



Quest



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DAVID HUME, PHILOSOPHER AND HISTORIAN

The tercentenary of this Scottish writer, who is regarded as one of the most important figures in Western philosophy and the Enlightenment, should be of interest to us even if he was not a Unitarian. Given that Hume lived and died before our denomination was legalised, it can only be said that he would have made a good Unitarian – unless his sceptical views were too close to atheism for our forebears of that era.

He was born in Edinburgh on 07 May 1711 to an advocate, Thomas Home (pronounced ‘Hume’) and entered the university there at the unusually early age of twelve. Hume quickly abandoned the study of law in favour of “the pursuits of Philosophy and general Learning”. Finding his professors’ lectures no improvement over reading books for himself, he devoted himself to ten years of private study that nearly caused him a nervous breakdown. Seeking a more active life, he worked in a merchant’s office in Bristol for a few months in 1734 and then lived in France for four years, during which he wrote *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739).

Arguably the first book on psychology ever written, Hume sought a naturalistic “science of man” in which ideas were derived from sensory perceptions and (in opposition to the Rationalism of Kant and Descartes) there were no innate mental constructs such as space, time or God. While it was dismissed as “abstract and unintelligible” by critics at the time, the *Treatise* is now regarded as his most important work. He responded by publishing an anonymous *Abstract* of it in 1746, which was shorter and written in simpler language.

By that time, Hume had also published *Essays Moral and Political* in 1744 and applied for a professorship at the University of Edinburgh, which he failed to get because the local ministers regarded him as an atheist. He then spent three years as secretary to General James St. Clair, accompanying him in naval actions against France and to diplomatic posts in Vienna and Turin. In 1748, he published *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, which contained arguments against miracles and the existence of Heaven and Hell. (He would usually present these as discussions and find in the Church’s favour, though in very ironic language.)

In 1752, Hume was again unsuccessful in his application for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, not helped by his recent publication of *An Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals*. That book, while not directly critical of religion, established a system of morality based purely on human sentiments and utility, for which it was denounced as ‘godless’. In that year, he also produced his *Political Discourses* – for once, an immediate success that made him known to economic thinkers such as Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus.

Back in Edinburgh, Hume was appointed Librarian of the Faculty of Advocates, a position that was virtually unpaid but gave him access to extensive printed resources. Since the 1740s, he had worked intermittently on a study of English history but it was there that he wrote most of what became a six-volume collection. This *History of England* was published part-by-part between 1754 and 1762, covering the entire period from the Roman Conquest to the Glorious Revolution (against King James II) in 1688. The work was criticised for certain comments about both Catholicism and Protestantism, but the unprecedented timeframe and Hume's attention to developments in science and literature, rather than just political and military events, were well received. At least fifty editions were printed between 1776 and 1894.

At about that time, moves were made within the Church of Scotland to try Hume for heresy. Pamphlets for and against were circulated and, in 1756, his case came before a committee of the General Assembly (the church's highest judicial body). His defenders argued that, as a non-believer, he would not be affected by any such censure and it was determined by a large majority not to proceed. Ironically, Hume had written very little about his personal religious views and many of his 'heretical' arguments were presented as speculative or those of unnamed friends.

His last two books were among his most substantial, *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and *The Natural History of Religion*. (The term, 'natural', meant derived from empirical observation, rather than from Scripture.) The second, published in 1757, contained essays defending the moral right to commit suicide and criticising the concept of an afterlife; the first did not appear until three years after Hume's death. After two diplomatic appointments between 1763 and 1768, he spent his remaining years refining his written works and socialising in Edinburgh's intellectual circles and died in 1776, probably from liver or bowel cancer.

A number of Hume's works were published posthumously, including an autobiography and the *Dialogues*. That last contains an elegant refutation of what is called 'Intelligent Design' today – we have no other universes for comparison, so ours arguably could have been better designed, and no aspect of what we see tells us anything about the nature and intentions of the 'designer'. The possibilities include that our Universe "... was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance: it is the work only of some dependent, inferior deity; and is the object of derision to his superiors: it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated deity; and ever since his death, has run on...from the first impulse and active force which it received from him."

Whether Hume was a Unitarian or not, we owe him a great deal even today.

ANZUUA NEWS

At the time of writing, James Hills has just sent out application forms for the ANZUUA Conference in Brisbane in August (see next page for the Conference Program). These conferences are always a good chance to meet other Unitarian Universalists from across Australia and New Zealand and also contribute your ideas to the discussions. We would like to see as many as possible join in to make the ANZUUA community stronger and more connected.

