the principal city of what had been the Eastern Roman Empire. This event shook the foundations of Christendom and the balance of power lay with Islam. The threat was real. Hungary and the whole of central Europe were under the rule of the Ottoman Islamic Empire.

Barbarossa and his corsairs ruled the Mediterranean. The coast of Spain and southern France were constantly at risk of invasion. In 1543, Nice surrendered to the Ottoman forces of Barbarossa, who pillaged the city and carried off thousands of captives. By 1534, the Ottoman supremacy was complete. Barbarossa dominated the Mediterranean and Spanish and French coastlands for decades. To make matters worse Europe had been split in two by the Protestant Reformation. Luther was justifiably afraid that Christendom could be overwhelmed by Islam and stated that Servetus' views could infect and weaken all of Europe.

Calvin's attitude was more theological. He claimed that the Muslims had put Mohammad on the same pedestal as Christ. He wrote: "*Muslims are guilty of wickedness and this could lead so many people to destruction that all Muslims deserved to be executed.*"

In his books, Servetus stated that Judaism and Islam had remained faithful to the truth about the nature of God and, in his final book, Servetus quotes the Koran where it describes the persons of the Trinity as the sons of Beelzebub. Earlier, he had described the Trinity as the three headed dog, Cerberus, the guardian of Hell. Of course, in those days no interreligious dialogue existed. Servetus' view was: "*We believe in one God not in those added partners.*"

Given the times in which Servetus lived we can understand, but not condone, the brutal murder of Michael Servetus. How then should we remember Michael Servetus? The following adjectives might describe him: foolish, naïve, stubborn, brilliant, inventive and intolerant. Certainly, Servetus was the first reformer in modern times to question the Trinity.

Until recently, Servetus has been seen as the forerunner of contemporary Unitarianism, but there is another person who possibly can better claim that title. He is the French scholar, Sebastian Castellio, who had been a colleague of John Calvin in Geneva. As a 24-year-old Catholic scholar in Lyon, he had witnessed the burnings of heretics by the Inquisition and was so appalled and sickened that he joined Calvin in his Genevan stronghold. The friendship did not last very long and Castellio soon fell foul of Calvin and took refuge in Basel. Castellio wrote that he could smell the smoke again when he heard Calvin and his friends mock and deride those with whom they disagreed.

After the burning of Servetus, Calvin was congratulated by nearly all the Protestant leaders: "It was a job well done!" Calvin never showed the slightest remorse and had himself reimbursed for the costs of the trial from the gold coins that were Servetus' only assets. But that was not the end of the sad story. Calvin and Castellio became involved in a war of words over the burning of Michael Servetus. Castellio wrote to Calvin: "*It is absurd to use earthly weapons in spiritual warfare. The enemies of Christians are vices, they are to be overcome by virtues. The development of Christian character is neglected while Christians speculate about the nature of Christ, the Trinity and baptism. These do not make a man a better person.*"

Calvin responded: "*Freedom of conscience is a diabolical doctrine, a blasphemy because it undermines doctrine. Society must get rid of this impiety, even by the death of those who profess it.*" Tragically for Castellio, Calvin saw to it that he lost his job at the university in Basel. Without money and friends, he and his family faced starvation. Meanwhile, preparations were going on in Basel to try him for the same heresy that claimed Servetus' life. But his would-be judges and executioners were foiled because mercifully, in 1563 at the age of 48, he died at home in his bed having lost his will to live.

In my view and that of a growing number of scholars, Castellio, rather than Servetus, should be seen as the forerunner of Unitarianism. The American Unitarian Universalist scholar, David Bambaugh, describes it like this: "*Servetus is part of Unitarianism's mythic past and speaks to us across the centuries because of his stubborn refusal to be deflected from the truth as he saw it. His death gave not only Unitarians a martyr but it provided the occasion on which Castellio proclaimed the great commitment to reason and tolerance in matters of religious conviction.*"

The name of Sebastian Castellio lives on, despite Calvin's attempts to burn and destroy his books and ideas. Castellio's views have not been lost to history. His pleas for tolerance and respect, for kindness and mercy, are today the cornerstones of Unitarianism and Western liberal thought.

