



Quest



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REFUGEES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Another United Nations Day (24 October) came around and with asylum seekers prominent in the news, our topic for this year will be international efforts to deal with masses of people leaving their home-lands. This actually goes back to the League of Nations, which established a High Commission for Refugees in 1921 under the leadership of the Norwegian scientist and diplomat, Fridtjof Nansen. He had already been organising the repatriation of half a million POWs, which task he completed in 1922. Then he turned his attention to four million refugees from Russia, Turkey and Greece, half of whom were stateless.

In 1930, the High Commission was renamed the Nansen International Office for Refugees, which issued its own Nansen Passports for refugees who had no travel documents. Though not all League members were willing to resettle refugees, fourteen nations ratified the Refugee Convention of 1933, the first human rights agreement in history. Nansen and his Office were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1938.

It should be noted that the League of Nations had only recognised refugee groups (or not) according to their countries of origin. Thus, in 1933, it established a High Commission for Refugees Coming from Germany (mostly Jewish), whose mandate was extended in 1938 to Austria and Sudetenland. At the end of that year, the High Commission and the Nansen Office were replaced by the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees under the Protection of the League, just in time for an influx of Spanish Republicans into France at the end of the Civil War.

Interestingly, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was created by the Allies in 1943, before the actual UNO existed. Its purpose was to provide aid in areas liberated from the Axis Powers in Europe and China. By the end of World War II, there were more than 40 million refugees and/or displaced persons in Europe, and the UNRRA returned 7 million of them to their countries of origin. Another million who had nowhere to go were accommodated in refugee camps across Western Europe.

The United Nations was founded in 1945 and the UNRRA was replaced by the International Refugee Organisation in 1947. After resettling a million refugees in Western Europe, sometimes using its own Certificates of Identity, the IRO was superseded in 1950 by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Ironically, while the newly-formed state of Israel took 650,000 refugees out of Europe, an equivalent number of Palestinians who fled or were expelled necessitated the formation of the UN Relief and Works Agency in 1949. Today, it still administers refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The UNHCR commenced operations from its headquarters in Geneva at the beginning of 1951, initially confining its assistance to refugees in Europe. It had a mandate of only three years because many member states were wary of the implications of a permanent body. In that same year, a special UN conference approved the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which came into force in 1954. Signatories were committed to cooperate with the High Commission and not to charge refugees with illegal entry, "provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence."

However, new refugees from Eastern Europe and others from China entering Hong Kong made it clear that the UNHCR's mandate needed to be extended in both time and location. Algerians fleeing from the war of independence heralded a wave of population movements as Africa was decolonised in the 1960s. By the end of that decade, two-thirds of the High Commission's budget was allocated to operations in Africa and its definition of 'refugees' was extended to include internally displaced persons. These realities were recognised in 1967, when the 1954 Convention was updated by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

We know from the sad history of the last fifty years that conditions have only gotten worse in many parts of the world, mainly due to internal conflicts that have disproportionate effects on civilian populations. Worse still, many of those regions have little hope of being stabilised to the point that even internal refugees can return to their homes. After the Palestinians, who now number 5 million, the longest-standing refugee group is the Somalis, over a million of whom fled when their country disintegrated in 1991. The UNHCR's largest operation ever was during the Bangladesh Crisis of 1971, which displaced 10 million people.

The UNHCR now cares for 33.9 million people globally, of whom 14.7 m. are internally displaced, 10.5 m. are refugees, 3.5 m. are stateless; 3.1 m. are returnees who still need help, and 2.1 m. are asylum seekers and other 'persons of concern'. Its budget in 2012 was \$US 3.59 bn. and its 8600 staff work in 126 countries. It has 135 main offices and 279 smaller ones, many in remote areas.

There are 3.5 million refugees in Asia, a staggering 70% of whom are from Afghanistan. Most of those are in Pakistan and Iran, but the UNHCR also has camps in Bangladesh, Thailand and Nepal. A similar number of refugees and asylum seekers are in Africa, as well as 5.4 million internally displaced persons in countries as various as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Somalia and Sudan.

