



Quest



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MODERN UNITARIANISM IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

As soon as the Unitarian Toleration Act was passed by the UK Parliament in 1813, many churches promptly declared Unitarian allegiance – and not just in England. In Scotland, Unitarian congregations had been forming since 1776 in Edinburgh, Montrose, Glasgow and Dundee. Just as when Theophilus Lindsey started his church in London in 1774, there had been no legal repercussions, though the minister at Dundee, Thomas Fyshe Palmer (1747–1802), was transported to Australia on purely political charges in 1794.

In 1813, about a dozen congregations declared themselves and Rev. Thomas Southwood Smith (1788–1861, pictured at left) of Edinburgh organised them into the Scottish Unitarian Association with the help of Rev. James Yates (1789–1871) of Glasgow. After using five rented meeting places over the years, the Edinburgh congregation built St. Mark's Unitarian Church in 1835. It is still in use today, though no-one seems to know how it got its incongruous name.

In Ireland, things took a very different turn in the early 1700s, when the Presbyterians there began to demand more wide-ranging discussion of theological questions, unbound by the official Westminster Confession. This led to the formation of the non-subscribing Antrim Presbytery in 1725, which drifted to Arianism in the following decades. A similar liberalisation took place in the southern Synod of Munster, though it started later. A conservative backlash in the 1800s caused Henry Montgomery (1788–1865, pictured second from left) to lead the secession of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster in 1830.

Periodicals with a Unitarian orientation started in 1832 with the *Bible Christian* (a reference to personal interpretation of Scripture), followed by the *Irish Unitarian Magazine*, the *Christian Unitarian* and others. In 1910, the Antrim, Munster and Ulster bodies merged to form the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, which has been in association with the British Unitarians ever since. (Indeed, the large church in Dublin is officially Unitarian.)

Getting back to Britain, three national Unitarian bodies were formed before 1820. These were the Unitarian Book Society (1791), the Unitarian Fund (1806) for mission work and the Unitarian Association (1818/19) for promoting civil rights. In 1825, they merged to become the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. By then, the Essex House congregation had moved, so the building became the headquarters of the new organisation, joined by the Sunday School Association when it was formed in 1833.

The first secretary of the BFUA was Rev. Robert Aspland (1782–1845), prime mover of the Unitarian Fund and a founder of the Unitarian Association. He edited the *Monthly Repository* from 1806 to 1826, the first Unitarian publication to last any length of time, and started the lighter *Christian Reformer* for less educated members in 1815. His son, Rev. Robert Brook Aspland (1805–1869) took the latter over in 1845 and later led the administration of Manchester College, which taught both divinity and lay disciplines. (Despite the name, it was located in London at that time and it is now at Oxford.) Fittingly, the younger Aspland also became secretary of the BFUA in 1859, for which reason both men (see the two pictures in the centre on p. 1) are considered to have made great contributions to organised Unitarianism.

During this period, Unitarian theology had shifted from rejecting the Trinity and the pre-existence of Christ to more general questioning of the divine origin of Scripture. The doctrines of American Unitarians were known of but considered quite radical. James Martineau (1805–1900, pictured second from right) was the most influential Unitarian thinker of his century and he did as much for the religious side of the movement as the Asplands had done for the organisational side. He entered Manchester College in 1822, at which time it had been moved to York in order to have the engagingly named Rev. Charles Wellbeloved (1769–1858) as its principal. After he graduated with high honours in 1825, he spent the rest of his life as both a minister and a teacher.

Martineau wrote the first of his many books, *Rationale of Religious Inquiry*, in 1836, which caused great consternation among older Unitarians by giving reason supremacy over Scripture. In 1840, he became Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy at Manchester New College (now back in its home city). A sabbatical year in Europe in 1848/49 changed his viewpoint dramatically and he became a Transcendentalist. He became principal of the college (by now in London) in 1869 and retired in 1885, after which he wrote his best-known books.

It would be unfair not to mention his sister, Harriet (1802–1876, pictured at far right), who became a social theorist and a prolific author. An early feminist, she has been described as the first female British sociologist.

The history of Manchester College is almost a microcosm of British Unitarianism. It was established as the Warrington Academy by English Presbyterians in 1757 and the famous chemist, Joseph Priestley, was one of its teachers. It was re-founded as the Manchester Academy in 1786 and offered courses in radical theology as well as in the sciences, languages and history. After a period in York, where its Unitarian identity was established, the college returned to Manchester in 1840 as the New Manchester College, at which time the University of London agreed to award degrees to its graduates.

The College moved to London in 1853 and remained there until a new building was built at Oxford in 1889, designed by the Unitarian architect, Thomas Worthington. Today, it is known as the Harris Manchester College, named after its benefactor, Baron Philip Harris.

In 1928, The British and Foreign Unitarian Association merged with the Sunday School Association to form the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Since they both shared the Essex House building, no change of headquarters was needed. However, that building was destroyed by a bomb in World War II and had to be rebuilt. Today, the General Assembly has 170 member congregations: 146 in England, 21 in Wales and 4 in Scotland. The English churches are divided into 13 regions for administrative purposes.

In 1930, the General Assembly acquired a building at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire, which has been used as a conference centre since that time. It has been the site of its Annual Meetings until recently and is still used for various other conferences.

[Continuing from ‘The Unitarian Spring’ in the previous issue, this is from the rest of Part 2 of the author’s ‘Unitarianism in Europe’ series of PowerPoint presentations. Part 1 traces the history of our denomination from its origins in 15th Century Transylvania and Poland to its hostile reception by the authorities in England in the 1600s. Part 3 deals with developments in Continental Europe from the 17th Century to the present, which will be the subject of a future article.

It should be added that Joseph Priestley also assisted in the foundation of some of the first Unitarian churches in England and Scotland. He wrote as many books on theology as he did on science, though the former were possibly too advanced for that time. An article about his career will also appear some time next year.]



International
Council of
Unitarians and
Universalists

ICUU NEWS

Special Council Meeting

Conferences

Pilgrimages and Tours



The Executive Committee of the ICUU convened an on-line meeting of the ICUU Council on 10 November, the agenda for which was:

- a report on developments since the last Council Meeting in The Netherlands and on plans for the next on in India in 2018;
- the Treasurer's Report and Interim Accounts; and
- consideration of the proposed ICUU Budget for 2017.

Our president, Peter Abrehart, represented ANZUUA at that meeting (see p. 13).

The new Executive Director, Rev. Sara Ascher, has lost no time in convening three other videoconferences with leaders of member groups in order to get to know them and to discuss various national and international matters. She has also issued an appeal to the wealthier member groups and their congregations to remember the ICUU in any Christmas donations they may be considering. Such bequests, including from individuals, can be made via the ICUU website (www.icuu.info).