The International Council of Unitarian Universalists' biennial Council meeting will be held in Damaguete City in the Philippines next February. Nominations for the next Executive Committee have been called for and our Pauline Rooney (current Vice-President) is being re-nominated. Anyone from member congregations can attend these meetings so, if you are able and in the vicinity, we encourage you to come.

An encouraging number of people have expressed an interest in lay ministry training, so a pilot program in Australia is planned later in the year and after the terms of reference are finalised. The project is supported by the ICUU through its Program Director, Jill McAllister, and it may be possible to obtain assistance from the UUA's Meadville-Lombard Theological School.

The 'Under the Southern Cross' anthology of antipodean songs and writings project has now received full budget funding, with all requested funds granted by the UUA Fund for International Unitarian Universalism program and an additional \$US1000 added to our request by the outgoing chairperson, Sandra Danforth. An editor is being appointed and the plan is to have the books in print by mid-2012. The ANZUUA Committee expresses its grateful thanks to Derek McCullough for his vision and determination that has seen this project successfully scoped and funded.

ANZUUA CONFERENCE – BRISBANE, 27–29 AUGUST 2011

Theme: - Standing on the Side of Justice and Compassion

The outcome and objectives of the conference is that “participants return to their congregations with information, planning and strategies ready to institute campaigns aimed at alleviating the discrimination or marginalisation suffered by one or more of groups such as gay, lesbian or transgender, refugees, homeless and destitute, disabled, indigenous peoples, those who suffer in disasters globally....”

Objectives of the conference are to equip participants with:

1. Knowledge of the situation and needs of one or more of the marginalised groups
2. Knowledge of the ways and means of campaigning on their behalf – locally, nationally and globally
3. Knowledge of principles and practices underpinning establishing and maintaining a campaign among a congregation.

This assumes that of those participating in the conference, some at least from each congregation, will fill leadership roles in getting the campaign going.

Proposed structure of the conference (agenda, timing, sessions, etc) and planning as follows. (Note: We have used SSL for Standing on the Side of Love to refer to local Australia/NZ campaigns.)

<i>Session Time</i>	<i>Friday 26th August</i>	<i>Saturday 27th August</i>	<i>Sunday 28th August</i>	<i>Monday 29th August</i>	
<i>Early Morning</i>		<i>Morning Walk or meditation</i>	<i>Morning Walk or meditation</i>	<i>Morning Walk or meditation</i>	
<i>Breakfast</i>		<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>	
<i>Session 1</i>		<i>SSL Campaign Director – Launch, background, objectives etc</i>	<i>Service by Peter Ferguson</i>	<i>ANZUUA AGM and election of Officers. ANZUUA General Mtg Business – Incorporation and Insurance</i>	
<i>Morning Tea</i>		<i>Morning Tea</i>	<i>Morning Tea</i>	<i>Morning Tea</i>	
<i>Session 2</i>		<i>Understanding marginalised groups and mapping potential SSL activities with marginalised groups</i>	<i>Congregation reports and ANZUUA Election of Officers</i>	<i>ANZUUA AGM cont Any other business Action Planning</i>	
<i>Lunch</i>		<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	
<i>Session 3</i>		<i>Campaigns – how to do them; SSL support materials; What to avoid, risk mitigation etc</i>	<i>How to engage members with SSL, how to use support materials, how to manage campaigns</i>	<i>Action Planning</i>	
<i>Afternoon Tea</i>		<i>People arrive Friday afternoon or night</i>	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>
<i>Session 4</i>			<i>Meditative walk –Mt Cooth-tha?</i>	<i>Buddhist compassion meditation;</i>	<i>Farewells and people depart</i>
<i>Break</i>			<i>Focus on local opportunities to use SSL type engagement</i>	<i>12 steps to compassion program overview etc</i>	
<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Dinner – must advise prior of intention to attend</i>	<i>ANZUUA Conference Dinner, music</i>	<i>Dinner</i>		
<i>Later</i>	<i>Settle in, social meet and greet</i>	<i>Board games, conversation, dance?</i>	<i>Social Time</i>		

WHAT IS YOUR NET WORTH: EXPLORING *REAL* WEALTH

By Sally Mabelle

[From an address to the Auckland Unitarian Church on 30 January 2011.]