The UNHCR won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954, the year that its mandate was extended, and again in 1981 for its worldwide efforts. An organisation that began with a three-year mandate, a staff of 34 persons and a budget of \$US 300,000 celebrated its 60th anniversary on 14 December 2010, fully aware that the need for its humanitarian mission is unlikely to disappear.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees has a website: www.unhcr.org, which makes sobering reading. Its Regional Office for Australia, New Zealand, Papua-New Guinea and the Pacific also has a site: www.unhcr.org.au and there is also a support group called Australians for UNHCR: www.unrefugees.org.au.

ANZUUA NEWS

Our pledge at the Auckland conference to raise a contribution of \$2000 to further the work of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists has been met and the funds sent. Virtually all of that money came from member groups, leaving only a small amount to be made up from unspent funds allocated for that conference.

Further with the ICUU, our Treasurer, Henri van Roon, represented ANZUUA at the recent Special Council Meeting. Hopefully, he will send a report on that for the next issue. (For now, please see next page for more on both matters.)

ANZUUA's public liability insurance has been renewed for another year, with the possibility of it being exempt from stamp duty.

The Melbourne church's sub-committee working on the next ANZUUA Conference has proposed to hold it October 2015, if the member groups agree. Specific dates will be established once the month is decided.

[This column is a bit sparse because there were only two ANZUUA Council meetings in this quarter.]



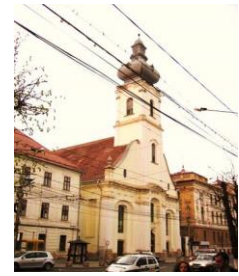
International
Council of
Unitarians and
Universalists

ICUU NEWS

Special Council Meeting

Pan-African U*Us

Transcendentalist Tours



The Executive Committee called a Special General Meeting of the ICUU Council on 06 November at 15:00 UK time. The meeting was conducted on-line and all member groups were eligible to nominate delegates; it was also open to registered observers. (Full Members, such as ANZUUA, are entitled to two delegates, while Provisional Members get one.)

The main purposes of the meeting were to receive the Treasurer's Report and Interim Accounts and to consider the proposed Budget for 2015. There was also a report on developments since the last Council Meeting, held in New York in February, and plans for the next one in the Netherlands in 2016.

The ICUU is pleased that more than \$US 20,000 of additional income has been received in response to its appeal for an increased budget. They write: "We continue to be grateful to the organizations and individuals who responded positively to our call for financial support of ICUU this year. We are close to fully covering the cost of this year's expenditure and we are on target to 'break-even' by the [end of the] year."

The significant ICUU events of this year have been covered in previous issues but the plans for 2015 are even more ambitious. These include a Leadership School in India and a joint celebration with the Unitarian Union of North East India to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Hajom Kissor Singh, the founder of Unitarianism in the Khasi Hills. The Executive Council will meet at the site of the 2016 Council Meeting and Conference in the Netherlands and there will also be celebrations of the ICUU's twentieth anniversary

A video recording of the Special Council Meeting is now available on-line at: <https://vimeo.com/111140006>.

As ordained by the previous Executive Council, a review of ICUU governance is under way and a Task Force chaired by Past President Brian Kiely is coordinating a consultation process over the next two years.

An on-line meeting of Pan-African ICUU representatives was held on 14 October 2014, the first since the conference in Bujumbura, Burundi, in August 2013. The earlier meeting agreed to establish a Pan-African U*U Secretariat, which is still a 'work in progress', as well as to:

1. Produce a newsletter for information from and about African U*U groups.
2. Design and carry out an African training conference for U*U ministers and lay leaders.
3. Establish an annual celebration of African U*U unity and cooperation in the August of each year.