By way of timely notice, the Annual Meetings of the UK General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches will be held at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole on 10–13 April 2017. Unfortunately, no details are available yet affecting the theme or the speakers, but they should be on the website in December. So, please check: www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/unitarian-meetings when that time comes. (The Metropole has become the standard venue for the Meetings as of last year, due to the centrality of Birmingham and the hotel's attractive location on a lake near the airport.)

Similarly, the UUA's General Assembly will take place in New Orleans over 21–25 June 2017 but, as yet, only a basic schedule is available on: www.uua.org/ga. It is known that a new president will be elected at the GA to replace Rev. Peter Morales and three candidates, all female, have nominated.

The UU Partner Church Council has given us rather short notice of their Pilgrimage to the Khasi Hills of India on 12–21 March 2017. Attendees convene in Delhi and fly to Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya state and headquarters of the Unitarian Union of North East India. They will visit Unitarian churches and schools there and in the villages of Jowai and Kharang, with side-trips to some scenic national parks. There will also be a pre-tour of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. More information at: www.uupcc.org/pilgrimages but be quick, as registrations close on 30 November.

However, there is ample time to consider the 'budget' tour of Transylvania on 16–28 September. This will take you to the historical Unitarian landmarks of Kolozsvár, Torda, Mészkö, Gyulafehérvár and Déva, as well as the 13th Century castle at Vajdahunyad, the Saxon fortress church at Biertan and the medieval citadel in Segesvár. You will also visit the frescoed Unitarian churches of Szekelyderz and Karacsonfalva, and the medieval walled city of Segesvár. (Szekelyderz, Segesvár and Biertan are all UNESCO World Heritage sites). There will also be a pre-tour of Budapest and a post-tour of the Maramureş region on the border with Ukraine, where four of the most famous painted monasteries are located in Voroneţ, Humor, Moldoviţa, and Suceaviţa (all of which are UNESCO World Heritage sites).

Back by popular demand is the study tour of Poland on 06 – 11 June 2017, led by Rev. Jay Atkinson of the UUA. This will start from Kraków and proceed to historic sites of the Polish Brethren at Jędrzejów and the Ludynia estate en route to their former centre of Raków, where a dinner will be held at Kurozwęki palace. The return journey will take in chapels at Kolosy, Cieszkow, Czarnocin and the Lusławice estate (site of a memorial to Faustus Socinus). Please contact Rev. Atkinson (jayatk40@gmail.com) for more information.

MARY, FULL OF GRACE

By Rev. Rob MacPherson

If there ever was a holy day our culture has made ‘Disney-like’, it’s got to be the Christmas season. I’m not even talking about the consumerism, ‘Disney-like’ though that is. I’m thinking more of the sanitized image of the Nativity we have taken on uncritically as transmitted and maintained in song, story, film and church diorama. Faithful, avuncular Joseph, doe-eyed animals, kneeling rich-robed kings around a perfectly un-blood-daubed gleaming white baby, and of course...Mary, the Virgin who, we are told, conceived the snow white baby without the, um, fleshly entanglement that’s usually minimally required to conceive and deliver at all. Disney-like, all right.

UUs tend not to make much of a liturgical fuss about Jesus’ birth, though all around us – even the un-churched seem to be doing so without much reflection or critique. For us, this is the celebration of the birth of a man – an extraordinary, wise and compassionate man, but a man who, though he wasn’t God incarnate, had a deep and highly motivating experience of what he took to be God. A big difference – or was he, in fact, a man at all?

Joseph Atwill’s *Caesar’s Messiah* makes a compelling case, through Roman historical accounts, that Jesus is a fictional character, not a man. A story that was fabricated by the occupying Roman authorities and their Jewish collaborators in the First Century. The rough outline from the character was a Roman general named Titus Flavius. That outline was then fleshed out and shaped by the many Old Testament prophecies of a Jewish messiah who would come to liberate Israel from its long and repeated subjugation.

Why would the Romans and their collaborators combine resources to invent such a story of hope? The Romans had tried all forceful means of keeping rebellion down in the region and failed, so they resorted to a fairly simple ‘psy ops’ – propaganda to keep the rebellious, zealous, freedom-seeking Jews pacified and subjugated, keeping them ‘rendering (taxes) unto Caesar’ and waiting passively for a prophesied Second Coming. This, according to Atwill, was Disney before Disney.

Does hearing about this scholarship dispirit you? If so, why would it? Do you *care* if the story of Jesus is historically true; do you care whether Jesus was a real person or not; do you care if all of it was cooked up by wily Roman PR experts and there isn’t a shred of actual, factual, verifiable, historical truth in *any* of it? Why should it? – you don’t need Jesus to have really lived in order to draw wisdom from the teachings. Based on fact or not, it’s still really just a story to us, one which has been adapted and evolved continually over millennia, adapted by many different people in many different places and many different contexts for many different purposes.

But this indicates, does it not, an_essential appeal of the story as universal and timeless as any product of the human imagination. It is a story absolutely soaked into the fabric of human culture, both West and East. But, again, the Nativity story we’ve been soaking in has been sanitized. Even if you reject it utterly as a PR Disney-like fantasy, the scope and significance and meaning – the power – of the story cannot be denied. For humanity to have evolved a story with this much power and endurance should be enough for you to pay attention to it. *Something must be going on in there*. If it’s fiction, it’s_great fiction and, like all great fiction, it is reimagined and reinvented according to our understanding and our needs, again and again.

The essence of the story of Jesus, and its appeal, is hope for a better way of living together in this world, but not merely a Disneyland hope for ‘pie in the sky when you die’. No, it’s a story of *real* hope for a better *this* world as well, one based on the power of compassion to transform human relations, concretely, for the better. If *Caesar’s Messiah* is right, perhaps the Romans did their PR job rather better than they expected. It wouldn’t be the first PR campaign that produced unexpected consequences.

As a progressive religion, UUs tend to care less about the factual detail of any scripture, and still less about loyalty to the exact words as the black letter law of God than about the essence of such texts. UUism is a response to Christianity, one that tries to sniff out and capture the essence of the wisdom it can offer, and our principles are thus pretty indistinguishable from essential Christian values. And the essence of the Nativity story that is commemorated all over the world this month is well worth our reflection, and our reimagining. It’s about hope but, more specifically, about when and where and how and in whom hope for a better, juster, kinder world is engendered. Not in beauty, not in power, not in glory, and not in cleanliness. Like new life emerging from fertilizer, hope is engendered where you’d least expect it. Which brings us back to Mary.

If you think about the Nativity from her point of view, hers is truly a story for our time and a powerful one, perhaps as much or more so than Jesus' story. It would be a story that would have little to do with the comfortable romanticized, sanitized, Disney-like accounts in Western art and music that the Nativity has inspired. For, if a *real* Mary *really* lived as a young Jewish woman in *real* 1st Century Judea, the difference between the harsh reality of her life and the disinfected myths that have arisen from it could not be more stark. We would do well, this Christmas, to lift the veil of myth and to look unflinchingly on her reality, because the more you look at that, the more you see that her story is the story of millions in our teeming world, and the more amazing and revolutionary her story (real or not) becomes.