What's your net worth? Has anyone ever asked you that? When you hear this question, do you automatically think of your financial income and assets? Or, do you think of your contribution to society or your inherent 'worth and dignity'?

In a recent interview, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigmi Thinley, talks about a new way to define wealth and economic health in his country. In Bhutan, they now measure GDH, not GDP. Have you heard of GDH – Gross Domestic Happiness? He is on a mission to get other countries to adopt this new measure, which includes four economic health or wealth indicators:

- the degree of equitable socio-economic development;
- environmental health and biodiversity;
- culture; and
- democracy which empowers each individual to express their view and to be counted.

The Prime Minister explains: "What the healthiest and happiest societies have in common is not that they have more, but what they have is more equitably shared."

Have you ever heard the saying: 'Half the world is starving while the other half is on a diet!?' It sounds ridiculous but it's true! According to UNICEF, over three billion people live on less than \$2.50 a day and over a billion live on less than \$1/day – three billion *is* about half of the world's population. Some 30,000 children *die every day* from starvation or poverty and 120 million children don't get even a primary school education.

In 2005, *Forbes* magazine counted 691 billionaires in the world. In 2008, only three years later, it counted 1250 and estimated their combined wealth at \$4.4 trillion. According to a United Nations study, the richest 2% of world's people now own 51% of all the world's assets. The poorest 50% own only 1%.

In New Zealand, housing prices have risen 80% since 2002 and, consequently, over one-third of its households are renting – they can't afford to buy their own home. According to the NZ Council of Christian Social Services, over 30% of NZ children live below the poverty line and almost 20,000 children per week need feeding at school due to empty cupboards at home. One in seven households – 585,000 people – live in poverty, according to the Ministry of Social Development. In New Zealand, it is true that the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer.

How can we, as intelligent and compassionate people, be aware of this and not feel moved in some way? Why is it that there is such an enormous gap between the world most people say they want and the world we live in today? Do you feel powerless over the situation? Apathetic? Angry? What is your response? There are significant imbalances on our planet that we have a responsibility to address, if we actually believe in our Unitarian principles that we say are so important to us.

Today, I'd like us to talk about redefining the concept of 'wealth' or 'good living'. Alisa Gravitz, the Executive Director of Green America, offers some food for thought by defining the seven essential elements of good living common to everyone around the world. As I read this list, ask yourself if you agree with her and how you personally might be 'wealthy' or not in each area.

1. A strong, nurturing family, friends, and a supportive, peaceful and secure community that allows us to explore and develop our capacity for loving relationships.
2. The opportunity to learn and to give expression to our awareness and understanding of ourselves and the world around us, both intellectually and artistically.
3. Good physical health and the opportunity to engage in athletics, dance, and other forms of physical expression that make our bodies tingle with life energy.

4. A sense of belonging to place, community and life, yet with the freedom to make personal choices and sometimes to wander and explore without the obligations of place.
5. A clean and healthy environment vibrant with the diversity of life.
6. An assurance that our children will have an opportunity for the same.
7. A secure means of livelihood that provides for our basic material needs while earning us a place of respect in our community.

Do you agree with this list? Is there anything you would add or change?

As you begin 2011, it's a time to reflect on what true wealth means to you and to reflect on all your relationships, both those with your physical family as well as those with your larger global family.

On the theme of wealth, I'd like to share two short parables. The first one was recently sent to me by a colleague:

A management consultant is on holidays on a tropical island. He notices a local fisherman who sells out of fish every day by noon. He approaches the fisherman and suggests a four-point plan to sell more fish and make more money. Getting some subcontractors to fish for him will increase production by 25% but then moving to a fleet will double production in just six months. A joint venture with another shipping company will see the man become a millionaire within ten years.

The fisherman asks what the fourth step is. The consultant says he will be able to retire, do some fishing in the morning, have a siesta and then play with his kids. The fisherman replies, "But that is what I do now."

The second story is a Buddhist parable:

One day a rich father took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose to show him how poor people can be. They spent a day and a night on the farm of a very poor family. When they got back from their trip the father asked his son, "How was the trip?" "Very good Dad!" "Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked. "Yeah!" "And what did you learn?" The son answered, "I saw that we have a dog at home and they have four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of the garden; they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lamps in the garden; they have the stars. Our patio reaches to the front yard; they have a whole horizon." When the little boy was finishing, his father was speechless. His son added, "Thanks, Dad, for showing me how poor we are!"

