

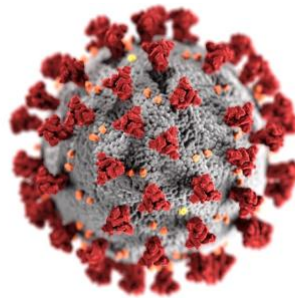


Quest



**Journal of the Australia New Zealand
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THE YEAR OF THE VIRUS: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

No-one needs to be told what a devastating year this has been for every country in the world. At the time of writing, the World Health Organisation's website lists over 65 million cases and 1.5 million deaths – both are sure to be underestimates and, in any case, the figures don't tell the whole story. While the mortality rate (2.3%) may well be the lowest for any pandemic on record, many survivors have suffered serious illness requiring hospitalisation and some of those have been left with lasting disabilities.

Neither should it be necessary to detail the massive social and economic disruption that has afflicted most of the world's countries. Between the lockdowns and the closure or restriction of many industries, this has truly been a 'once in a generation' event that will be remembered for the rest of our lifetimes. Moreover, those disruptions are far from over and one hesitates to speculate when they will be.

The purpose of this article is to review the changes that have taken place in our societies in these unprecedented circumstances and to explore which of them will be permanent, even if they are ameliorated when conditions return to something resembling what we previously regarded as normal. While it will be necessary to focus on our societies in Australia and New Zealand, the findings will presumably apply to all developed countries and probably to urban centres in the rest of the world.

Clearly, the first thing the pandemic has taught us is how totally unprepared even the most advanced countries were for such an event, despite many warnings from the World Health Organisation and other medical bodies. As we have seen, some countries responded sooner and better than others, but even the former saw their public health systems placed under great stress while those of the latter were overwhelmed. Accordingly, we can hope that all countries will allocate more resources to public health in future, especially to pandemic control.

The second thing that even the most free market-inclined countries have learned is that there are times when massive state intervention is needed to avert economic collapse and massive unemployment. Here again, some countries have done better than others, but all of them left significant segments of their populations without adequate support (if any). Mercifully, at least in Australia, the unemployment benefit was greatly increased while the Jobkeeper program saved many working people from losing their incomes while they were unable to work. It is to be hoped that those measures will not be withdrawn too soon during the putative recovery and the unemployment benefit will be increased from its previous pathetic level on a permanent basis.

Further with matters affecting employment, it was striking to see how rapidly many office workers and their employers adapted to working from home during the lockdowns, such that many such workers are still doing that most of the time now. This has been a great boon to those who previously had to commute long distances, with concomitant reductions in traffic congestion and air pollution. It is anticipated that, if this trend continues, Central Business Districts will see a permanent reduction in their daytime populations, resulting in lower rents and prices of dwellings in those areas. It may even mean that essential (but poorly-paid) workers, such as cleaners and maintenance staff, will be able to live closer to their workplaces.

However, working from home was not the only massive uptake of technology that boosted sales of computers and related software. While many of those workers used Zoom and other platforms for face-to-face communication with individuals and groups for the first time, ordinary people did the same to maintain contact with family and friends during the travel restrictions. They also used on-line ordering to have groceries, meals and other commodities delivered to their homes, and we can expect that convenience to retain its appeal under more normal conditions. The resulting spike in 'gig economy' jobs delivering these goods has highlighted the need for greater protections for those workers' wages, job security and insurance against accidental injury.

While a few industries have thrived during the emergency, many others have been hard-hit by the recession. It appears that domestic tourism is facing a prosperous summer now that all the interstate borders have reopened, it looks like overseas travel, even in the proposed South Pacific 'bubble', is still at least three months off. New Zealand is still reserving most of its hotel accommodation for quarantining returned citizens and, of course, travel to and from other continents is too unsafe to even be contemplated. Transporting goods by ship also has its risks, for which reason countries like ours have had cause to regret becoming dependent on overseas sources for certain products. Fortunately, few countries have resorted to protectionist policies despite their economic difficulties, but there is still a clear need for 'home-grown' sources of vital commodities.

Despite massive government support, it seems inevitable that a significant number of businesses will go bankrupt while others will undergo drastic restructuring. Both will result in workers being displaced, in many cases permanently, so we need a major retraining program and a huge investment in our long-neglected vocational education systems. It will be interesting to see how much of that can be effectively delivered on-line, as our schools, TAFE colleges and universities were certainly ill-prepared for that alternative when those institutions were closed. (So were many of their financially disadvantaged students, again highlighting the fact that poorer people have suffered disproportionately during this catastrophe.)

On a more positive note, something should be said about how entire national communities have responded to their governments' attempts (or lack thereof) to control the pandemic. Our countries were fortunate to have the support of their peoples in complying with the lockdowns and other restrictions, which were implemented swiftly once the gravity of the situation was recognised. Between that and the closure of our borders, the spread of the virus was checked in impressively short times, though mistakes were made and localised lockdowns were necessary in certain cities and regions.