Immaculate Mary, full of grace, is the lowest of the low. She is, first, a young woman in a patriarchal, pre-literate desert tribe, and thus utterly disempowered. In this culture, she is chattel; any worth she has at all rests upon her virginity. And guess what? Unless you believe in the Immaculate Conception, she is not and cannot be a virgin. The Biblical texts use the word *almah*, meaning 'young woman' – virginity is merely inferred from her youth and unmarried status. How young? According to Jewish custom, she is able to be betrothed after the age of 12.5 years. So she's a non-virginal, unwed, early teen girl in this patriarchal tribe.

Second, she is a pregnant non-virginal teen girl, a transgressive state and therefore a highly vulnerable one, subject to her preliterate desert tribe's poor grasp of biology and many cultural taboos around woman's reproductive business. And she has been made pregnant by someone other than the man she is betrothed to. *This is very serious* – Joseph, carpenter and cuckold, would be well within his rights under Jewish law to dissolve the betrothal and Mary could, as an adulteress, be stoned to death, her baby still in her belly. So, she is absolutely dependant on the good will of this 'wronged' tradesman, Joseph, for protection from a fate she could never hope to talk her way out of.

Third, this pregnant teen, the illegitimate fruit of her womb and her betrothed tradesman cuckold, being Palestinian Jews, are themselves all subjugated slaves of the occupying Romans – colonised, without rights but with obligations for paying Roman taxes. To pay those taxes, they must be registered in a census which requires long overland travel to the (nominal) father's hometown, Bethlehem and – as Sod's Law would have it – this travel coincidentally *during the last trimester of her pregnancy*. Maternity leave was unknown at the time.

Think about it – she would have known her time was approaching, but off they must needs go or face typically harsh Roman punishment. This is the Mary who would have slouched into Bethlehem, full-bellied, swollen-footed no doubt, filthy from the road, waters ready to break any moment, and no midwives, friends, or family about to help. (Any similarities you might begin to see to refugee families are, of course, a mere coincidence! As our born-again Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison, must believe, Jesus hates refugees.) And on arriving, what do they find? Welcome? Comfort?

Hardly. Bethlehem is jammed full of others also mustered there under the Roman directive. So there is nowhere to stay but the streets; they are thus quite literally *homeless refugees*. Until a kindly innkeeper takes pity on them and lets them use his – what? Not 'manger', that's the food trough – but a lean-to, semi-open shed for keeping the rain and wind off livestock. Already the lowest of the low, barely housed in a stranger's shed, this unlikely couple lie down that night *in the straw with beasts*. Under the arching canopy of a large and brutal empire, they are considered little better than beasts anyway. And in straw?

Oh, how many well-scrubbed Nativity scenes feature clean straw! Any of you who've ever had stock or kept horses will know why stables, barns and pens are floored with straw. It makes the removal of ordure easier – the straw can be easily swept out and take the ordure with it, so it does not remain to cake into the floor and infect the animals' feet or fodder. This is the context which, if it happened at all, must have been the dreadful context in which Mary's water breaks and flows; her labour starts; and her boy-child is delivered. I do not need to tell you, childbirth is also rather a messy business even when there are clean tiles and towels to hand. But, here, in this place?

Not exactly a Renaissance oil painting is it? Or a Disney film? Or a carol? The real Mary would not be Immaculate Mary: the real Mary would be a very maculate, very soiled Mary, living hardly better than the beasts she's housed with. And the enduring wonder of this theology is that it is into this fetid context, and through such an abject human being, that God incarnates, takes flesh and becomes as we are – he partakes in our humanity *at its lowest level*: Jesus, the bastard; Mary, the unwed pregnant teen; Joseph the cuckold – a non-traditional family, powerless, homeless, enslaved, little better provided for than beasts. The Nativity story is one of poverty, powerlessness, displacement, vulnerability and squalor, in which context is engendered, paradoxically, a living hope that will not be quenched. *Where else would you expect to find hope?* Where else is it more needed? Hope from muck.

Look, I can't help being born a free white male in the 20th Century, so I can only imagine what it would have been like to be Mary, a terrified child lying in the straw in a stranger's shed, racked with labour pains (that I'm told would kill a man), a child younger than my youngest daughter, probably screaming and crying and wondering "What is happening to me? What will become of this child?" She is utterly passive; she is acted upon, being absolutely subject to politics, culture, gender, to biology, and she bears it all. Hers is a story of absolute yielding and submission at all levels of the story – betrothal, pregnancy, journey, and delivery – all working through and upon her abject little self. She has no or little choice in any of it and so she yields. And so she shows more capacity to bear suffering than the world has power to inflict it. Today we call that 'passive resistance'. Like enduring a crucifixion, that is real strength.

It's our cultural gender bias to read the Nativity story as anything other than Mary's story, too. And because it is also Mary's story, it is paradoxically a subversive and therefore a hopeful story. Here is the lowest of the low and it is from this being that emerges a coherent challenge to the authoritarian forces of tribalism, patriarchy, religious authority, imperial/political power and the animal part of our own biology – all of the things that have kept Mary down. You know the challenge of which I speak – the non-violent passive resistance of 'love your enemies as yourself, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you'. For what bestial, oppressive, dehumanising, authoritarian force can withstand the redemptive power of such compassion? Where passive resistance has been truly and faithfully applied, empires have fallen.

Those who slam Christianity itself as another male-gendered source of oppression conveniently ignore the crucial part the female roles play in the Christian story: nurturing, submitting to all that fortune and a brute world can hurl, allowing nature (or God) to do its will. It is in this way, by yielding and suffering and loving anyway, that Gandhi delivered India from the womb of Empire; how Dr. King induced civil rights into a society wracked with racial pain; how the Pankhurst woman at Ascot, whose very body was broken open to bring forth gender equality to a world not yet ready for it.*

Hope is born only out of great suffering. And, when the Jesus story plays out its final act, complete with broken bodies nailed to wood, pierced and flowing blood, it is well to remember that long after the men had fled, only Mary and the other women followers remained to witness to final bitter, bloody agony. This is true strength: if you yield, nothing can subdue you any more. That's true revolution. And the name 'Mary' comes from the Hebrew 'Maryam', meaning 'rebellious'.

So, if this Christmas we happen to think on Mary, sing of her in carols like 'Silent Night', hear as we have the *Ave Maria*, we would do well to remember that hope incarnates not just on Christmas, but every day, everywhere our brothers and sisters in this world are at their lowest. Somewhere, this very day as we sit here, four million or so Syrian refugees in Jordan and elsewhere, abject survivors of oppression under strange roofs in a land not their own, broken families, germinate seeds. And today, as we sit here, behind walls twice as high as the Berlin Wall in long-suffering Palestine itself, penned in like beasts, broken lives are gestating hope. They must. And, yes, somewhere today on Nauru and Manus Island, and even on the ironically named Christmas Island, and coming soon to Cambodia, all throughout the course of history, millions have slouched toward their own Bethlehem every single day.