For more food for thought regarding *real* wealth, see David Korten's website on 'living economies' (www.davidkorten.org) and the Awareness Party in New Zealand (www.theawarenessparty.com).

[Just correcting an error in the previous issue, Sally's surname rhymes with '[Michelle,] ma belle'. Her most recent address to her church, entitled 'Moving from Separation to Oneness: 10 New Commandments', is now on her website: www.sallymabelle.com/speaker.]

FROM BHUTAN TO BOLIVIA

The Gross Domestic Happiness index was the concept of Bhutan's previous King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, when he acceded to the throne at 17 and sought to modernise the country without compromising its unique Buddhist culture. Not to be outdone, the similarly elevated Republic of Bolivia is about to pass the Law of Mother Earth, which guarantees to nature the rights: to life and to exist; to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration; to pure water and clean air; to balance; to not be polluted; and to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered. Controversially, it will also enshrine the right to not be affected by mega-infrastructure and development projects that affect the balance of ecosystems and the local inhabitant communities. Evo Morales, the first indigenous president in Latin America, is firmly behind this measure, as is his government. Bolivia has been drastically affected by foreign-owned mining industries, even as its mountain glaciers are melting due to global warming at a rate that threatens its water supplies.

GIVE ME THAT OLD-TIME RELIGION

Give me that old-time religion, give me that old time religion,
Give me that old-time religion. It's good enough for me.

Let us worship Zarathustra, just the way that we used to.
I'm a Zarathustra booster. He's good enough for me.

Let us worship like the Druids, drinking strange, fermented fluids,
Running naked through the woods. That's good enough for me.

Let us meditate like Buddha. There is no god that is cuter.
Come in silver, brass, and pewter, and he's good enough for me.

I'll invoke the Triple Goddess when she wears her Cretan bodice.
No, she isn't very modest, but she's good enough for me.

We will pray to Aphrodite, we will pray to Aphrodite.
She wears that see-through nightie and that's good enough for me.

We will pray with those Egyptians, build pyramids to put our crypts in
Over subways with inscriptions. And that's good enough for me.

Hare Krishna, he must laugh on with my robes all trimmed in saffron,
And my hair that's only half on. And that's good enough for me.

I'll arise in early morning, when my Lord gives me the warning
That the Solar Age is dawning. And that's good enough for me.

Give me that old-time religion, give me that old-time religion,
Give me that old-time religion. It's good enough for me.



This intriguing piece was written by Gordon Rupert Dickson (1923–2001) of the US, who is better known for his science fiction – however, we have no idea why he wanted to worship Zarathustra rather than the Zoroastrian deity, Ahura Mazda. Further, while the religion of Minoan Crete was dominated by goddesses, the Triple Goddess is really a Neo-pagan concept. First recorded by Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie on their album, *Precious Friend* (Warner Bros., 1981), the song is one of many parodies of a Negro spiritual of the same title that was first published in 1873. The origin of the melody is not known but it could be from a much older English folk song.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn't work that way. So I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness.

Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

Dolphins are so smart that within a few weeks of captivity, they can train people to stand on the edge of the pool and throw them fish.

Never judge a man till you've walked a mile in his shoes. That way, you're a mile away and you've got his shoes.

You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

The voices in my head may not be real, but they have some good ideas!

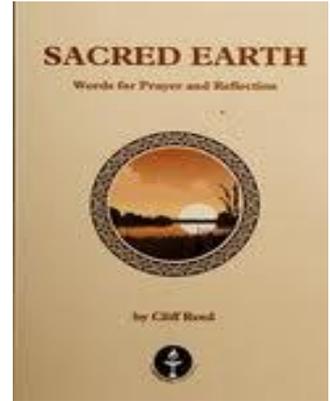
Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

[Yet another apocryphal selection from the Internet.]

AFTER THE GREAT WAVE *For Japan, March 2011*



Namazu*, the Great Fish, stirs
and the earth quakes.
Tsunami, the Great Wave, races
to the shore.
Harbours are engulfed, and towns
and villages and farmlands.
The fragile, perilous works of humankind
are assailed and shaken.
Nature's power and human folly have
combined.
People are filled with fear. They suffer
ruin, devastation, and death.
Human weakness is exposed. We feel
helpless in the face of so much grief,
so much suffering.
And yet we cannot afford ourselves
the luxury of despair.
We are here to say that, in us, the
universe cares for its children.
We are here to reach out in love
to the people of Japan;
to unite our spirits with theirs in an affirmation
of hope beyond apocalypse.
And to do what we can.
And so we kindle our sacred flame.