[This concludes the text of Peter Ferguson's address to the Melbourne Unitarian Church on 26 August. Anyone who hasn't seen the first half, which dealt with doctrinal disputes in the early Christian church and the persecution of heretical sects in medieval Europe, should access the Spring 2012 issue on the ANZUUA website: www.anzuua.org.

Rev. Ferguson is an ex-Anglican priest who served parishes in New South Wales, South Africa and Western Australia between 1961 and 2000. In South Africa, he was involved in the struggle against apartheid, and he was President of the WA Peace Committee in 1979–83. From 1984 to 1993, he was the Anglican Chaplain at Curtin University of Technology in Perth. He founded the Unitarian Association of WA in 2000 and has been the President of ANZUUA since 2009.]

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ADELAIDE WOMEN'S LEAGUE AND FRIENDS

By Maureen Kowalick

Following a suggestion by the British League of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women of linking all Unitarian Churches throughout the world by means of a Friendly League, a group of twenty-five women from the Unitarian Christian Church in Adelaide met on 22 April 1912 and became inaugurated with their British counterparts. In 1916, there were fifty-seven branches around the world. Within one year of establishment, the Adelaide League had sixty-five members. The main object of the League was to bring Liberal Christian Women into closer cooperation and fellowship.

The Women's League is the oldest of the special groups within the framework of the congregation, 100 years old on 22 April. It is a most interesting history, beginning in 1912, a history that has gracefully adapted to many changes:

1. A change of the church's address in 1971 from Wakefield Street in the city to 99 Osmond Terrace in the suburb of Norwood.
2. Changes in name from the Liberal Christian Women's League to the Unitarian Women's League in 1977, and then in 2001 to the Unitarian Women's League and Friends.
3. Change in membership as numbers fluctuated over time, sometimes raising question of continuance.
4. Changes in the structure and content of meetings as they became less formal. We no longer include prayers or Bible readings. As time passed, alliances were made with new organisations and others withdrawn. This changed the focus and discussion at meetings.
5. Changes to days and times of League meetings, and change of League venues. Sometimes meetings were held in the homes of members, at the Botanic Gardens or other local places of interest.
6. Changes in the League's financial status as money was raised through a wide variety of successful and innovative projects. This was spent on church and manse upkeep, furnishing the Shady Grove chapel at Balhannah in the Adelaide Hills, and donated to many charitable organisations at home and abroad. When cash reserves were very low, regrettable decisions had to be made and support in some areas was lessened or ceased. It was a matter of priorities and, when funds and membership allowed, new charities and interests were adopted. Over many years, funds have been sent to the Kharang Rural Centre in the Khasi Hills of India to provide health care for the local Unitarian community.

During the World War I years, League members were busily engaged in knitting, sewing and collecting for food parcels which were sent to Britain and Europe. At home, the ladies made valuable contributions to the smooth running of the church, cleaning brass, supplying tablecloths and kitchenware, arranging flowers, and raising money for the renovation of the church and the manse in Trevelyan Street, Wayville. They raised funds by holding garden parties, trading tables, concerts, cake competitions, fetes, cake stalls, and musical and social afternoons. A 'Visiting Branch' was formed of four members who kept in touch with scattered members of the congregation and those who were ill or bereaved.

In 1921 the League became affiliated with the Travellers' Aid Society in Australia. Members saw this as a way of keeping in touch with Unitarians coming to Adelaide from other states and from overseas. This later expanded to greeting and helping travellers from all walks of life. Up to the present time, we have sent a delegate to the Travellers' Aid Society. In 1925 the League became affiliated with the National Council of Women in Australia and delegates attended their meetings, helping to formulate many important social and safety reforms. That year saw League ladies giving out literature at a booth at the Adelaide Exhibition.