Another aspect of community support is that, during the travel restrictions, many people relied on their families and neighbours for what little social life they could have. Even after that time, there are indications that people working from home were necessarily spending more time in their communities and rediscovering the benefits of that. There were even reports of children playing in their local parks and elsewhere in their neighbourhoods instead of sitting at home in front of computer playstations! Further, more people were taking up cycling, both to and from work and around their communities, and demanding that their local councils make more provisions for open spaces and cycleways.

This is not to say that the government support of workers and companies were perfect, as many people 'fell through the cracks' until something was belatedly done for them. Principally, these were international students and 'backpacker' workers who weren't eligible for the unemployment benefit, even though they had no means of returning to their home countries. There were also poorly-paid residents who couldn't afford to leave their jobs even if they felt sick, which exacerbated the spread of the virus. This particularly affected our aged care facilities, where many older people died due to inadequate and underpaid staffing – a national disgrace that has rightly now been addressed by a special Commission.

Lastly, there is reason to hope that the economic restructuring that will be necessary to restore something resembling full employment will include a massive shift toward 'green' sources of energy, recycling and other measures to combat climate change. It won't happen soon but the future may be brighter than we think!



ICUU NEWS

ICUU Council Meeting

UN Celebration

Proposed Merger of ICUU and UUPCC



As was reported earlier, the intended International Council Meeting and Conference scheduled for October in Montréal, Canada, had to be cancelled due to the COVID problem. However, a virtual Council Meeting was held with all the voting member groups represented and a new Executive Committee and Nominating Committee was elected. The ICUU's Executive Director, Rev Sara Ascher, reports as follows:

“At our 29 October 2020 ICUU virtual business meeting, we were able to address and accomplish all our necessary business, including the passing of our Fiscal Year 2021 budget [and] electing officers.... And we had the joy of welcoming *Aliança Unitária-Universalista da Língua Portuguesa* (the Portuguese Language Unitarian-Universalist Alliance) as an emerging member group.

Our new Executive Committee was elected, seeing Inga Brandes (Germany), Derek McAuley (UK), and John ‘Mich’ Michell (Canada) all re-elected to their positions of President, Vice President, and Treasurer, respectively. Shelley Adams (South Africa) shifted her role from Member-at-Large to Secretary. Lucie Hrabánková (Czech Republic) is staying on as a Member-at-Large and we welcomed Rev. Derrick Pariat (India) and Rev. Norbert Racz (Transylvania) as our new Members-at-Large. We offer our gratitude to Rev. Aryanto Nugroho (Indonesia) for his service as Member-at-Large as he steps off the EC.

We also extend our deep appreciation for Rev. Celia Midgley (UK) as she steps off as Convener of the Nominating Committee. Celia has served ICUU in several roles over many years and her passionate dedication to our global faith community is an inspiration. Rev. Tet Gallardo (Philippines) also stepped off the Nominating Committee and we are very thankful for her service. The new Nominating Committee Convener Eva Kortekaas (Netherlands), beginning her second term on the committee, welcomes Rev. Alicia Forde (USA) and Rev. Ilona Szent-Ivanyi (Hungary) to the team.”

Bruce Knotts, Director of the UUAO-UN, has written: “This year, the United Nations is celebrating its 75th birthday and the Unitarian Universalist Association Office at the UN, in collaboration with the Canadian Unitarian Council, will be commemorating that anniversary with a special virtual event co-sponsored by the NGO Committee on Human Rights. In the current moment of global political, social, economic, health, and climate crises, continued involvement with and investment in international cooperation could not be more critical. During this event we’ll talk about how Unitarian Universalists can make our mark for global justice.”

Held on 22 October, the featured speakers included Bruce Knotts; Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, President of the UUA; Vyda Ng, Executive Director of the Canadian Unitarian Council; Rev. Alicia R. Forde, Director of the UUA International Office; Hawa Diallo of the UN Department of Global Communications; Chris King of the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs; Craig Mokhiber, Director of the New York Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Bobbi Nassar, Co-Chair of the Nongovernmental Organization Committee on Human Rights at the UN; and Gillian Sorenson of the International Rescue Committee, former Assistant Secretary-General at the UN and then with the UN Foundation. (She is a lifelong UU.)

Rev. Ascher also wrote: “Leading up to the virtual Council meeting, ICUU’s staff and Executive Committee worked diligently on addressing the on-going, complicated issues facing us as an organization. As we discussed...last year, the structural deficit of our operational budget is a significant risk to ICUU’s long-term future as an effective organisation. Last year member groups supported the EC taking this past year to explore sustainable ways in which to address the issues the deficit raised. And as a result of extensive discernment and conversation, the proposal ‘A New Vision’ was published a few months ago.”

Essentially, the proposal is to merge the ICUU with the UU Partnership Church Council. While it was overwhelmingly approved by the Council Meeting, many details remain to be discussed and resolved by the two parties and further updates will be provided as those discussions proceed. You can read the full proposal here: <https://icuu.net/2020/11/23/a-new-vision/>.