Rev. Cliff Reed

* In popular Japanese mythology, earthquakes are caused by the giant catfish, *Namazu*, who lies imprisoned underground beneath a huge stone and is guarded by the god, Kashima. When the latter is distracted or tired, the fish struggles to escape with earth-shaking consequences.

This was the ICUU's global Chalice Lighting for the month of April. Reverend Clifford Reed has been the minister of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House in Suffolk (southeastern England) since 1976. He was President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (1997–98), the first Secretary of the ICUU (1995–97) and chair of its first Theological Symposium, held at Oxford in 2000.

Rev. Reed is the author of five books, the latest of which is a collection of prayers and meditations called *Sacred Earth* (Lindsey Press, 2010). He is also a hymnodist and, just this year, he produced a three-part video on the early Unitarian martyr, Michael Servetus, for the 500th anniversary of his birth. These can be viewed on YouTube (www.youtube.com – search 'clifford reed servetus').

The Ipswich Meeting House was founded by Presbyterians in 1700 but the congregation became Unitarian in its views by 1800. Few Meeting Houses from that era still survive and most of those have had major alterations done. With its aspect and character basically intact, it is thought to be the only remaining purpose-built timber frame Dissenting Meeting House of its period.

Just to give *Namazu* 'fair play' (as Unitarians should), he does not cause earthquakes out of malevolence – it is just due to his nature. His depiction as a catfish is thought to be because those creatures become agitated immediately before a quake, presumably because they can feel the precursor tremours.

After the Great Ansei Earthquake at Edo (now Tokyo) in 1855, *Namazu* became seen as a divine punisher of human greed whose havoc forced the survivors to redistribute the remaining wealth. He was then called *Yonaoshi Daim-yojin* (God of World Rectification). In classical artwork, *Namazu* is depicted forcing the rich to excrete coins for the poor or committing *seppuku* (*hara-kiri*) to atone for the destruction he has caused, whereupon coins spill from his innards.

REVIEW OF *I SHALL NOT HATE*, BY DR. IZZELDIN ABUELAISH

By Frances Kendall

Like many other people, I have been appalled at the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine. Like others, I have read letters and accounts of the situation and attended many speeches on the issue. I am a member of *Just Peace for Palestine* and a supporter of *Australians for Palestine*. When I heard of the book *I Shall Not Hate*, I found it difficult to believe that a Palestinian doctor living in Gaza and working in Israel, whose daughters were killed by an Israeli bomb, could possibly make such a statement.

I bought the book with no little scepticism. But, within the foreword written by an Israeli doctor, I found this:

He doesn't view Israel as a monolithic entity where everyone is the same. He knows many Israelis: some have become his friends. He knows many Israelis who don't dismiss all Palestinians as terrorists, and he knows many Palestinians who likewise do not look at all Israelis as right-wing occupiers. He believes that we are two peoples who want to live in peace and are fed up with war and bloodshed.

Izzeldin Abuelaish is a medical doctor specialising in fertility. He has travelled and studied widely, practising in Gazan and Israeli hospitals. He is presently living with his children in Canada. *I Shall Not Hate* is the story of Abuelaish's life. Yet it is so much more. The story of his wife, Nadia, and the sense of loss on her death from leukaemia is beautifully told. They had eight children but on January 16th, 2009 during the Israeli invasion, Abuelaish ran to his daughters' bedroom where:

Bedroom furniture, schoolbooks, dolls, running shoes, and pieces of wood were splintered in a heap, along with body parts. Shatha was the only one standing. Her eye was on her cheek, her body covered in puncture wounds, her finger hanging by a thread of skin. I found Mayar's body on the ground; she'd been decapitated. There was brain matter on the ceiling, girls' hands and feet on the floor as if dropped by somebody who had left in a hurry.

There is more description of his children's and their cousin's death and, to most of us, this would justify any action taken by Abuelaish seeking retribution against Israel. Yet we find that he felt:

That his own personal disaster should serve as a kind of milestone and from here we should do more for peace in order to prevent such a horrible thing from happening again. (Letter from a friend)

In his own words:

One girl asked me, "Don't you hate the Israelis?" "Which Israelis am I supposed to hate?" I replied. The doctors and nurses I work with? The ones who are trying to save my daughter's life and my niece's sight? The babies I have delivered? Families like the Madmoony's who gave me work and shelter when I was a kid?