An important avenue of communication was the 'Friendly Links' network, where British League volunteers took on the role of letter writers to Unitarian League Secretaries around the world, who at each meeting would share the news received. We still received letters up to the present time. The ladies took a great interest in news from England, as many of them had family ties with Britain. Steadfastly loyal to the Crown, they enthusiastically took part with the National Council of Women in welcoming and catering for Royal visitors. Frequently, members would absent themselves from meetings because of travel plans to the 'Old Country' and, on their return, news of their adventures and of the people they met was very much enjoyed.

To fulfill their aim to assist in meeting the needs of the Church, until 1975 the League posted church calendars and minister's sermons to distant members, the sick and the elderly, paying the printing costs. They established a small circulating library, chiefly for the use of their country folk. Ladies from the Shady Grove group kept in touch and later the ladies from the Tranmere branch. These fellowships were offshoots of the Adelaide church.

Guest speakers were frequently invited to speak on a variety of interesting and educational topics. At first, they spoke at alternate meetings only, but this varied over the years according to time limitations, availability of speakers and declining numbers of members. Speakers included overseas travellers, current ministers, social workers and members of the church.

In 1937 the League joined with other Christian denominational church Leagues to become the Women's United Church Association. This move was a significant gesture of inter-church friendship and cooperation working for a common goal. Apart from attending each others' meetings and church occasions, they worked together once a month to raise money for charities, usually in the Town Hall during 'At Home' functions where entertainment and afternoon teas were held. (Until 1977. the church carried the name 'The Unitarian Christian Church of S.A. Inc'. After that, we became the Unitarian Church of S.A. Inc.)

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, it was decided as a show of support for Britain and its Royal Family to begin each meeting by singing 'God Save the King'. Considered the patriotic thing to do, the ladies bought a number of War Savings Certificates. They sewed, knitted and sent parcels overseas, as they had done during the First World War.

In 1940 the League was invited to send a delegate to the Women's World Day of Prayer Committee. In 1942-43, the turn had fallen to have a Unitarian, Mrs. Dora Harris, appointed President of the Women's United Church Association. In May 1945, doctrinal differences were brought to the surface. Mrs. Herbert, a representative from the Women's World Day of Prayer Association, sought an interview with the Rev. George Hale, the Unitarian minister. She had misgivings about the Unitarian presence, given that Unitarians could not conform to the doctrinaire basis of membership that affirmed 'Jesus Christ as Saviour of the World', as was written in their Constitution.

Mrs. Harris, the Unitarian League Secretary, undertook to talk about this with Mrs. Herbert and explained the feelings of Unitarians on this issue. Following this, Mrs. Armstrong, President of the W.W.D. of P. Association asked her Committee to consider the deletion of the words from the Constitution with the idea that it was not acceptable to Unitarians. Mrs. Greeneklee, the Unitarian delegate, said that Unitarians did so regard Jesus as 'Saviour of the World' provided they were allowed their Unitarian interpretation of the word 'Saviour', and that "we did not wish for their Constitution to be so altered". The matter was taken no further at this stage.

In March 1955 Mrs. Greeneklee reported that she had received a letter from Mrs. Hoady, Secretary of the Adelaide Nurses Christian Union. The letter stated that the ANCU wished to withdraw their delegate as a matter of principle, as they had learned that there was a delegate from the Unitarian Church also on the Committee. The matter was discussed at the next W.W.D. of P. Committee meeting, when Mrs Greeneklee gave a thoughtful and carefully prepared statement of the views of the Unitarian Church. The matter was referred to the Annual Meeting to be held in the year.

In April of that year, Mrs Greeneklee gave a full account of the discussion held at the meeting of delegates to the Women's World Day of Prayer Committee. She had upheld the view that Unitarian women had the right to be represented on the Committee as 'followers of Christ'. "Our cause calls for unity" met with sincere approval. All delegates, with the exception of one and the President, who refrained from voting, upheld this view. It was agreed that the matter be dropped. Unitarian members were divided as to whether they should leave or not, as in the first instance, they were invited to join the Women's World Day of Prayer Committee.