WAS JESUS BORN OF A VIRGIN OR NOT?

By Rev. Eric Stevenson

While no reliable details are available about the life of the historical Jesus, there is no doubt about the positive impact which his life has had upon us and upon the ancient world. This has given rise to the invention of multiple unsubstantiated Christianities and mythologies which include birth stories about him. These birth stories were only composed *after* the wonderful characteristics of his adult life had impacted his followers. One of those attributes was his undoubted humility. He would have freaked out at the suggestion that he was divine. Unfortunately, the insistence that he was the Son of God has been mindlessly endorsed by the modern world.

Rather than having been conceived of the Holy Ghost, a credible image of this infant is that, as a new born baby, he arrived in a country occupied by a merciless foreign power, under threat of persecution, having been conceived out of wedlock, of doubtful parentage, with no satisfactory shelter, unsuitably clad, and being guarded by an honourable partner in an unhygienic makeshift crib. But the New Testament writers were so impressed by his transforming life as an adult that first Mark, then Matthew, and then Luke tried to say something significant and sacred about how he came into the world.

Matthew's birth story about the conception of Jesus is recorded in Chapter 1, verses 22–25. Matthew must have been searching in his Jewish scriptures for endorsement of his theory that his hero was divine. He thought he had succeeded by quoting from the prophet Isaiah, as recorded in the revised interpretation of the Greek Septuagint, Chapter 7: 14. "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son." But he made two mistakes – one was his misunderstanding of the Greek word, '*parthenos*', used for 'virgin', and the second was his failure to use the correct context in which Isaiah made his prophetic statement.

Isaiah's original use of a word for the mother of the child is in his own language, the Hebrew, '*almah*' which is found in his Jewish scriptures called the Torah, from which the original Greek Septuagint was translated. '*Almath*' does not mean 'virgin' – it is a Hebrew description of a young woman of childbearing age. There is no Greek equivalent for this word; the nearest Greek word is '*parthenos*', which the original translators of the Septuagint had to use. It was only later in Matthew's lifetime, when the memory of unequivocalness was lost, that it came back to be understood as meaning 'virgin'. So, with apologies to Matthew and to the King James version of the Bible, my birth story in my first paragraph above makes a lot of sense to me.

Secondly, Isaiah's prophetic utterances in Chapter 7 were addressed to the decadent King Ahaz of Israel. At that time, the powerful Assyrian army was advancing upon Israel and Jehovah's people were in fear of being defeated and taken captive. Isaiah challenged Ahaz to repent of his godless ways and trust Jehovah for deliverance from the invading Assyrian forces. In effect, he said to Ahaz, "Before the time taken for one of Israel's young women to conceive and bring up her son to the age of accountability, Jehovah will have destroyed the Assyrian threat and the Lord will be with you. As a sign, she will call her boy Immanuel, which means God is with us."

So, once again, with apologies to Matthew, Isaiah was not talking about a golden age to come; he was giving a sign of his present-day assurance of peace and deliverance for God's faithful people in his day and in accordance with their current culture and belief. Therefore, my birth story resonates strongly with my (unsubstantiated) image of an historical Jesus of Nazareth. He is an exemplary model for the millions of people in identical circumstances of poverty throughout the world and an icon of hope that out of their abject condition, inspired by Jesus they can rise above their circumstances and live a fulfilling life.

[Rev. Eric Stevenson is a retired Uniting Church minister and has been a member of the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship in Sydney for eight years. He is also Coordinator of the Sydney branch of the Centre for Progressive Religious Thought (www.cprtfreedomtoexplore.org.au).

You can see some light-hearted speculations about Jesus' ethnicity on p. 6. However, the article that impressed me the most when I read it in perhaps 2003 was 'Jesus the Bastard and Mary the Mother of God' by Rev. Dr. Christopher C. Knight, in which he argued that Jesus' experiences as an illegitimate child gave him a special compassion for marginalised people. The author is a Senior Research Associate at the Von Hugel Institute, St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge and a former Executive Secretary of the International Society for Science and Religion. Interestingly, he did a PhD in astrophysics before he decided to study theology. The article can be found at: <https://journals.sagepub.com> but I can't recommend the registration procedure.

ANZUUA NEWS

Since the last issue, ANZUUA has conducted two Zoom services which all member congregations were invited to participate in. The first, on Sunday, 23 August, was organised as a one-hour service followed by a further hour for discussion and workshop, using the breakout capability to all viewers talk. Details are scarce but apparently the theme was 'Connection in a Time of Quarantine'.

Brisbane UUF conducted the Welcome; First UUF Melbourne did the Chalice Lighting; Melbourne UC did the Reading ('What We Believe'); and Spirit of Life UF provided the Closing Words. Member groups were invited to nominate three pieces of music; there were provisions for Joys and Concerns; and presumably our President, Rev. Clay Nelson gave an Address reflecting the theme.