It was agreed to produce a first issue of the newsletter in December of this year, which will be coordinated by the Unitarian Church of South Africa and edited by the ICUU's Program Director, Rev. Jill McAllister. The training conference, which will also address the design of standards for U*U ministry in the African context, is scheduled for the second half of 2015 and will be promoted by a second issue of the newsletter. Another feature of that publication will be worship materials – Chalice Lightings, prayers and songs – for the African U*U Day celebrations and more general purposes.

A new Unitarian travel operator has come to our attention, founded by Rev. Jennifer Rankin, Ecumenical Chaplain at Babson College in the Greater Boston area. Transcendentalist Tours takes its name from the movement in the mid-1850s that moved American Unitarianism from liberal Christianity to deism. They have a new tour from 30 April to 10 May 2015, which proceeds from Syracuse in Sicily to the fabled Amalfi Coast via Taormina and Naples. While the historical focus is on the times spent there by Rev. Theodore Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller (see the Winter 2010 issue for her story), archeology buffs will love the largely intact Ancient Greek relics in Sicily and the Roman ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Ever present will be the Etna and Vesuvius volcanoes and the beautiful rugged coastlines.

However, registration closes on 30 November, so act quickly: www.transcendentalisttours.com.

ECO-THEOLOGY FROM A PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

By Dr. Richard Smith

[Text of an address to the Perth Unitarians on 20 July 2014.]

My progressive perspective on Eco-theology is best expressed in the context of how our World View determines our beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards the Earth or our *Ecos*, the home which we share with all other life forms. A World View is the product of the interaction between the two dimensions of human existence. That is of mind and matter or body and soul or, Biblically, between Heaven and Earth.

In this talk, I will cover the five dominant World Views as defined by Walter Wink (1993) in *The Powers that Be: A Theology for a new Millennium*.

1. Ancient – Earth-centric.
2. Spiritualist – Heaven good, Earth corrupt.
3. Materialism – No Heaven, Earth the only reality.
4. Theological – Heaven and Earth separate realities.
5. Integral – Heaven and Earth are inner and outer aspects of a single reality.

World Views 3, 4 and 5 are also described by John F. Haught (2012) in *Science and Faith: A new introduction*, where he uses the terms Conflict, Contrast and Convergence for Wink's Materialism, Theological and Integral. I will argue that a progressive Eco-Theology results from the Convergence of Religion and Science characterised by the Integral World View of Wink.

First the Ancient World View, which most of us embraced during our childhood. It is the world view *reflected in the Bible, where everything earthly has its heavenly counterpart and everything heavenly has its earthly counterpart. This world view was held by the ancients, including our Aborigines, and it is still held today by a large number of people. The earth is deeply valued as the source of all life.*

This world view is reflected in the Lords Prayer: “Thy will be done on Earth as in Heaven”, “Give us this day our daily bread” and “Forgive us our debts”, where debt was the path into slavery. This world view is a product of those aware of their total dependence on the Earth. Aboriginal people from the West Kimberley still express this world view in their art. The snake symbolises the Ungud, who create the rivers and valleys and all forms of life that dwell therein. Each new animal and person is born of the Ungud. The snake is used because it remains hidden. The Wandjina are the spirits that bring the rains to renew the land. From their head comes lightening. Under the head is the cloud and on their body are the raindrops. They have no mouth, since they do not speak. The Sacred here is process and not an object.

I encountered the next world view at university, when I engaged with Evangelical Christianity characterised by St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin and St. Anselm's Doctrine of Substitutionary Atonement. That is, Jesus died for my sins so I could go to heaven. He did not die because of the violence of civilisation that confronts all life on Earth.

In this Spiritualist World View, “*Heaven is good, Earth corrupt. Out of creation came the Fall of Adam and Eve. Consequently sensual sex, matter and the earthly body are considered evil. Still a powerful factor today in forms of Christian faith that places the emphasis on getting to heaven when one leaves this “vale of tears”.* **The Earth, the source of all life is corrupt.** This world view underpins many of the Domination systems of violence that plague our world today. But it helps the Aboriginal peoples to break the grip of alcohol on their lives though not to focus thereafter on creating a better world.