The story says that it is there, among such lowly as these, and not in the halls of governments, nor in corporate boardrooms, nor in the comfortable villas and McMansions of the social elite, nor the holy ends of churches, is hope born and liberation begins. The Kingdom germinates, the divine in man incarnates, where we are most broken – broken bodies, broken hearts, broken homes and the broken waters of birth. "Life is reproduced by sacrifice," said UU minister Francis Peabody. "The life that is lost is the only life that is saved."

There is one last modern parallel in this story of suffering, birthing, hope: our role in the story. We are not the Holy Family, or the innkeeper or the beasts. In our privilege and power, we are the Romans. And we have a choice: we can continue to spin pretty Disney myths, with virgins and clean babies and happy nuclear families, myths that maintain our privilege and its delusions, *or* we can work to tear down the structures of oppression and unjust systems we've helped build and maintain, and play our role in that longed-for Nativity, that birth of hope for a better world, our very selves. The imagery of childbirth was in the mind of the Old Testament prophet, Amos, who said: "Let justice flow down like the waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream." So may it be. Amen.

* Please see p. 16 for an explanation of this.

[This sermon was delivered at the Adelaide Unitarian Church on 08 December 2013.]

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC's minister, Rev. Rob MacPherson, gave an address to the 'Common Dreams' conference held in Brisbane over 16–19 September, in which he spoke about the Unitarian approach to spirituality. It was followed by a Q & A session. A recording of the address and the Q & A session that followed is available on their podcast site: unitariansa.podbean.com.

During October, they raised almost \$6000 for the One Girl 'Do it in a Dress' campaign led by Sandy Johns, which was enough to give a year's education to 19 girls in Uganda and Sierra Leone. Sandy led the service on 09 October, at which Khadija Gbla, Young South Australian of the Year 2011, was the guest speaker. (She was born in Sierra Leone but came to South Australia with her family in 2001.)

A group of members participated in the 'Walk Together' event, held on 22 October to celebrate diversity in our society and welcome newcomers to Australia. Others visited the Adelaide Mosque on National Mosque Open Day (29 October). This year's 'Spring into Summer' fair was held on 12 November with an extensive range of items on sale: good quality second-hand clothes and books, bric-a-brac, plants, jams, preserves, cakes and biscuits. There was also a barbecue, children's activities, live music, and afternoon tea available.

AUC's Annual General Meeting was held on 20 November and their Christmas Service will take place on 18 December

Auckland UC report increased attendance, membership and finances. On the strength of a successful pledge campaign, the Management Committee has offered Rev. Clay Nelson another one-year contract as minister. On 24 September, they held a very successful Service Auction and dinner that raised \$4800, the second highest amount in their history.

Rev. Nelson attended the 'Common Dreams' conference in Brisbane and also the annual Sea of Faith NZ conference near Wellington on 07–09 October as their guest. (Actually, he was the back-up speaker in case Rev. Gretta Vosper of the United Church of Canada's forthcoming heresy trial prevented her from coming!)

All of their talks and portions of some services are now available in video, podcasts and text on their website (www.aucklandunitarian.org.nz) and any ANZUUA congregation is free to use them. Particularly noteworthy is the video from the service on 13 November, in which KJPhoenix Joy and Sally Mabelle presented 'Dances of Universal Peace'. As in previous years, a special service and dinner will be held on Christmas Eve.

Their Peace and Social Justice Committee has tripled in size and wishes to extend its purview from the long-term project of helping dyslexic children in Samoa and Tonga (see last issue) and supporting the Living Wage Movement. The Committee is now exploring ways to assist Amnesty International's work to liberate refugees held in Australian detention centres and how to sponsor refugees seeking asylum in New Zealand.

The most recent Adult Religious Education program, a six-session look at Unitarian Universalist history, was very well received with an average attendance of 22. A greater challenge is to build up their children's RE program, as they are aiming to have a children's crèche by the beginning of next year.

Brisbane UU Fellowship are pleased to have developed a brief Commitment to Right Relations statement. In response to a general invitation, a small group led by their member, Rev. Robert Hill (author of the UUA publication, *Complete Guide to a Small Group Ministry: Saving the World Ten at a Time*), compiled the statement in September. (Please see p. 16 for the text of that.)

Recent services have dealt with such topics as 'A Small Planet' (interconnections proven through DNA testing), 'On Becoming Wise' (based on Krista Tippett's book, *Happily Ageing*) and 'They Go Low, We Go High' (an excellent reflection by Rev. Robert Hill on the lead-up to the American presidential election and the climate change wisdom of Australian ocean scientist, Charlie Veron). The services in November were 'Tolerance' (to mark the International Day of Tolerance on 16 November) and 'Grounded' (ideas on earth spirituality by leading progressive Christian theologian, Diana Bass). The end-of-year celebration will follow the final service for the year on 11 December.

(Continued on p.14.)

GLOBALIZATION IS GOOD FOR YOU



Well it's been a lengthy lesson
But we've been learning every day
Perfecting our techniques at keeping
The working class at bay
First we tried slavery
But those slaves did rebel
Then we tried colonies
But that worked about as well

If your people start dying younger
And they say they're underpaid
Then you must remind them
Of the wonders of free trade
Just borrow some more money
And ignore that little rider
And remember you've got ten choices
Of mobile phone provider

Well we kept trying to stabilize
Minority control
To provide a sense of honesty
In this land we stole
Then we came upon it
The key to legitimization
You can call it what you want
We call it globalization

And globalization is good for you
If you do it well
Just close those schools and hospitals
And sign this contract here with Shell
And tell those labor leaders and protesters
To go walk the plank
Three cheers for the IMF
And the World Bank



And globalization is good for you
Different from before
We'll just sell the arms you need
To fight your civil war
And when you look at those golden arches
You know who to thank
Let's hear it for the IMF
And the World Bank

If the idea of democracy
Had a pleasant ring
We'll help you realize that dictatorship
Is really just the thing
This self-determination
Is all a silly fuss
A billion dollars in your pocket
Says just listen to us

We'll loan you lots of money
So you can modernize
Build up your infrastructure
Which we'll then privatize
'Cause you gotta pay your loans somehow
It is only right
And at eighty percent interest
We'll just take everything in sight

'Cause globalization is good for you
Even if the people disagree
They'll take their orders from you
As you take yours from DC
Now don't forget to pack the prisons
And to watch your flank
Let's hear it for the IMF
And the World Bank



And globalization is good for you
It'll open many doors
Though you've sold your country
And it's no longer yours
Now you've got a coca-cola
And a very modern tank
Let's hear it for the IMF
And the World Bank

David Rovics

This song relates to the article on pp. 9/10. David Rovics was born in New York City in 1967 and grew up in Wilton, Connecticut. His parents, both classical musicians and educators, were liberal in their outlook. He enrolled at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, in 1985, but dropped out and moved to Berkeley, California. He worked in various occupations while pursuing his musical interests as a street and subway performer, also playing in small clubs and bars.