And again:

To those who seek retaliation, I say, even if I got revenge on all the Israeli people, would it bring my daughters back? Hatred is an illness. It prevents healing and peace.

He has founded an organisation called 'Daughters for Life', dedicated to changing the status and role of women. He believes that every girl in Palestine (and elsewhere for that matter) must be able to go to school. The foundation will provide scholarships for high school and university education and will examine existing programs and services to find out what's working for girls and women and what isn't. It will develop new curricula to fill the gaps and assist in improving current programs. Ultimately, it is hoped to develop a credible voice throughout the Middle East on societal issues affecting the lives of women and girls.

My copy of this book is covered with pen and pencil marks underlining some of the wisdom of this man. I can't hope to include these in a book review but I will conclude with Abuelaish's words for the future:

I hope my story will help open your mind, your heart and your eyes to the human condition in Gaza and help you avoid making sweeping generalisations and false judgements. I hope to inspire people in

this world, afflicted with violence, to work hard at saving human lives from destructive hostilities. It's time for politicians to take positive actions to build not destroy. Leaders cannot be leaders if they are not risk takers: the risk they must take is not in sending in the soldiers, but finding the moral courage to do the right thing to improve the world's human face in spite of criticism from haters. Instead of building walls, let us build bridges of peace.

I believe that those interested in peace (and war) would find this book a real challenge.

[Frances Kendall is a member of the Brisbane UU Fellowship, having previously been associated with the Quakers for some time. She has actively involved in peace and social justice groups for twelve years, of which she writes: "I'm sure I have quite an ASIO file. It's funny – sometimes, when you're at a protest, the cameras are out and the fellows are talking to you while they're standing behind trees, etc." She now helps to get speakers from those movements for the BUUF's meetings.]



ICUU NEWS
Kenya UU Council
Founders Vision Awards



From the ICUU weblog:

The ICUU Executive Committee has granted Emerging Group Status to the Kenya Unitarian Universalist Council following an application from that body. ... This is only the first step in the building of a relationship that could ultimately lead to full membership. It is the policy of ICUU that new groups are admitted as emerging groups and after a period of time and as part of a developmental process can later be considered for provisional membership. Emerging Group Status is a way we can recognize the start of our formal relationship and represents our intention to work with a new or reorganized faith body in further developing their Unitarian Universalist community. It does not come with any voting status or right to send delegates, but the EC does have the discretion to invite observers from the group to any meeting.

ICUU is encouraged that the KUUC continues to be open to involvement and participation from the other UU groups in Kenya that have so far not joined in this initiative. We live in hope that this preliminary step can be a catalyst towards the inclusion of all our UU brothers and sisters in Kenya around one table, independent in organization but united in love.

[The KUUC's current member congregations are located in Nairobi and points north on the central plateau, in the Rift Valley and around Kisii, in the tea-growing region near Lake Victoria. The numbers of groups and members are unclear but the denomination has grown very rapidly in Kenya since 2001, when Rev. Patrick Magara, a Seventh Day Adventist minister, returned after meeting some UUs while studying in the US. The Chairman of the KUUC is Ben Macharia, a social worker, who oversees eight preschools in Ruiru (near Nairobi). Many of the groups run orphanages, schools and food-producing enterprises.]

The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists was founded fifteen years ago and will commemorate that achievement by presenting the Founders Vision award to fifteen men and women who were pivotal in the establishment and development of the international U*U organisation. These are people who brought their national bodies behind the ICUU project when it was first vaunted, helped to plan the Foundation Meeting at Essex, Massachusetts that was held in 1995, represented their countries at that conference, held office on the ICUU Executive Committee and/or assisted its programs in other ways.

In most cases, ICUU representatives are presenting the awards at the national conferences of the recipients' home organisations. (At this time, many of the awards have already been presented – see next issue for full details of the recipients.) The ICUU recognises that its formation and subsequent expansion depended on many other people and that future development will require the dedication of many others to come, for which reason it is expected that further awards will be given in later years.

OUR INFINITE SELF

Supposing, just supposing
There was another "Self" of this physical me
An individual and personal "Other Self"
Who is beyond all time and all matter.
An other self who is also "Infinite",
Having no beginning and no end.
Born of that "Other Than" "Infinite Being".
Born, not made or created,
But of the same essence of
The "Infinite Being" "Other Than" (God).