I soon found myself slipping from this world view into the heresy of Pelagianism. Pelagius, a Roman/British monk, contested St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin, teaching instead that we must face the moral choices to follow God or create hell on earth. The Spiritualist World View was challenged historically by science, leading to the Materialist World View, “*where there is no heaven, no spiritual world, no God, no soul; nothing but what we can know through the physical senses. The spiritual world is an illusion, Matter is ultimate, consumerism, self-gratification and absence of spiritual values are consequences. Capitalism with no moral base is its crowning achievement.*” **Earth is a limitless resource for exploitation.** Technology will solve all our problems. The Materialist World View has often been accommodated by Churches leading to a belief in the inevitability of human progress and perfectibility. Also the Prosperity Gospel – that is, God helps those who help themselves, and the poor and asylum seekers deserve their fate.

The violent killing of over 100 million people in the 20th Century, mostly by the nations of Christendom, forced a reality check by the Churches. As a consequence, the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth shaped much of late 20th Century mainline Christianity. This was my world view when I trained as a lay preacher with the Uniting Church in 1984. In this Theological World View, *“there exists a higher supernatural realm that cannot be known by the senses immune to confirmation or refutation. It is only revealed by God in the Scriptures. Nature has no place in the revelation that comes from this higher realm.”*

“Science tells us how, while religion tells us why. Earthly reality is conceded to science to preserve a higher ‘spiritual’ realm. This means splitting reality in two and hermetically sealing off theology from the discoveries of science and science from the wisdom of theology.” **In this dualist world view, God will save us when we have destroyed the Earth.** As James Watt, Reagan’s Secretary of the interior, said anecdotally: *“When the last tree is felled, Christ will return.”*

Just 45 years ago, we achieved the technology to look back at Earth as a living system. Twenty years later, scientists could also study the origins of the Universe to discover that the process of creation is ongoing as the Universe continues to expand.

While Christianity has its orthodoxy, so does science. Orthodox science follows the reductionist paradigm of “Knowing more and more about less and less until we know almost everything about nothing”, leading to an understanding of evolution through random chance and survival of the fittest. This underpins Materialism and also theological Literalism. Systems Theory is an alternative paradigm that emerges in the late 20th Century because of the discovery that the: “Whole is greater than the sum of its Parts” and survival ultimately comes through collaboration and not competition, leading to an Ecological and Eco-theological perspective on life. But before we go there, we must first consider the impact of the dualistic world views of Spiritualism, Materialism and Theological on how humans have impacted the Earth when observed from space? These are my observations made from space.

First, agriculture: Overclearing of the native vegetation has increased surface reflectance, creating a big scar at the eastern edge of SW Australia. As a result, early in the season, clouds seldom form over these highly reflective areas compared with the native vegetation to the east. This has contributed to the general decline in rainfall and also to large areas of land going saline. Loss of habitat is causing the extinction of many species.

In the northern savannas of Australia, we observed the development of catastrophic large fires as the Aborigines left the land for European settlements, where food was more accessible. This depopulation of the landscape by Aboriginal people, who had for 40,000 years managed the land by firestick farming to create a mosaic pattern of burning, was their method of stopping large fires spreading and destroying both them and the species they depended on for survival. Also to create the species composition that they and their animals depended on. We have had to go back to their Ancient World View to save the tropical savannas from the devastating degradation that followed European settlement.

Having degraded the Australian continent by deforestation and wildfires, our dualistic Materialistic World View just moved north to Kalimantan in Indonesia to destroy by fire rainforests for palm oil plantations to satisfy our demand for cosmetics and confectionary, driving the orangutans and the culture of the indigenous Dayaks to extinction.