Rovics immersed himself in the leftist counterculture and his prolific songwriting certainly expresses that outlook, as does his practice of self-releasing many of his albums and making his works freely available on the Internet in mp3 format. He produced 31 albums between 1998 and 2015, on which (like Bob Dylan) he is the sole performer. From the mid-1990s, he has conducted concert tours around the world, performing in Australia in 2008/9. Just when and where the above song was written or recorded is unclear, though it is not listed in his 2004 songbook.

Although Rovics' work has never met with great commercial success, he continues to be popular with a small but widespread base of fans around the world. He also writes essays for *CounterPunch* magazine and the *Truthout* website. He currently lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife and daughter.

CHRIST CLIMBED DOWN

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
there were no rootless Christmas trees
hung with candycanes and breakable stars

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
there were no gilded Christmas trees
and no tinsel Christmas trees
and no tinfoil Christmas trees
and no pink plastic Christmas trees
and no gold Christmas trees
and no black Christmas trees
and no powderblue Christmas trees
hung with electric candles
and encircled by tin electric trains
and clever cornball relatives

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
no intrepid Bible salesmen
covered the territory
in two-tone cadillacs
and where no Sears Roebuck crèches
complete with plastic babe in manger
arrived by parcel post
the babe by special delivery
and where no televised Wise Men
praised the Lord Calvert Whiskey

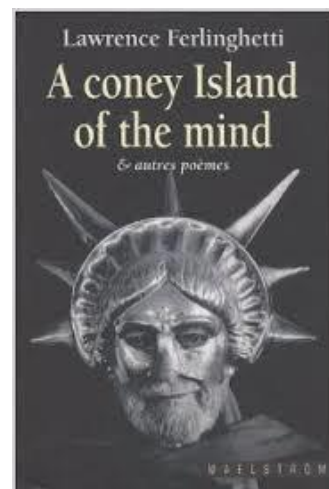
Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
no fat handshaking stranger
in a red flannel suit
and a fake white beard

went around passing himself off
as some sort of North Pole saint
crossing the desert to Bethlehem
Pennsylvania
in a Volkswagen sled
drawn by rollicking Adirondack reindeer
with German names
and bearing sacks of Humble Gifts
from Saks Fifth Avenue
for everybody's imagined Christ child

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and ran away to where
no Bing Crosby carolers
groaned of a tight Christmas
and where no Radio City angels
iceskated wingless
thru a winter wonderland
into a jinglebell heaven
daily at 8:30
with Midnight Mass matinees

Christ climbed down
from His bare Tree
this year
and softly stole away into
some anonymous Mary's womb again
where in the darkest night
of everybody's anonymous soul
He awaits again
an unimaginable
and impossibly
Immaculate Reconception
the very craziest
of Second Comings

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1958)



For those with long memories, here is a poem by another New Yorker from an earlier generation of radicals, known as the Beatniks. Lawrence Monsanto Ferlinghetti was born in 1919 and completed a B.A. in journalism at the University of North Carolina in 1941. He joined the US Navy as an officer and served in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres. A visit to the ruins of Nagasaki in 1945 made him a lifelong pacifist.

Funded by the GI Bill, Ferlinghetti obtained an M.A. in English literature from Columbia University in 1947 and a Doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1951. Living in San Francisco from 1953, he took up painting and translated French poetry before he started writing his own. (The poem above is from his second collection, *A Coney Island of the Mind*, published in 1958. It is not known when the actual poem was written.) He founded the City Lights Bookstore and then added a publishing house, which produced the works of many Beatnik writers, including Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Jack Kerouac.

In later years, Ferlinghetti was active in the Hippy movement and left-wing politics. He travelled extensively and wrote more than 30 books of poetry, fiction, art criticism and film narration. He won numerous awards, both in the US and internationally, and became the Poet Laureate of San Francisco in 1998. He often gave public recitations and even made recordings of his poems and stories. Most impressively, he is still alive at 97.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND WORLD TRADE

By Mike McPhee



This may seem like an incongruous topic for a United Nations Day (24 October) feature but most people don't realise that the present-day World Trade Organisation is actually the long-term outcome of a UN initiative that began almost as soon as that organisation was founded in 1945. They may also not know that the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established as a principle organ of the UN at that time, a distinction it shares only with the Food and Agricultural Organisation.

From a purely peacekeeping aspect, we can see that international trade has been a flashpoint for conflict in the past – consider the Opium Wars of the mid-1850s and the forceful entry of the US Navy into Japan at about the same time to compel that country to open its ports. While those days were long gone by 1945, more recent history had seen boycotts, embargoes and 'tariff wars' that disrupted trade between nations even in the absence of military hostilities.

It has long been argued that international trade is a force for peace, given that interdependent countries are less likely to go to war with each other. That was certainly the purpose of the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty, signed by the UK and France in 1860, which led to many more bilateral trade pacts in the rest of Europe. (While these are often called 'free trade agreements', they usually instituted reciprocal reductions in tariffs, rather than the abolition thereof. In those days, tariffs were an important source of government revenue and the protection of domestic industries was a secondary consideration.)

The League of Nations, founded in 1919, did not concern itself with economic matters, though it did establish the International Labour Organisation for the protection of trade unions and workers' rights. The League also had recourse to economic sanctions as a means of forcing hostile nations to accede to its mandates (or, at least, agree to negotiate), but those powers were never used because one or more of the Great Powers thought that their commerce would be adversely affected.

Near the end of World War II, while the United Nations Organisation was in the planning stages, the US held a conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in July 1944 to regulate the future international monetary and financial order. Attended by 730 delegates from 44 Allied nations, the conference agreed to establish the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund. The brief of the former, better known as the World Bank, was to fund reconstruction efforts in war-torn Europe, while the latter's role was to reconstruct and stabilise the international payment system, facilitate trade through the management of balance of payments difficulties and resolve financial crises. Both bodies formally came into being on 27 December 1945, with their headquarters in Washington, D.C.

In February 1946, again at the behest of the US, the UN's Economic and Social Committee (precursor to the Council) called for a conference to form an International Trade Organisation and another to negotiate a general reduction in tariffs. Representatives of 56 countries met in Havana in March 1947 and ratified a plan for the ITO proposed by the famous British economist, John Maynard Keynes. Ironically, the Havana Charter was stillborn because the US Congress refused to ratify it, so another conference of only 23 countries formulated the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in Geneva in the October of that year.