[Also in] 1955 a group of younger women in the church called 'Mothers and Others' became affiliated with the League as a Junior Branch. Their interests centered mainly on children of the Sunday School and younger adult women, in social and money raising activities.

In 1964 the League withdrew from the Women's United Church Association on an issue of conscience, after working with them for 27 years. This followed the Association's decision to represent the women's section of the Australian Council of Churches, which brings with it the necessity to subscribe to the doctrine of 'Jesus as God and Saviour', which excludes Unitarians. In July 1966 a copy of the proposed new Constitution of the Women's World Day of Prayer Association Committee was available. It seemed, from the wording that the League had no alternative but to withdraw, as it felt it could not agree to the new rules of membership. Other churches were understanding about our religious views, but they and the Unitarians did not regain the close cooperation of old.

For a while, other church Leagues sent invitations to their gatherings but they grew fewer as time passed. Invitations were received from the Presbyterian Women's League. In 1978, the Norwood Catholic Women's League sent an invitation to join in an 'All Paths' social afternoon and, in 1979, an invitation was received from the Salvation Army Women's Group for the Unitarian League to attend an Interdenominational Prayer Meeting during Advent. Low attendances at meetings and very different religious views made it difficult to find members to attend these meetings. When the Unitarian League hosted representatives from local churches to an afternoon tea, the invitation was not reciprocated. It seemed that, while Leagues were happy to meet together and eat together, praying together posed a problem.

In 1971, the Church moved from Wakefield Street, Adelaide, to Norwood. Repair and refurbishment of the old church would have been very expensive, and congregational numbers had significantly decreased. This move was initiated and supervised by the Rev. Allen Kirby, the minister of that time. At the Annual General Meeting on the 27th of October, 1977, the word 'Christian' was removed from the Church title, and so the League became 'The Adelaide Unitarian Women's League'.

As part of its Outreach programme, the ladies hosted women from the local Vietnamese community to a morning coffee in 1980, but language difficulties proved a barrier to communication and the contact was short-lived.

1981 saw the resignation from affiliation with the National Council of Women, but subscriptions to their newsletter continued until 2012. Falling membership was the deciding factor and few ladies were able to attend their meetings. Average attendance was down to eight, and discontinuation was given serious consideration, but it was decided to carry on. Meeting times were changed to the second Thursday of the month to see if more members could come.

In 1985 a taped recording was made of older members of the Church (men and women) reminiscing childhood experiences in the old city church. Later, in 2002, League members did the same thing. Boxes of good second-hand clothing and knitted infants' clothing were sent to Romania. Small travelling rugs made from remnant materials were given to the Travellers' Aid Society and, in 1994, boxes of bandages and swabs made from sheeting were sent to Rwanda. A raffle of needlework raised \$400 for the Women's Shelter.

Also in 1994 'in-between' get-togethers were arranged for members to visit places of interest around Adelaide. The same year, our members were asked to write recollections of their association with the church from their early days up to the present era. These, along with the tape recordings, are kept with the Church archives at Norwood. League ladies conducted a Sunday service in which the lives of six late Unitarian women of distinction were honoured.

Money raising was a feature of 1995. The League gave \$95 towards equipment for the Sunday School creche, bought tables for the church and items for use in the manse. \$108 was sent to the Unitarian Kharang Rural Centre in India to buy needed articles for use in their health centre. That year, the League provided \$930 for restoration work to be carried out on the vandalised grave of the late Catherine Helen Spence at St. Judes Cemetery, Brighton. When the cost of a plaque was added, the total contribution of the League and other generous supporters totalled \$1,141. In 1998 the League organised a collection of \$600 towards establishing the Catherine Helen Spence pavement memorial on Norwood Parade.

During 1997 a gift of \$100 was given to the Piano Fund, and \$210 was sent to Romania for education and family planning. Clothing and goods were donated to the local Quaker Shop and the Women's Shelter, Catherine House. The Women's League conducted a church service in June that year on the topic of 'Outreach' and a visit to the Planetarium with adults and children of the church was a fascinating and enjoyable experience.