I discovered this May in Turkey that these processes, measured by the amount of sediment being washed down from the hills following deforestation to form a large alluvial delta, began over 2000 years ago and peaked around the time Jesus was born. As a result, many of the ancient cities such as Ephesus were abandoned as they became isolated from the sea trade, leaving behind an archaeological treasure trove for tourists and scholars to learn the lessons of history.

These dualistic world views have contributed to the exponential rise in atmospheric CO₂, warming the earth, melting the ice and causing sea levels to rise. Ignoring the science, our government has just crucified the Carbon Tax, our only serious attempt to address Global Warming and humanity’s propensity for violence against all forms of life. In our hubris we have ignored God’s plea: *“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”* Deuteronomy 30:19

But, as the dualistic world views are dying in the West, a non-dualistic world view is being born, for as Isaiah said: *“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”* Is 43:18-19

Much new theological and biblical scholarship points the way to the emerging Convergence of religion and science, giving us an Integral World View. In this world view, *“Heaven and earth are the inner and outer aspects of a single reality. Spirit is at the core of every created thing and inextricably related to an outer physical reality. It takes seriously the ancient worldview but with science and progressive religious thought, it expresses it in a new way.”* **Caring for The Earth is vital for our survival.**

Science confirms the unity of all life through its interdependence and interconnectedness. Whether the evolutionary process reveals ‘*Teleos*’, a sense of meaning and purpose, is a matter of debate. If science views the Earth separate from humankind, no meaning and purpose is detected. But if science views Earth with humankind as an integral part, then a quantifiable sense of meaning and purpose is exhibited, often expressed by faith (trust) in the essential goodness of neighbour and of creation.

Theologically, this view of life has been termed Evolutionary Panentheism.¹ No other view of God is larger. All other theisms – deism, theism, polytheism, animism, pantheism, atheism, agnosticism, paganism, materialism and capitalism – are fragmented theologies compared to Panentheism. God is being revealed in the evolutionary process and not as a static object of history.

Paul expresses this World View in many verses in his Letters, such as:

In him we live, and move, and have our being.... “We are his offspring.” —Acts 17.28 NIV

For from him, and through him and to him are all things. —Rm. 8.36 NIV

There is one God who is father of all, over all, through all and within all. —Eph. 4.6

Panentheistic verses flow like a subterranean stream through the Bible: *Acts 17.28, Romans 8.36, Ephesians 4.6, Colossians 1.15-17, Job 38.6-7,19,25,29,37,41, Psalms 19.1-2, Psalms 42.7, Sirach 43.27, Jeremiah 23.24, Matthew 5.26,28-29, Luke 19.40, John 1.2-5, John 6.33,36, 1 John 1.5, 1 John 4.16.*

It is summarised by Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, as: *“Love is a Sacred Reserve of Energy: It is like the blood of spiritual evolution.”* Marcus Borg in his book describes Panentheism as *“The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a More Authentic Contemporary Faith”*.²

Evidence of the Ancient World View that points to Panentheism is found in the archaeological ruins of early Christianity in Asia Minor. They became preserved as early Christian churches, were abandoned to become mosques with their structures, mosaics and frescoes being whitewashed over, then following secularisation they became museums. The mosaics are now being restored with the removal of the whitewash to reveal their ancient iconographic stories.

One example that caught my attention in May, while on a pilgrimage in Turkey with Marcus Borg and Dominic Crossan, were these large ‘Baptisteries’ on the outsides of former churches in Ephesus (St. John’s) and Istanbul (Hagia Sophia). Before being able to enter the Church, people had to be baptised by immersion for repentance of sin. What was this sin that Paul writes about in Romans 6? What did they repent from to lead a transformed life? A life transformed from what to what?

In the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the word ‘sin’ does not appear, but is defined in the next Chapter by Cain’s murder of his brother: Then the Lord says to Cain, *“Why are you angry?If you don’t do what is right, SIN is waiting at your door to grab you. It longs to have you. But you must rule over it.”* Gen 4: 6.