Over eight 'Rounds' between 1949 and 2001, the membership of the GATT increased to 159 countries; tariffs were progressively reduced; and other aspects of trade were added to the organisation's purview. In the early years, attempts were made to revive the ITO proposal but, ultimately, the GATT evolved into an equivalent body. The Uruguay Round of 1986–94 saw tariffs reduced to below 5%, addressed the contentious area of agriculture for the first time and established the World Trade Organisation in its final year.

The WTO came into being on 01 January 1995, with its headquarters in Geneva. It currently has 164 members (and another 20 countries have observer status) who collectively conduct over 95% of the world's trade. It is governed by a Ministerial Council that meets every two years, while its day-to-day operations are managed by the General Council and three subsidiary Councils for Trade in Goods, Trade in Services and Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. There is also the Trade Negotiations Committee, which oversees the continuing Doha Development Round of tariff deliberations, and the Dispute Settlement Body.

Critics argue that the WTO benefits the developed countries and their multinational corporations at the expense of the Third World, where any growth that does occur has no positive impact on the poorest of their inhabitants. The intellectual property element is a case in point, as that was added at the insistence of the pharmaceutical and information technology industries. Worse still, developed countries were still protecting their agricultural industries while developing countries were urged to open their markets.

Such criticisms were not new, as the World Bank and the IMF had been accused of ravaging Third World economies in the 1970s. Their dominantly Western managements were obsessed with 'free market' policies that totally ignored the realities of developing countries. Thus, when the Oil Crisis of 1973 forced many Third World countries to default on their loans, they were obliged to privatise such public assets as national banks and water distribution systems and sell them to foreign companies. They also had to cut their meager national budgets, causing their health and education systems to decline. Worse still, these countries were told to abandon industrialisation and concentrate on cash crops, even at the expense of food production. Those nations with natural resources such as forests and minerals were made to open them to development, again usually by foreign companies and regardless of the cost to their environments.

By 1964, the UN had become sufficiently concerned about the disadvantage faced by Third World countries that it founded the Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Its primary objective was to formulate policies on trade, aid, transport, finance and technology that would favour exports of manufactured and agricultural products from Third World countries. UNCTAD has 194 members that meet every four years and a permanent secretariat in Geneva. While that body has given the Third World an effective voice, the response from the developed countries to its initiatives has been grudging and slow.

The globalisation process has advanced to such a degree that the economic 'majors' (including countries like Singapore and Chile) became impatient with the pace of the Doha Round and embarked on regional pacts like the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The twelve parties to the negotiations, ranging from Australia to Vietnam (but not including China), account for 40% of global GDP and one-third of world trade. A number of other countries in Asia and South America have expressed interest in joining once the group is operational.

The negotiations have been complicated, dragging out well past the original 2012 deadline. Yet, after all this time, few details (other than 'leaks') were available before a draft was released near the end of 2015. It is claimed that the TPP will cut or eliminate some 18,000 tariffs, reduce over-fishing and ban exploitative child labour – all this, while protecting human rights, collective bargaining, and fair wages and working conditions. This should be interesting to see, given the woeful record for such matters in some of those countries.

The many criticisms of the TPP include that its intellectual property provisions greatly benefit US copyright holders and the transnational pharmaceutical industry. Labour movements in the developed countries fear that tens of thousands of jobs will be 'offshored' to countries that are able to artificially depress their currencies and/or have weaker occupational health and safety standards. However, the most alarming aspect of the TPP is the provision for investor-state dispute settlement, which allows corporations to sue national governments for alleged damages caused by their laws and regulations.

This provision could enable a foreign company to claim 'lost profits' due to an increase in the minimum wage or tightened environmental regulations on the part of the host country. Worse still, disputes will not be settled in courts of law but through the TPP's own arbitration system of corporate lawyers. There are many sources of concern here and the UN has been effectively 'sidelined' for too many years to be of any help.

[That last paragraph may have been 'trumped' by the recent presidential election in the US, which is ironic in that critics of the TPP in our countries complained that it was too advantageous to American intellectual property and pharmaceutical interests. Now, economic analysts are concerned about the unraveling of long-standing trade agreements and the prospect of an all-out trade war between the US and China that would embroil many other countries.]

A VERY BRIEF AND RECENT HISTORY OF FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS OF MELBOURNE FELLOWSHIP

By Janine Rizzetti



It seems to be tempting fate to even attempt a brief history of our small fellowship at such an early stage of our development, but I'm aware that first steps are often lost further down the track. This, therefore, is an account of the formation and early progress of First Unitarian Universalists of Melbourne.

For lack of a better term, our fellowship began as the 'Eastern Unitarian Universalist Congregation', convened by Dr. Katherine Phelps. It was intended that the group be based in the Eastern Suburbs and that it be consciously Unitarian/Universalist, rather than Unitarian alone. Initial meetings to establish the group included some participants who had attended Unitarian Universalist churches in the United States; others who had attended the Grey Street church in Melbourne and, for various reasons, wanted an alternative Unitarian experience; and participants in a language school that had been held at the Grey Street premises in the past.

Although the original intention was that it be an Eastern Suburbs-based group, its members were (and are) from across Melbourne and a central location was more convenient. The first service was conducted at Ross House in Flinders Lane in February 2013 and we have continued to meet in the city on a monthly basis since then.

Ross House was selected because it is a community-owned building whose tenants work towards social justice and the environment. However, despite its central location, there were some drawbacks to meeting there. Ross House had no storage space that we could use, so we needed to bring all of our equipment in each month. Parking was expensive and it took some effort to load and unload musical equipment each time in a small busy street. The building was largely unused on a Sunday morning, so one participant had to wait by the door to allow latecomers to enter.

On application, groups devoted to social justice and the environment could become members of Ross House, provided that they were incorporated or working towards incorporation. This would enable us to store our equipment on-site. Therefore, a working group was established on 24 March 2013 to organize events and publicity, and to draw up a constitution. The constitution was ratified by the members on 9th February and certified by Consumer Affairs Victoria on 4th March 2014. Several members of the working group went on to serve on the Management Committee and continue to do so today.

However, in May 2014, we learned that our application to join as members of Ross House was declined on the basis that, for eligibility under the Social Justice category, an organization needed to demonstrate activities promoting human rights and removing some form of disadvantage. It was not considered that this was a clear outcome of our activities. We were welcome to continue renting a space at Ross House on Sundays as before but there would be no access to storage or mailbox facilities.

At this point, the president Katherine Phelps abruptly resigned and the service scheduled for the following day was cancelled. After a flurry of telephone conversations, the group met on 25th May and made the decision to continue. A letter was sent to Katherine Phelps thanking her for her work in establishing the group as foundation president.

Committee members stepped into the breach as executive positions were realigned and we became determined that the whole enterprise should not founder on the resignation of one individual. There was no need to find an alternative venue immediately, so a number of venues were investigated. We decided on the Rehearsal Room at the Multicultural Hub, a location opposite Victoria Market, where a locker and storage space were available.