We then of this world of time and matter
May in fact be merely
Projections of our "Other Self"
Who resides in that "Other Than" dimension.
Or we may be the dreaming
Of those in that "Other Than" world.
But on the other hand,
We may be deliberate energy transitions
Of our "Other Than Selves"
Into this existence
Of Matter and Time.

The purpose of which we can only guess.
To gain new experience,
Of creativity, wisdom?
Of destruction, suffering and death.
Of joy, happiness and wellbeing.

To learn from our creative inventiveness,
Our scientific research
Into the origins of life,
And the nature of matter.
All to be taken up into that
"Other Than" personal existence
In the "Other Self" dimension.
Adding to the growth and acumination
Of knowing and being
As "Other Than Selves" in infinity.

If we are then also of another existence,
In the mystery of an "Other Than" world
Being here to sense joy and suffering,
Creativity and destruction in this world.
Then Death also loses its non-sense and terror.
It becomes a gate to a larger
And perhaps a more meaningful
And exciting existence into infinity.
We may never know.
But we can wonder.

David Woodroffe
2008

David Woodroffe has been a member of the Perth Unitarians for the past two years. He was a minister in the Congregational Church and, after its amalgamation with the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in 1977, in the Uniting Church. He retired from full-time ministry after 16 years and worked as a student/staff counsellor at Murdoch University, doing church work on a part-time basis.

'BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY'

Vesākha (or Vesak) was celebrated on 17 May in most countries where large numbers of Buddhists live, as that was the day/night of the full moon in the appropriate month of their lunar calendar. It is not the same day in all such countries, due to their different calendars, but most of them use the system agreed to at the first Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, held in Sri Lanka in 1950.

According to tradition, *Siddhārtha Gautama* was born, attained Enlightenment and died on the same calendar day. He was the son of King Suddhodana of Kapilavastu, in what is now Nepal, and his mother was Queen Maha Maya, from a neighbouring kingdom. On the night of Siddhartha's conception, she dreamed that a white elephant with six tusks entered her right side (with its trunk, at least). He was born at Lumbini while his mother was returning to her ancestral home and she died shortly thereafter. A hermit seer, Asita, attended the birth celebrations and announced that the child would be either a great king or a religious leader. He was raised in palatial luxury but left in disillusionment at the age of 29.

On Vesak day, adherents assemble in their temples before dawn for the raising of the Buddhist flag and sing hymns of the 'holy triple gem': the Buddha, the Dharma (his teachings) and the Sangha (his disciples). Typical offerings are flowers, candles and joss sticks, all of which symbolize the shortness of life. Devotees are enjoined to avoid killing of any kind, not even insects, and to eat only vegetarian food. Thousands of birds, insects and animals are released as a symbolic act of freeing those in captivity. (I suspect this may include those who need spiritual liberation.) Celebrating Vesak also involves bringing gifts and happiness to unfortunates, such as the aged, the sick and the handicapped.

SHADY GROVE CEMETERY

By Valerie Webb



Our historic little cemetery has undergone quite a few changes over the past two years since the Shady Grove Bushland Cemetery management committee (SGCC) was formed at the end of 2008. Much work has been done behind the scenes by our dedicated little group, through liaison with other cemeteries in the area and beyond, to ensure proper legislative requirements and Australian standards have been met. In the past, cemetery procedure has been very *ad-hoc* but, with the creation of a set of documents, including eligibility requirements, fees and charges, and a 50-year lease, we believe that the policy now in place will ensure the smooth running of the cemetery into the future.

In relation to the change to the ‘Bushland’ nature of the cemetery, we have been heavily advised by Jennie Warner and her bushcare team who, through their sensitive weeding program and with a little help from a very cool summer, have ensured that we can all now enjoy seeing the emergence of many new native varieties in the cemetery. To many people, and the SGCC also, distinguishing ‘weeds’ from natives is very difficult at times. The ethos of the cemetery is ‘bushland’ and, being custodians of this unique land, all users need to be aware that general weeding by clients can be detrimental to encouraging native growth. To ensure our ongoing education of what is a ‘weed’ and what is a ‘native’, we intend to eventually have an interpretive board erected to help people with identification. A great way to learn is to join this dedicated team on its (usually monthly) bushcare days. A great social opportunity, too!

If at any time you need any information about cemetery matters, please feel free to contact myself, Jill Dunn or the curator, Helen Raison. We really enjoy the positive feedback of the general public, many of whom are just discovering this especially evocative piece of Unitarian history.