That is, sin is violence; in particular, escalatory violence against life. Abel was the shepherd and it was his eco-friendly way of life that was being destroyed by the violence of the agriculturist Cain. If we extrapolate this to all life, we can then understand why humanity’s gross violence against the Earth passes so easily without notice or moral conscience. For, by adopting St. Augustine’s Doctrine of Original Sin, we have neutralised the Biblical understanding of sin with dire consequences for the world and its ecosystems.

¹ Not to be confused with pantheism, whereunder everything in the Universe is divine.

² This is the title of Borg’s book, published in 1997.

Paul's sin that he repented for on the Road to Damascus was violence against the earliest followers of Jesus. Paul turns instead to Jesus' Gospel of non-violence through justice. The believers of the early Church were being baptised to lead transformed lives from the violence of the Roman Empire to the non-violence and justice of Jesus' Kingdom of God, by the formation of "In Christ" communities to live out this new reality. Do we not now need to be re-baptised into lives transformed from violence against not only humanity but against the Earth as well? In the Integral World View, our traditional understanding of the story of Adam and Eve needs to change. But this will not be easy.

And so the mosaics preserved in the early Christian churches proclaim Christ as Pantocrator – as the Supreme Sustainer of Earth in contrast to the Emperor, who had the title of either Imperator or Autocrator. Christ's hand is in the teaching gesture, where his thumb and third finger symbolise the unity of Heaven and Earth and the three fingers the Trinitarian nature of God revealed in Creation, in humanity and in universal consciousness. The Bible is open at Matthew 11: 28-30, pointing towards us to Christ's invitation to:

*"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

And finally, in the Eastern tradition, Jesus leads the general Resurrection by standing on the gates of hell, yanking out from their graves Adam and Eve and other famous martyrs. On the right are the first OT martyr, Abel, with his shepherd's staff and the first NT martyr, John the Baptist. On the left is another martyr and the two kings, David with the beard and Solomon cleanly shaven. This Eastern interpretation of the Resurrection depicts the risen Christ justifying how the deeds of the martyrs have created a better world for future generations of humankind. In this trans-generational transfer of goodness, our fear of death is overcome. For Abel, the first martyr of the OT, this is expressed in Hebrews 11:4 as: *"By means of his faith Abel...still speaks, even though he is dead."* In the Western tradition, the dead lie in their graves facing east waiting for Christ's return, where believers will be justified and the others consigned to hell.

So in the concluding words of Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 we are called to:

*"Stand in awe of Nature and do what it requires of you, for this is the whole duty of humankind.
For everything we do Nature will bring to judgement, even everything hidden, whether it be good or evil."*

In this translation by Lloyd Geering, Nature is used in preference to a theistic God to symbolise the Panentheistic view.

What is the validity of a Panentheistic Eco-theology derived from an Integral World View? I believe that its validity is in it being a scientific re-statement of the Ancient World View. A world view from a time of total human dependence on the Earth. A world view to which we need to progress for humanity to survive on Earth.

[This is the text of a PowerPoint presentation that was also given at the God of Sea and Sky Conference, held in Perth on 26–27 July 2014. Dr. Richard Smith has worked in farm economics, agronomy, irrigation science and studying Earth from space. Now retired, he works on Aboriginal community development in the West Kimberley and chairs the All Saints Floreat Uniting Church Mission and Outreach Task Group and the WA Progressive Network.

The God of Sea and Sky Conference was an ecumenical faith and environment event bringing together some of the best minds and practitioners in the sustainability sector. The meeting featured 19 presenters covering such topics as low-carbon housing, permaculture, the ethics of craft and political processes. For more information, see their website: green.wa.uca.org.au.