That year senior church members again joined us for our Christmas Luncheon as they had done in the past. These invitations continued until 2003. Because of reduced numbers, it was reluctantly decided not to offer a Christmas Luncheon in future, but to make a point of inviting the church's older members to be guests at the Church Annual Christmas Party in December.

Men of the church were invited to join the League in 2001. The attendance was down to an average of six and the League was looking to boost numbers. The move proved to be of mutual benefit and the ladies enjoyed the company of men, who made a welcome input into the meetings. And so we changed our name to 'The Unitarian Women's League and Friends'. Time was spent considering our role of pastoral care within the church and we continued with the practice of sending birthday cards to older League members who were no longer able to attend meetings and to church members who were ill or bereaved.

The year 2005 was the sesquicentenary of the Church in South Australia and October saw the 150th anniversary of the first public Unitarian Church Service, conducted by the Rev. Crawford Woods at Green's Auction Mart in the city, soon after his arrival from England. To celebrate the occasion, the Women's League organised an historic collection of papers, books and photographs, which was displayed in the Shirley Beckwith Room.

A trading table raised \$481 for the Vietnamese Children's Fund. This fund aids those who still suffer the effects of the Vietnam War. In 2006 the League assisted a project involving relief for victims of the Pakistan earthquake by donating \$648 to the cause. [In 2007] the sermon, 'Human Responsibility', given in our church by Catherine Helen Spence, was put on CD. In the same year a trading table raised \$450 for the Kharang Rural Centre.

2008 was the year of the British Women's League's Centenary Celebrations held at Hatfield, UK, and we were asked to provide a short history of our own League to be exhibited among others from around the world. We were pleased to comply with this request. During 2009, we were able to donate \$400 to the Church Building Fund. That year, the Norwood church had a visit from Mary Wightman, the President of the British Women's League, and her husband, Bob.

Since 2001 we have contributed \$1800 to the Khasi Hills Unitarian Medical Centre in India. Delays in receiving the donations have been common but they have been very gratefully acknowledged. The last amount of \$450, raised in 2007, took five years to reach its intended destination, due to community restructuring and the need to make sure the money arrived safely. In the end, John Hewardine from England took it with him to the Centre when he visited it in late 2011.

During the last few years, with falling attendance, we continued to meet most months, welcoming interesting speakers to educate us and tell us about their travels and interests. Members of the congregation were invited to join us when speakers were present.

Early in 2012 we began to think about continuance as a League. Attendance was low; some of our members were elderly; and we had not been able to attract newcomers. Reluctantly, we agreed to end our League association and that the appropriate time to do this would be in May. That would take us beyond 22 April 2012, as this date would be exactly 100 years that Adelaide League members had continuously met. And so, on 10 May 2012, our members and supporters met at the church for our last gathering as a League. However, we intend to meet socially at times in the future.

A hundred years is a long time and we feel that, over the years, the achievements of generations of members have been consistent, varied and worthwhile. We have provided a friendly meeting place for women, and later, men, to meet over lunch and chat on topics of interest, to enjoy the experiences and knowledge of guest speakers, some of whom were past interim ministers. We have been able to support a number of charitable causes, in Australia and overseas. This record does not list the many smaller donations we have recorded in our Minutes.

Through regular postings of the British League newsletter, we have learned about League activities overseas, and received letters through the 'Friendly Links' Unitarian network from our British counterpart. Our Minute Books of meetings tell the tale, not only of League Activities, but also of some of our earlier church history. Tapes made of early recollections are an important source of information. I am grateful for the contributions made by our League pioneers, and for their commitment, fortitude, adaptability and integrity. We owe them our gratitude for so competently nurturing our League through the years, so that we later members could carry on their valiant work.

[Abstracted from a four-part series in the May to August issues of *The Adelaide Unitarian*, newsletter of the Adelaide Unitarian Church. The originals can be found on the AUC's website: www.adelaideunitarians.org. Maureen was the leader of the Women's League for many years and, up and till recently, she wrote both the League and Personalia columns for the newsletter.