The second service was on 29 November with the theme of 'Things Worth Protecting'. Details of that are even more fragmentary but the format was similar and there was a Meditation lead by Lynn Kelly of the Brisbane UUF. Rev. Clay Nelson provided a video performance of the international Unitarian anthem. 'Spirit of Life'. (Again, it can be assumed that he gave an Address.)

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Auckland UC are holding weekly services with 35–40 people attending, followed immediately afterwards with a Zoom call with about 10 people from across NZ and elsewhere taking part.

Brisbane UU Fellowship are having fortnightly Zoom services, as their regular meeting place has not yet reopened. They are planning a Christmas get-together and a review of their situation in early 2021. People are keen to meet as well as maintain Zoom calls to link in more distant people.

First UU Fellowship of Melbourne are meeting weekly by Zoom, with meditation, discussion and services across the month.

Melbourne UC are continuing with fortnightly Zoom calls.

Perth Unitarians have only reported that their minister, Rev. Peter Ferguson, has been unwell recently, but they are presumably still holding monthly meetings.

Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship continue to hold three meetings each month.

Sydney UC has continued to meet, every week with the occasional guest speaker and Music Service. Their Christmas Party on 13 December will be smaller than in previous years, being limited to 40 people. They have just sent their annual donation of \$1000 to their sister congregation in the Philippines, which will be used to tile the floor of their church.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Any other time, I would be apologising for not bringing this issue out at the beginning of December, as I had intended some time ago. Instead, I'm saying you are lucky to have it at all and I make no apology for having other distractions that prevented me from completing this edition sooner.

I have explained before that I was having difficulty producing *Quest* even before my bereavement and asked if anyone would assist me. No-one offered and, this time, I was having trouble getting the input and information I needed (see above) from the ANZUUA leadership. I won't withhold from you that I found this lack of support quite dispiriting.

Anyone else would just quit but I can't bring myself to do that. I actually enjoy producing *Quest* and I do need something to fill in my time. However, you will have noticed that I couldn't have completed this issue without the input from Rev. Tet Gallardo, so I am demanding that I get more input from the member congregations in future. With that, I can get back to bringing out four issues per year – so, it's up to you whether that happens.

WHAT WAS JESUS' ETHNICITY?



Three proofs that Jesus was Black:

1. He called everyone 'brother' or 'sister'.
2. He liked Gospel.
3. He couldn't get a fair trial.

Three proofs that Jesus was Jewish:

1. He went into his father's business.
2. He lived at home until he was 33.
3. He was sure his mother was a virgin and his mother was sure he was God.

Three proofs that Jesus was Italian:

1. He talked with his hands.
2. He had wine with his meals.
3. He worked in the building trades.



Three proofs that Jesus was a Californian:

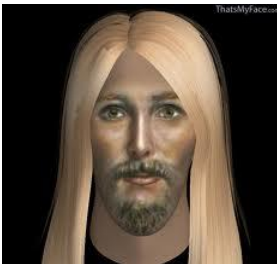
1. He never cut his hair.
2. He walked around barefoot all the time.
3. He started a new religion.

Three proofs that Jesus was a Puerto Rican:

1. His first name was Jesus.
2. He was bilingual.
3. He was always in trouble with the law.

Three proofs that Jesus was Irish:

1. He never got married.
2. He was always telling stories.
3. His last request was for a drink.



But the most compelling evidence of all – three proofs that Jesus was a woman:

1. He fed a crowd at a moment's notice when there was no food.
2. He kept trying to get a message across to a bunch of men who just didn't get it.
3. And even when he was dead, he had to get up because there was work to do.

[For lack of anything better, we're running this remarkable item again for the first time since the Summer 2011 issue. Versions of it have been on the Internet for at least twenty-five years but none of those listings gives any indication of its provenance. 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*.

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?

MAGLIPAY UNIVERSALIST

*Maglipay Universalist, ning panahon sa pagtigum,
Naghiusa ang katawhan aron lamang sa pagtambong;
Simbahan ta palig-onon pagtulon-an palanugon,
Ipaila tang kal'wasan alang sa tanang katawhan.
Ipaila tang kal'wasan alang sa tanang katawhan.*

*Di tagdon ang makiglalis ning pundok Universalist,
Dumdumon ta ang pagtigum, pag-abut na sa panahon;
Magmadasigon tang tanan, magma-alam ta's pagtulon-an
Ipataas ang kal'wasan nga alang's tanang katawhan.
Ipataas ang kal'wasan nga alang's tanang katawhan.*

*Higugmaon ta ang tanan katawhan ning kalibutan,
Kay tanan atong igsoon; puti siya ug ang itum;
Makigdait ta sa tanan, katawhan ning kalibutan,
Ang tuyo ta kalinaw man, alang sa tanang katawhan.
Ang tuyo ta kalinaw man, alang sa tanang katawhan.*

Rev. Toribio S. Quimada

Be joyful Universalist, in this good time of gathering,
In solidarity we are, accepting each in this meeting;
Let's make our church a growing one, our lessons be progressive too,
Proclaim salvation is for all, humanity, for you and you.
Proclaim salvation is for all, humanity, for you and you.