We have met there since September 2014, shifting from a basement room to a more pleasant and accessible room closer to the reception desk, which is manned during our services. In many ways, our services continue to follow the format introduced by Katherine, who had presided over all the services conducted during her time with us. Responsibilities for conducting the services, choosing the music and readings, making a presentation and chairing our talkback session are willingly shared between participants.

We have had and will continue to welcome the input of guest speakers on social justice issues. Time for reflection and a sense of reverence is valued during our service times and the Seven Principles form the bedrock of our shared values. Our services would be familiar to North American Unitarian Universalists, as several of our members have been long-standing members of churches in America.

During 2014–15, we met on the second Sunday of each month for a book group and discussion group, but this lapsed over time. We shifted to an afternoon timeslot on the third Sunday of each month, with a Committee meeting (open to all members) held in the morning and a shared lunch amongst the participants before the service commenced at 2.00 p.m. We have recently reprinted our pamphlets, and our website and Facebook page continue to attract interest as our main form of communication and publicity. Our numbers hold steady and are slowly increasing, with approximately 10–12 people attending our services each time.

We have attended a number of refugee marches and anti-war functions, and have engaged in ‘write here, write now’ activities over indigenous affairs and refugee policy. We have made donations to the Brisbane group’s Philippines project and to the Refugee Action Collective, who have organized large-scale protests here in Melbourne. We are still only a small group and we look forward to joining with other larger and more established groups in their social justice activities, rather than trying to initiate programs independently with so few to bear the weight. We hope that, in the coming year, we may be able to run a second service each month.

It was and is important to us that we fall under the ANZUUA umbrella, which was approved by the ANZUUA Conference in 2015. Our small group is steadily growing and we feel that we offer another aspect of Unitarian Universalism in Melbourne.

[Janine Rizzetti is the Secretary of the FUUMF. The picture is from a Refugee March protest outside the State Library on 18 June.]

ANZUUA NEWS

Our president, Peter Abrehart, represented ANZUUA at the on-line meeting of the ICUU Council and also attended one of Rev. Sara Ascher’s videoconferences with national group leaders, which he describes as a ‘listen and learn’ experience for him.

The ANZUUA Council endorsed our signing on to the Interfaith Statement on Climate Change that arose from the COP (Conference of Parties) 22 meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco, this month.

Plans are well underway for the next ANZUUA Conference, to be held in Adelaide on 20–22 October 2017. The keynote speaker will be the social researcher and author, Hugh Mackay, and the theme will be how our denomination flourishes and grows in the region.

Our Treasurer, Henri van Roon, has pointed out that annual subscriptions from the member groups are now due. Each group should new their current numbers so that accounts can be sent out.

(Reports From Member Groups, cont'd)

Joining with the local branch of Zonta (a women's advocacy group) to pack toiletries in August was seen as an excellent exercise in practical social justice. BUUF hope to repeat this in the future and some members are already collecting travel toiletries for the next packing day. They have also researched volunteer opportunities for individuals to work with Micah Projects, a not-for-profit organisation committed to providing services in the community to create justice and respond to injustice.

Renee Hills and Janice Heyhoe attended the inaugural Brisbane meeting of Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), which was well attended by members from a wide spectrum of religions. Renee has taken a personal membership and it is hoped that BUUF can have a significant role in that group. At their AGM on 09 October, the main office bearers were re-elected and some additional members were added to the Management Committee.

Christchurch Unitarians attended two major presentations in September that were held by other bodies. The retired Church of Scotland minister and hymnodist Rev. Bill Wallace celebrated his 'Sacred Energy/Mass of the Universe' at the (Presbyterian) Knox Church Hall. Then, former MP and Cabinet member Marian Hobbs gave the Annual Quaker Lecture, titled: 'A Peaceful World – How can we make it so?'

Their October meeting featured a TED video, 'Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator', by the American singer-songwriter and actor, Tim Urban. In November, Valerie Wycoff and Jim Lovell-Smith led a service on 'Gratitude/Thanksgiving'. On 11 December, their president, Natalia Artemiev will speak on 'Season Sharing – Solstice, Christmas' and a shared meal will follow the service.

First UU Melbourne Fellowship held a service in August titled 'There's Always Room To Learn More', led by congregation member Claire Butler. It is intended that she will conduct a series of workshops, 'Cakes for the Queen of Heaven' (a long-standing UUA course on goddess worship), at the additional monthly meetings they plan to hold during 2017.

On the weekend of 17–18 September, they welcomed Kim Banz from Brisbane, who conducted a workshop on the Saturday which examined various forms of spiritual practice that could be incorporated into our daily lives. On the Sunday, she led the service where she reflected on her role as a hospital chaplain and the perspectives that she had developed through this work. Their AGM followed and the new Committee gained a new member. Kim spoke at the conclusion of the meeting, offering suggestions for growth and the potential for using internet-based services to reduce the workload of their small Committee.

Their president, Mimi Farrar-Dixon, conducted the October service titled 'Fashion, Flair and Confusion', having arrived home from an overseas trip the previous evening! The November service was a Water Communion, to celebrate the start of summer and formally welcome two new members. On 05 November, two members attended a rally organised by the Refugee Action Committee, seeking to assist the 'Welcome to Eltham' group who are supporting the temporary settlement of Syrian women and children in a disused nursing home. On Saturday, 17 December, they will have a break-up BBQ at the home of their president.

Melbourne UC has had the usual range of guest speakers in this quarter, including: Cam Walker of Friends of the Earth and Mike Salvaris, Chair of the Australian National Development Index Project ('Measuring the Future We Want') in September; author, consultant and curator Tasneem Copra ('Burqas, Bombs and Bogeymen'), Prof. Hans Baer of the University of Melbourne's School of Social and Political Sciences ('China's Ecological and Carbon Footprints Under Modernisation') and retired Uniting Church minister Rev. Robert Stringer ('West Papua in Crisis') in October; and Angela Merriam of the Sacred Heart Mission ('Homelessness in the World's Most Livable City?') in November.

On 27 November, they celebrated the 164th anniversary of MUC's foundation. The service was led by Julie Phillips, a manager in the Disability Discrimination Legal Service, who has been working primarily with the deaf community for over twenty years. The final service on 18 December will be a fundraising Christmas Concert, replete with good music, skilled performances, laughter and appreciation of the entertainers.

Their AGM on 16 October was one of the best yet, in terms of both numbers attending and participation. The previous Committee of Management was re-elected unopposed and a number of resolutions were passed on matters of importance to the church: the environment, Newstart, financial issues, support for workers at the Carlton United Brewery and the church concert. Members were also introduced to the first-class theatre system that was recently installed.