Just by way of background, Walter Wink (1935–2012) was an American theologian and an important figure in Progressive Christianity. In addition to *The Powers that Be*, he wrote *Naming the Powers* (1984), *Unmasking the Powers* (1986), *Engaging the Powers* (1992) and *When the Powers Fall* (1998). John F. Haught is a Catholic specialist in systematic theology who famously testified against 'Intelligent Design' in the 2005 Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District court case. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) was a French paleontologist (he discovered Peking Man) and philosopher whose books caused great consternation to the Catholic Church at the time, though he is highly regarded now. Marcus Borg (1942–) is yet another American theologian, a prolific writer and a fellow of the Jesus Seminar. His friend and often co-author, Dominic Crossan (1934–), is an Irish-American historian of early Christianity and a former Catholic priest.]

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



Christmas time is here, by golly,
Disapproval would be folly,
Deck the halls with hunks of holly,
Fill the cup and don't say "when".
Kill the turkeys, ducks and chickens,
Mix the punch, drag out the dickens,
Even though the prospect sickens,
Brother, here we go again.

On Christmas Day you can't get sore,
Your fellow man you must adore,
There's time to rob him all the more
The other three hundred and sixty-four.



Relations, sparing no expense'll
Send some useless old utensil,
Or a matching pen and pencil.
"Just the thing I need! How nice!"
It doesn't matter how sincere it
Is, nor how heartfelt the spirit,
Sentiment will not endear it,
What's important is the price.



Hark the herald tribune sings,
Advertising wondrous things.
God rest ye merry, merchants,
May you make the Yuletide pay.
Angels we have heard on high
Tell us to go out and buy!
So let the raucous sleigh bells jingle,
Hail our dear old friend, Kris Kringle,
Driving his reindeer across the sky.
Don't stand underneath when they fly by.

Tom Lehrer

Tom Lehrer (1928 –) is definitely one of the funniest songwriters of our times, though that was never his true calling and most of his songs were written and recorded in the 1950s and '60s. Born to a Jewish family in New York City, he studied piano in his youth and took to writing comic songs while pursuing a degree in mathematics at Harvard, which he somehow completed at the age of 19. He produced three albums between 1953 and 1964, while still working at universities and research institutes until retirement in 2001. (You can hear the song on YouTube (www.youtube.com) just by searching the title.)

TEN THINGS TO SAY ABOUT GIFTS YOU DON'T LIKE

It would be a shame if the garbage man ever accidentally took this from me.
Perfect for wearing in the basement.
I really don't deserve this.
Gosh, I hope this never catches fire!
I love it, but I fear the jealousy it will inspire.
If the dog buries it, I'll be furious!
Sadly, tomorrow I enter the federal witness protection program.
To think this is the year I vowed to give all my gifts to charity.

[Sorry for the sick humour but it seemed to go well with Lehrer's song. Please refer any complaints to my source: www.ahajokes.com/unlike.html – there are plenty of worse ones there, I can assure you!]

ADVICE TO A PROPHET

When you come, as you soon must, to the streets of our city,
Mad-eyed from proclaiming the obvious,
Not proclaiming our fall but begging us
In God's name to have self-pity,

Spare us all word of the weapons, their force and range,
The long numbers that rocket the mind;
Our slow unreckoning hearts will be left behind,
Unable to fear what is too strange.

Nor will you scare us with talk of the death of the race.
How can we dream of this place without us? –
The sun mere fire, the leaves untroubled about us,
A stone look on the stone's face.

Speak of the world's own change. Though we cannot conceive
Of an undreamt thing, we know to our cost
How the dreamt cloud crumbles, the vines are blackened by frost,
How the view alters. We could believe,

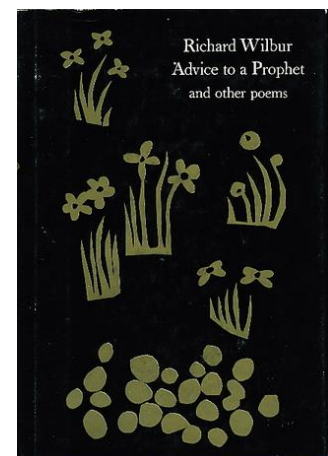
If you told us so, that the white-tailed deer will slip
Into perfect shadow, grown perfectly shy,
The lark avoid the reaches of our eye,
The jack-pine lose its gnarled grip