[Reproduced from the *Adelaide Unitarian Newsletter* of April 2011; Valerie Webb is Chair of the SGCC and a member of the Adelaide church’s Committee of Management. Shady Grove is in the Adelaide Hills to the north of the city and has its own Chapel and congregation. Services are held monthly and, three times a year, the city congregation has its services there.

The Chapel was built in 1856–58 by two related English Unitarian immigrant families on land that was granted to them for farming. It was primarily used as a schoolhouse for their children and those from neighbouring farms, but the families also held services there. When a government school was established in the region, the building was designated as the Shady Grove Unitarian Church and officially opened by Rev. J. Crawford Woods of the Adelaide church in 1865. He acknowledged that Shady Grove had precedence over his own church, which had started in 1857.

Later in 1865, about 4.5 acres of land containing the Chapel and the cemetery (sadly, some young children had died by that time) was given over to the Adelaide Unitarian Church. Early on, the cemetery was used by people in the area but it is now reserved for Unitarians. Valerie Webb writes: “The cemetery is both historic and operative. It has 168 plots, arranged in three double rows and sold originally in groups of four. ... There are 38 memorial plinths around the perimeter. ... The larger area is particularly renowned for its variety of orchids. The cemetery is surrounded on three sides by an almost pristine messmate stringybark forest. About 30% of the cemetery is covered with perennial native species; in particular, the ground-hugging plants called native cranberry (*Astroloma humifusum*), running postman (*Kennedia rubicunda*), sundew and mosses. Because of the openness of the sight, there are also orchids and native grasses (stipa, danthonia and kangaroo grass). Self-sown golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) and Cyprus pine (*Callitris preisii*) are also present and will have an opportunity to flourish under the new system.”

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Auckland UC reports that a small group looks like being started in Hawkes Bay in the Hastings/Napier region of the North Island, initiated from a Sea of Faith conference.

Adelaide UC's very active Stream of Life program has four new groups starting: Mothers and Babies, Open Space (arts and crafts), Singles and an Atheist group. Their 'Expanding Horizons' radio program had its tenth anniversary on 03 June.

The Christchurch Unitarians found their meeting place in reasonable shape after the recent quake and it is expected that all of the worship materials will still be in good usable condition. They are very grateful for the support they received through ANZUUA and the ICUU

Melbourne UC has a new Konica Minolta colour printing facility, mainly for bulk printing of their *Beacon*, which has a very large circulation. In addition to the usual fax, scanning and copying functions, this 'state of the art' device can fold, staple and even punch holes in pages. It has a memory capacity of 10,000 pages and can resize, enhance and even change typefaces of documents without assistance from a computer. They have offered to print the 'Under the Southern Cross' anthology, which could be quite a saving for the project.

Spirit of Life UF recently held their AGM and elected a new Committee.

Sydney UC has installed an audiovisual system, which includes a computer projector and large screen from the ceiling. It is already proving to be a great adjunct to their services and has also been used to screen DVDs. At its AGM in May, it was decided to seek a sister church in the Philippines.

THOUGHTS FOR TODAY

What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call thought, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe? Our partiality in our own favour does indeed present it on all occasions; but sound philosophy ought carefully to guard against so natural an illusion. (*David Hume, Dialogues*)

Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But, after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it. (*Buddha*)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

My special thanks to Valerie Webb for her information on Shady Grove and its history – learn more from their website: www.adelaideunitarians.org.au. Thanks also to the other contributors and to James Hills of the Brisbane UUF for the Conference Program and his help with the ANZUUA News section.

I should also mention that I got the information about Bolivia, based on an article in the *Guardian* newspaper, from my contacts at the Glasgow Unitarian Church. Janet Briggs and Lyanne Mitchell produce a beautiful monthly newsletter, *News & Views*, which you can see on: www.glasgow-unitarians.org.uk.

I had intended to bring this issue out a bit earlier but a number of things got in the way. I will definitely have the Spring issue out in time for the Conference in Brisbane but whether it will be larger than usual will depend on what I have to print. I ask that anyone who wishes to submit articles, poems, jokes or anything else do so at their earliest convenience – and remember that I want this issue to be *really* special. Please send your copy to me at: michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au.

As before, I will provide folded-and-stapled copies of this issue to any congregation that request them. Alternately, groups can print their own copies and/or circulate the electronic files when they are sent.