Catherine Helen Spence (1825 –1910) was a Scottish-born author, teacher, journalist, politician and suffragette who lived in Adelaide from the age of fifteen. Her picture was on the \$5 notes issued in 2001 for the centenary of Federation. She attended the Adelaide church from 1850, preached her first sermons there in 1878 and served as acting minister when Pastor John Crawford Woods was absent. You can read more about her on the AUC website if you click the 'History' link on the home page.]

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC has had a stimulating year with Rob McPherson as their pastor, with recent Anglican (a female priest, no less!), Buddhist, Baha'i and Muslim guest speakers; also one from the Multifaith Association of South Australia. Their AGM was held on 21 October and the new Committee of Management elected Jennie Dyster as President. Her predecessor, Margaret Lambert is now the Vice-President.

Auckland UC recently conducted a funeral for a former minister, Rev. Lincoln Gribble – his grandfather was their first organist and his family had been Unitarians for generations. (There is a podcast of the eulogy on their website: www.unitarian.org.nz – use the 'Publications & Sermons' tab on the home page and click on 'Sermon Archives'.) The church has just appointed a new minister, Rev. Dr. Matt Tittle from the US, to start in February 2013. He is a retired naval officer and served as minister in Houston, Texas, and Paramus, New Jersey. He has also written a book titled *Harvest the Power: Developing Lay Leadership*.

Brisbane UUF elected Renee Hills as President at its AGM in September. In the last two months, they had a service of sacred music through the ages and a guest speaker from the Red Cross, who talked about their work and how they coordinate with other social justice and humanitarian aid organisations in times of crisis.

Christchurch Unitarians had a successful retreat at Takahanga Marae cultural centre in October, with 35 attendees including 13 children. They heard stories from the Maori elders about the history and traditions of their people, and observed the night sky (full report in the next issue). Their members also visited the local Quakers' service and, since then, some of the Quakers have been coming to their services.

Melbourne UC held facilitated meetings in August on the future of the church, the voluminous report of which they are now considering. [The AGM in September](#) elected a new treasurer and four new Committee members, while Peter Abrehart remains chairperson. The 160th anniversary was held on 25 November with Peter Cundall (previous host of the ABC's *Gardening Australia* program) as the guest presenter. The collection of *Beacon* magazines from 1939 to 2009 was launched at the same time and copies will be made available to other ANZUUA congregations. Individuals can purchase copies for \$15.

Perth Unitarians held their annual retreat at the usual New Norcia venue at the end of August (full report in the next issue). A recent speaker talked about the link between climate and nutrition. Some members of the congregation have been meeting at a restaurant for a shared meal after the Sunday service.

Spirit of Life UF now have Rev. Geoffrey Usher speaking on occasions, in addition to his son, Rev. Andrew Usher. Their founding president, Candace Parks, has returned to the US.

Sydney UC have a new resident musician who is a tenor in the Sydney Opera, so he sings while he plays the grand piano. Recent services have featured both music presentations and high-profile speakers. They have also received pictures of the impressive work that the village congregation at Nagbinlod in the Philippines have done on their little church, funded by SUC earlier this year, and another donation will be sent shortly.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This feels like being the easiest edition of *Quest* I have ever produced – certainly, I had no trouble meeting the deadline even as I had an issue of my other publication due out at the same time.

Anyone brave enough to read an in-depth analysis of the poem on p. 7 should go to: www.shmoops.com and search 'cummings everything'. It's a huge academic website that covers a wide range of English literature.

As always, my thanks to those who contributed articles. Just with Maureen Kowalick's history, the Women's League of the UK General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches is still quite active, with 76 branches in 14 of the GA's 17 Districts. You can read about the League's history and current activities on its website at: www.unitarian.org.uk/WomensLeague/index.htm.

The Autumn issue will come out at the beginning of March and I already have a fair amount of material for it. However, I like to keep ahead, so please send any material to: michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au.