Be grateful for our differences, as we are Universalist,
Bear in mind our togetherness, when the time comes for the next steps;
Let's persevere in earnestness, let's yearn for wisdom mindfully
And let salvation be assured for all of us, humanity.
And let salvation be assured for all of us, humanity.

So let us love as we are loved, in all the world where love should win,
Because siblings all we are indeed; whether we're white or black of skin;
Let's try to get along with all, let different voices all be heard,
Our noble goal is that of peace, when all are fairly, justly served.
Our noble goal is that of peace, when all are fairly, justly served.

[Translation by Rev. Tet Gallardo]



The relevance of this hymn, whose title means 'Be joyful Universalist' will be seen on pp. 7/10. These are only the first, fourth and sixth verses of Rev. Quimada's words, written in the Cebuano language when he founded the Universalist Church of the Philippines in 1955. He had been a minister of the Universal Church of Christ prior to that but he was excommunicated for using materials provided by the (then) Universalist Church of America. Starting with the nine UCC congregations that he led on the eastern half of the island of Negros, Quimada travelled further, spreading the gospel of a unitary God and universal salvation.

After the merger that created the UUA in the US in 1961, his organisation was renamed the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines in 1985. Tragically, he was killed in 1988 during fighting between government forces and rebels of the New People's Army, but the perpetrators were never identified. After that, the group was led by his daughter, Rev. Rebecca Quimada-Sienes, until she retired last year. Today, the UUCP has 25 congregations on Negros and one in Manila.

Just for the record, Cebuano is a language spoken in the eastern Visayas in the centre of the country and also on the southern main island of Mindanao. It takes its name from the island of Cebu, east of Negros. You can see and hear the original hymn being sung in the UUCP's headquarters church in Dumaguete City at: .

HOW DID WE BECOME UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST?

By Rev. Tet Gallardo



The painting is titled '*Bayanihan*' by Botong Francisco, 1962. *Bayanihan* is the age-old Filipino value of a community rallying to the assistance of one needy member – reminiscent of the Biblical parable of 'The Lost Sheep'. Filipinos have built indigenous dwellings that could be uprooted anytime and moved where they can find themselves land to till for their families. Once the community agrees on your community share, they all get together to help you relocate. That's how, for most of our history, we had known no need or hunger.

We say that the UU Church of the Philippines (UUCP) was founded in 1955. And when our generation tells this story we usually say because of the American Universalists.¹ That is accurate if we mean Unitarian Universalism, rooted in what the West calls their Enlightenment and their Renaissance, are in fact values ancient and organic to the East. It is false if we mean that UU values were introduced to the Philippines by the West. It is also true if we mean that Filipinos needed a word for the historical persistence of indigenous humanitarian values in their culture and UUism was adopted as a counter-oppression to fundamentalism in the country.

Many non-Filipino Unitarians who discover our national hero Jose Rizal (1861–1896), a polymath, a doctor, a novelist, educated in Spain and Germany, a member of the Masonry, would say, okay, maybe Unitarianism is older than 1955. For many UUs, we are UUs for our ability to demonstrate openness to different beliefs and non-beliefs. For many UUCP members, it is by adoption of the UUA's Seven Principles that make us UU, and an eighth principle that makes us Filipino UUs – which we know as our First Principle: There is a God. God is love.² In fact, Filipinos are very open to refugees.³

This past Wednesday, September 23, I was at the birthday of our oldest living member, age 93. I brought the only 5-gallon tub of ice cream in a place with no refrigerator, up in the hills where wildflowers grow, with zero Covid-19 cases. So safe, even the oldest, most fragile member could throw a party with only us from the city wearing masks. Two roast pigs are essential to this annual festivity since Rev. Elinio Belimac Sr. survived a deadly illness more than a decade ago. This was his religious commitment or *panata*, that he would thank God this way every year. Lolo Elinio (Grampa Elinio) is a bit deaf from his age, but very, very sharp and very strong; he still tills and plants his garden of fruits and harvest rambutan, dragon fruit, bananas, guyabano, and mangoes so sweet. He has about four hectares for his whole clan of four generations, who live in this town of San Jose, and they are the members of our Siapo congregation, which he founded.

I had the privilege of saying the sermon at the ceremony with the support of our National Office staff, who have made supporting this annual feast a religious calling. And why not? Aptly, my sermon title was ‘Respect for Elders’, a value one cannot find in the Westernized UU list of principles but that which has helped Filipinos endure as a nation of different nations with different languages.