Perth Unitarians held their ninth Annual Retreat at the Benedictine Monastery in New Norcia at the end of August. There were nine attendees ranging in age from 35 to 84, and the usual morning discussion with Dom Chris, who had chosen 'Forgiveness' as his theme, was extended into another session in the afternoon. Member Gordon MacDonald spoke of his experiences when studying in Jerusalem, accompanied with pictorial representation. They enjoyed movies, meditation, walks and viewing an exhibition in the art gallery, and were joined for Sunday Mass by the Camino walkers and some members who were attending the Perth Fox Hunt, which event is encouraged by nearby farmers to help eradicate the foxes who attack the lambs.

Goff Barrett-Lennard spoke on 'Are we always and forever responsible for our past voluntary actions?' in August. The speakers in September were Angela Burchardt ('Experience of a Spiritual Life'), journeying through different philosophies including yoga, Esoteric Christianity and colour therapy, and Kate Barrett-Lennard presented 'What are we asking for?', which was the first sermon delivered by visiting Unitarian Jerome Rubin since his return to the US. (Jerome had spent most of this year in Perth.)

In October, their minister, Rev. Peter Ferguson, spoke on 'Current Societal Trends in Religion', pointing out that that Fundamentalist Christian and Islamic populations are growing while secular citizens are having too few children to replace themselves. In a subsequent talk in November, he looked at the theocratic terrors in the Middle East and the growing influence of fundamentalist religions on nuclear-armed states such as China, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA.

Also in October, ANZUUA president Peter Abrehart paid an official visit to Perth and gave a talk ('Cherish the Dream') about Unitarianism in Australia and New Zealand, and our Unitarian heritage and principles relating to social justice. This was a major event for the Perth congregation and was followed by a luncheon at the Captain Stirling Hotel nearby.

The new Trello minute-taking system (see the previous issue) is working well, especially when used in conjunction with a large flat-screen that everyone can see. The last Committee meeting focused on ways to attract more people and it was agreed to register the group with MeetUp.

Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship have placed a number of their talks on their website which other groups are welcome to use. The latest one is an address by Ginna Hastings on how to cope with the presence of evil in our world without falling into despair. There are also two excellent talks on the history of our Unitarian Chalice by Rev. Geoff Usher. Please see: www.sydneyunitarians.org/news-and-services/blog/.

Ginna also managed to get a letter printed in *The Sydney Morning Herald* recently that endeavoured to show the extent of bullying in our society. It was slightly edited but got the point across that bullying is not just something that individuals do; corporate and government entities do it too. Their end-of-year service and party will be on 18 December.

Sydney UC had two guest speakers in this quarter, the first being retired philosophy professor, Ted Sadler, speaking on Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas (perceived and real) in September. Then, in October, Kabita Chakma of the CHT Indigenous Jumma Association spoke on the discrimination faced by the peoples of the Chittagong Hills Tracts in Bangladesh. That region, in the southeast corner of the country, has native populations who are mostly Buddhists and Hindus, but their main problem is illegal seizure of their lands. SUC have now donated \$600 to Ms. Chakma's organisation and the school it is running in the district.

There were also two Music Services, one in October led by the previous Music Director, Chad Vindin, whose hymns feature in *A Southern Chalice*. The second, in November, focused on Richard Wagner's opera, *The Valkyries*, and the legends affecting Siegfried, Brunhilde and others. A Special Concert, again led by their current Music Director, Kaine Hayward, will be held on 18 December.

SUC have recently been making audio recordings of services to go on their website, which already has PDF versions of some of the talks presented over the years.

The screening of old silent films on Saturday afternoons has continued, with August Blom's *The End of the World* (Denmark, 1916) in September and Lev Kuleshov's *By the Law* (Russia, 1926) in October. In November, there will be a special series of comedies (including one by Charlie Chaplin) over three Saturdays.

For logistical reasons, the final service and Christmas Party will take place on 04 December.

STATEMENT OF THE BRISBANE UU FELLOWSHIP

Our Commitment to Right Relations

Because we value being together as a group, we seek to preserve the harmony of our shared space and events.

We will honour and respect our time together

We will provide periods of quiet for reflection

We will listen respectfully

We will be considerate of the range of diversity in beliefs, life experience, and outlooks of those present, by choosing with care how we express what we wish to say.

Our Commitment to Each Other

As we value our time together and the harmony of our shared space, we commit to listening respectfully to all and to consider others as we express ourselves.

We intend to have the last statement on a large poster that is visible on the way in to our gatherings and also printed on the order of service.

FOOTNOTES

Just with the lead article, an even more famous chemist than Joseph Priestley who taught at the New Manchester College was John Dalton (1766–1844). He was there between 1793 and 1800, teaching mathematics and natural philosophy (i.e., physics). Only three years later, he proposed the first modern atomic theory and went on to a distinguished academic career. This year marks the 250th anniversary of his birth.

With Rev. Rob MacPherson's sermon (p. 6), Emily Davison (1872–1913) was a British suffragette who joined the Women's Social Political Union, founded by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903. She became too militant for that organisation and was imprisoned nine times for property damage and arson. On 04 June 1913, she went to the Epsom Derby at the Ascot Racecourse and, slipping under the railing, stood in the path of a horse owned by King George V. She died four days later from concussion and internal injuries.

The report from the Adelaide Unitarian Church about the mosque in their city merits some additional information. Originally called the 'Afghan Chapel' and reputedly the oldest permanent mosque in Australia, it was built in 1888–89 by a group of Afghan and North Indian cameleers; four distinctive minarets were added in 1903. Muslims from as far away as Broken Hill and Kalgoorlie would come there at least once a year, usually for the Fast of Ramadan. It fell into disrepair after most of the cameleers went home but post-WWII migrants from Bosnia revived it and, today, Muslims of many nationalities are in attendance.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I am greatly relieved to bring this issue out on time, as I had feared this might not happen. I got off to a fine start in July/August with the help of the main contributors, to whom I am most grateful, but then the reports from the member groups started coming in from mid-November and some of these were quite lengthy. I had to reduce them from six pages to three and I apologise in advance to any groups that may think they didn't get a fair share of the available space. Then, technical difficulties caused the ANZUUA Council meeting to be deferred until 22 November, so I had little time left to hammer that report into the space I had left for it.

I understand that the meeting in February will also be quite late, so I ask the member groups to send their reports by the middle of the month. I imagine that most groups will not be getting up to much in January, so please feel free to tell me more about your end-of-year events and be sure to say something about what you have planned for March. (I will send a reminder to that effect closer to that time.)

I'm very pleased to learn of ANZUUA's recent engagement with the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. Let me mention, in all modesty, that I wrote to Rev. Sara Ascher somewhat earlier (having had much correspondence with her predecessor, and she asked me to put her on the circulation list of our *Quest*).

My best wishes to all of you for the Festive Season and please send me more articles as soon as you get over it, so I can make an early start on the March issue: michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au.