Our elders kept us sane; our elders kept us right; our elders were loving and kind; they respected women and their voices, children and their chaotic simultaneous conversations at worship, and animals with their spiritual gifts at worship. Most UU churches have at least a dog or a cat in attendance. We were not tied merely to theologies but also to secular rituals like ‘*Mano po*’, a sign of respect for elders by putting the back of their hand to our forehead as we kowtow to them; or ‘*Bayanihan*’, as illustrated in the photo, and a ‘sharing economy’ is not even new.⁴

Filipinos were all these prior to Unitarians. In fact, Unitarians were quite late in discovering the Philippines. By the time the UUCP became a member of the UUA of the USA, Filipino churches of other sects had already joined their global synods at least a decade earlier – Baptists in 1935⁵ and the Lutherans in 1973⁶. Until now, the chapels of the UUCP look like mausoleums in comparison to the investments of the other sects, which doesn’t help much in our case to be recognized as a legitimate church in the Philippines.⁷ How much can they trust us if they do not even see all of us?

In *Maglipay Universalist*⁸, the iconic book on the history of the UUCP written by Rev. Fred Muir, there is no attempt to name all the founders of the UUCP other than Toribio Quimada, the one who corresponded in English with Americans. There are nine others who started all this, who invested their land, labor, and clans to begin something groundbreaking. The senseless killing of Toribio Quimada at the hands of assassins also put him above the rest.

And yet, he wasn’t the only former president who was killed for his causes. There was also Rev. Hospicio Condez Jr., who, by the time of his ambush had already left the UUCP due to many differences with other leaders. We need to give credit to his authenticity and courage in living out his values fearlessly; his wife Jency, who was bloodied, in the vehicle still bears the trauma.

“There is an indomitable spirit”, said one of our national heroes, Benigno Aquino. Filipinos killed the person who attempted the first circumnavigation, Ferdinand Magellan⁹ who wanted to first capture the Philippines. Forty-four years later, another Spaniard, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi¹⁰ succeeded. But the first circumnavigator was Magellan’s enslaved boy, Enrique of Malacca¹¹, who was from around here. The Philippines was once the end resting place of people visiting Malacca.¹²

Only in a span of 100 years from 1898 to 1998, Filipinos have ousted the Spaniards¹³, the Japanese¹⁴, the US military bases¹⁵, the 20-year Marcos dictatorship¹⁶, and a plunderer president, Joseph Estrada¹⁷. There is little proof we don’t know the worthiness of destabilizing our own institutions. So, when we sit in peace, believe us that’s what we need right now.

For some reason, even fear of hurricanes and storms are not embedded in the Filipino genes. We are descendants of Polynesians, people who liked going on sea voyages far earlier than the Vikings and greater in expanse for far longer.¹⁸ We discovered regions were open to us and we freely exchanged cultures with them¹⁹, drinking wine and beer with Persians, roasting coffee with Africans²⁰ before coffee was even a thing in Italy, eating chickens with native South Americans²¹, and crossing the Pacific Ocean²² without navigational tools, even assisting James Cook in his voyage to New Zealand²³. Polynesians were the most popular voyagers who visited civilizations and did not destroy them, and Spain needed Filipino sailors in their galleon trades from the 16th to the 19th Century.²⁴ We are a people who welcomed not just beliefs but also cultures.

There were Filipinos in Louisiana before it was even called USA.²⁵ Filipinos taught Mexicans the distillation process of tequila²⁶ and Filipino heroes were part of the Mexican revolution against Spain²⁷. Filipinos also helped Mexicans put up a farmers’ union in America.²⁸ No scary God was required to command us to be kind. Our love is and has always been invitational. God is love and love was in our way of life. Social justice was a way of life. There are many scientific evidences of how sophisticated was their literature, art, society, and covenants that fostered respect for others, respecting the interdependent web of life, revering nature, animals, and human beings to the point that they treated them with ‘spirits’. The UU principles were well lived out within their culture and, even though the Spanish came to oppress us, these cultural values persisted and endured.

“Without slaves, there are no masters”, so goes Jose Rizal’s famous saying. So do not look for humbled people here. Filipino bravado is now globally known, which we have suppressed for the fantasy of being the fragile white American we have glorified, which we no longer want to be.

So why are we called UUs and not just Filipinos? When I tell people I’m Filipino, their expectations of me are kindness, openness, hospitality, charity, great service and mutual respect. When I say I’m UU, they still don’t know what it means and often don’t know what to expect. They expect to hear religion and theology and god words. And often we disappoint people when we try to articulate a theology for everyone because we can not really generalize. UUs are of different beliefs and cultures that are often far ranging. Filipinos, on the other hand, have consistent values-based practices that, wherever they go, they can be distinguished from Thais, Malaysians, and Indonesians by their way of being with others who are different. Would you rather be called a Filipino or a UU?

Clearly, the ten founders of our church needed a theological structure to be called a church and they found it in Unitarianism. But their Filipino sensibilities had much more to offer than any rigor a ‘logy’ or an ‘ism’ could provide. When we use the word these days, we are tapping into the Filipino value of reaching out globally. Religion travels faster and lasts longer not by theology but by sensibility. Things we learn in relationships leave the most lasting impressions in our lives, such as how we respond to pain, joy, needs, and desires. Unitarianism, a church built on relationships over a diversity of beliefs, is our present blue boat home, one we build also for ourselves.

[Rev. Maria Theresa (Tet) Gustilo Gallardo is the President of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines and we are honoured to receive this article from her, which she kindly provided at my request. More about her the UUCP on p. 12.]

¹ <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop6/175855.shtml>

² <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/new-leaders-philippines>

³ <https://www.google.com/search?q=refugees+philippines&oq=refugees+philippines&aqs=chrome.69i57j0j69i60l2j69i65j69i60l3.3243j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

⁴ <https://www.wattpad.com/9138093-history-of-the-philippines-prehistory/page/4?fbclid=IwAR0gbP8ayPqvHO8SfUPOF5ptKJJxKrDHPdf-Ea1XAwxFmbgdZwOj3hBNzrs>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_of_Philippine_Baptist_Churches

⁶ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/lutheran-church-philippines>

⁷ <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-this-shows-that-the-statistics-authority-doesn't-list-uu-as-a-religion>

⁸ https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1710947.Maglipay_Universalist

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ferdinand-Magellan>

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_L%C3%B3pez_de_Legazpi

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enrique_of_Malacca

¹² <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/medieval-times/cultural-interactions-along-traderoutes/a/the-srivijaya-empire-trade-and-culture-in-the-indian-ocean>

¹³ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/philippine-independence-declared>

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine_resistance_against_Japan

¹⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/28/world/philippines-orders-us-to-leave-strategic-navy-base-at-subicbay.html>

¹⁶ <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199778201.001.0001/acprof-9780199778201-chapter-7>

¹⁷ <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/philippine-citizens-overthrow-president-joseph-estrada-people-power-ii-2001>

¹⁸ <https://www.pnas.org/content/111/13/4826>

¹⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_ghkgZSEOI

²⁰ Polynesians populated Madagascar which coffee is one of its major exports: <https://news.mongabay.com/2005/07/studies-prove-people-of-madagascar-came-from-borneo-and-africa/>

²¹ <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/07/polynesians-steering-stars-met-native-americans-long-europeans-arrived>

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/dna-shows-first-inhabitants-of-vanuatu-came-from-philippines-and-taiwan>

²³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-07/tupaia-star-navigator-helped-captain-james-cook-reach-australia/12092008>

²⁴ <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p66561/html/ch08s04.html>

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Malo,_Louisiana

²⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226655687_Early_coconut_distillation_and_the_origins_of_mezcal_and_tequila_spirits_in_west-central_Mexico

²⁷ <https://www.manilatimes.net/2017/03/03/opinion/analysis/manila-galleon-trade-events-effects-lessons/315101/>

²⁸ <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/09/16/440861458/grapes-of-wrath-the-forgotten-filipinos-who-led-a-farmworker-revolution>

SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is a great honour to receive an article (at my request, I might add) by Rev. Tet Gallardo, President and Executive Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines. As was explained on p. 8, she was elected to those positions early in 2019 under a constitutional change that created the position of Vice-President and Church Administrator. That position is held by Rev. Arman Pedro, who represents the UUCP in the Zoom services of the UU Asia-Pacific that ANZUUA participates in.

Rev. Tet's history is quite unusual, not least because she became a UU in the US in 2003 while living with her partner in New York City. When they returned to the Philippines later that year, she didn't know the UUCP existed – but then she learned of the small fellowship in Quezon City (a suburb of Manila which is the national capital), which immediately invited her to take a leadership role. She began writing liturgies and organising worship services, and as she developed worship materials she became nationally known in UU circles as a speaker. She is also the author of *Spirit's Breath: Words for Worship*. In 2013, she was ordained as minister by the UU Congregation in Bicutan City (another suburb of Manila).

In 2016–17, Rev. Tet was the Balázs Scholar at the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, which supports international ministers for an academic year of study to enhance their training and religious leadership. She then travelled the US, speaking at UU congregations before returning to the Bicutan congregation. In her new roles, her priorities include a focus on climate change and decentralising the UUCP so that the districts are more independent. She has also begun fundraising to develop a Center for Social Justice in Valencia (near the UUCP headquarters in Dumaguete City) to house activists who can't afford to live in the city. Her dream is to build a structure in the traditional way, with mud rather than with carbon-emission-contributing cement.

Rev. Tet adds: “If you wish to have a course on Filipino UUism, please create a group of at least five. The fee is \$US100 per person, which pays for four Zoom sessions of one hour each for four Sundays. This includes a reading list of references that can be found online. You will also get a certificate from the UUCP. The proceeds will benefit the farmer communities of the UUCP.” Contact Rev. Tet via: www.uucp.ph.

MORE NEWS AFFECTING THE UUCP

In its funding round during the months of quarantine, the UU Funding Panel (UUFPP) gave its full support to realize the Strategic Plan of the UU Church of the Philippines (UUCP). The UUCP plan envisioned church communities that are life-giving, learning, and loving in material and spiritual ways. The theme of the session was ‘A Responsive and Accountable Church’. 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. The seedlings from this nursery will benefit all UU churches as they need them. Eventually, one of these congregational community gardens will develop into a free food garden or forest, most possibly in either Nataban Congregation or Nagbinlod Congregation.

The permaculture funding is part of a package called Community Innovations for Climate Action (CICA) that includes learning how to make, use, and build with mud bricks, recovering indigenous technology that uses free and abundant materials like loam soil, sand, and hay to create the same material of enduring structures like the pyramids. The third and last part of CICA is founding the UU Farmers Association. Farmers are critical frontliners to confronting food insecurity in the climate crisis, yet the average age of farmers in the Philippines is now 60. Farming practices are in danger and land use needs to be reclaimed through more interest in farming.

Permaculture cannot exist without Beloved Community. A Beloved Community initiative was thus also funded by UUFPP and it will incubate the new normal we need to stitch together. We need a new culture or mindset to shift to diverse cropping – which is the practice in permaculture – and away from the old normal of monocropping, or planting only one kind of dedicated crop for the market. Monocropping puts the vulnerable farmer at high risk from market forces, putting them at the mercy of capitalists who have little care for people or the planet. Beloved Community sessions will be conducted in all districts through the facilitation of the UU Ministerial Formation students, with modules designed in collaboration with them.

[This was also written by Rev. Tet Gallardo and published on the UUA International Office website.]

VALES FROM SoLUF

By Jan Tendys

Rev. Geoff Usher and Rev. Eric Stevenson, John Tendys and myself represented the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship at the funeral of Ross Colin Mcluckie, who had been a member since fairly early in the presidency of Candace Parks.

There was a time when the lift at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre didn't always work. One of our members, Ginna Hastings, wrote: "No matter how Ross struggled to get up those stairs, exhausted and puffing, he would always have some cheery greeting telling us how glad he was to be able to see us. He was witty, with a twinkle in his eye and so smart. If you asked how he was, he would say, 'All the better for seeing you.'"

His talks often took off from what he called 'the wisdom of the grandchild'. They were deceptively simple talks but always had a gentle wake-up call, a little 'Don't get too complacent in this life' message. Life in his later years was not easy for Ross on the physical level. That was clear to us all, but we never heard him complain. Instead, he remembered to thank all the 'workers', the other speakers, committee, providers of morning tea and those who made sure the other jobs necessary even in such a small group as ours were done.

Ross was an intellectual and not ashamed of it, but he also had a down to earth sense of mischief. When we idealists got too carried away with our notions, he had a way of pricking the bubbles on us. One election year, among all our commiserations when our left wing champion lost, Ross lit a candle for all the people who were happy at the election outcome – just reminding us we did live in a democracy after all.

Before I had got around to telling Margaret McCammon, whom some of you will remember as Margaret Armstrong, that Ross had died, there came news from Geoff Usher that Margaret herself had died – the last of the 'oldies that were in our Fellowship's first congregation. Margaret was an Aussie girl who headed off to England, as so many did as a rite of passage in those days. She did a Master of Arts in Psychology at Cambridge and she found Unitarianism in her time there in the form of a church where the minister was, she told me, a "fire in the belly type". Unitarianism fitted with Margaret's idealistic views of how the world should be run.

She had high hopes for the Australian Democrats, whom she joined and always believed that, at least for a while, they *did* serve to 'keep the bastards honest'. Along the way, Margaret discovered that she was a feminist and an environmentalist. A generous person, she contributed financially to all her causes but not without due scrutiny. Asking questions and demanding answers was in her nature. When it was time to go to a nursing home, the first thing she did when ensconced was to set about improving the nutrition of the food they gave the old folk.

Margaret will long be remembered, not least for the talks she gave about her pet recreation: going to the movies. She did work in Sydney as a child psychologist before marriage and children of her own. She later divorced, retaining the name McCammon as her legal name but reverting to Armstrong socially.

[Jan Tendys is a founding member of SoLUF, a long-time member of their Committee and the editor of their monthly journal, *Esprit*. It should be noted that, before SoLUF came into being, both she and Margaret were prominent members of Sydney Unitarian Church and sat on its Committee for a number of years.]

VALE, CLIVE BROOKS

While we're on this unfortunate subject, we have also learned of the death last month of Clive Brooks of the Adelaide Unitarian Church. His wife, Jane, wrote the following in the AUC's monthly newsletter: "He joined our Unitarian community not long after he retired and contributed through his work on the Finance Committee and our Expanding Horizons Radio Team for many years. He will be remembered for his forthright manner, his lovable eccentricity, and his sense of humour, which was always associated with an impish look on his face and a twinkle in his eye. We will miss him very much."

[Jane Brooks was AUC's representative to ANZUUA for 10 years and also served on its Board of Management in various capacities for longer than that. She contributed a few articles to our journal during that time.]