On the cold ledge, and every torrent burn
As Xanthus* once, its gliding trout
Stunned in a twinkling. What should we be without
The dolphin's arc, the dove's return,

These things in which we have seen ourselves and spoken?
Ask us, prophet, how we shall call
Our natures forth, when that live tongue is all
Dispelled, that glass obscured or broken

In which we have said the rose of our love and the clean
Horse of our courage, in which beheld
The singing locust of the soul unshelled,
And all we may mean or wish to mean?

Ask us, ask us, whether with the wordless rose
Our hearts shall fail us; come demanding
Whether there will be lofty or long-standing
When the bronze annals of the oak tree close.



Richard Wilbur (1961)

* The river of Troy, whose valley was blasted by divine fire during the Trojan War.

Richard Wilbur (1921 –), an American scholar, was born in New York City and graduated from Amherst College in Massachusetts in 1942. After two years in the US Army during World War II, he obtained a post-graduate degree from Harvard in 1947. He published his first collection in that year and went on to a lengthy career teaching at various universities.

Wilbur produced several volumes of poetry, translated some 17th Century French plays and even wrote lyrics for Leonard Bernstein's musical, *Candide* (1956). He won two Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry (1957, 1989) and his other honours include the title of US Poet Laureate, awarded in 1987.

NORTHERN GERMANY

By Jane Brooks

Last August, my daughter married a man who grew up in Northern Germany. They live in Darwin, where they were legally married in a civil ceremony. Two weeks later, they also had a church wedding ceremony, which took place in Aurich, East Frisia, where our son-in-law went to school. This family event provided a very good reason to see a part of Germany that is not visited by most tourists from Australia.

Aurich has a population of around 40,000 and is about a 40-minute drive from the North Sea. The closest international airport is in Hamburg and we stayed there overnight before making the journey to Aurich. For dinner, we tried the local speciality called '*Matjes*' – salted herrings. They were indeed very salty!

For Germans, Aurich is considered to be remote, because it has no rail service. The nearest town that had a train station is called Leer, and fortunately our daughter and son-in-law could meet us there with a car after our 3-hour train journey from Hamburg. There was a bus service from Leer to Aurich but it wouldn't have taken us right to our hotel! Our hotel, called '*Twardokus*', consisted of three charming old buildings right in the old part of the city.

Around the corner was the pedestrian mall, with its shops, cafes and restaurants. Our hotel was in a pretty little side street, and across the street from us was an 800-year-old clock tower that was so well maintained it looked new! Fortunately, it was silenced between about midnight and 6:00 a.m.! A hundred metres or so from us was the church in which the wedding ceremony took place. It is 200 years old but, like the clock tower, looks in tip-top condition.

The next day, the day before the wedding, we had a short cruise on the narrow calm Ems-Jade Canal. To give you a good idea of the location and landscape of the area, it may be helpful to know that there is a region known as West Frisia, but it is part of the Netherlands! So this part of Northern Germany is very flat, very green, has a lot of rain, has canals, and dykes on the coast. We saw lots of very tall maize crops, which are grown as fodder for the cattle. As you would expect, there were lots of Friesian cows!

East Friesians drink a lot of tea, in preference to coffee and they have a unique way of presenting it. Teapots with leaf tea, not bags, are placed on little stands with a candle-holder underneath, so that the tea can be kept warm. Cream is used instead of milk and a lot of sugar lumps are provided. We saw people putting in two or three! When offered tea, you must drink at least three cups; otherwise, it is considered impolite – you're indicating you don't like the tea. When you add the cream, with a tiny special ladle, you must not stir. We found that drinking three cups was very easy, because the cups are tiny and the tea was the best I have ever had! My son-in-law says that has something to do with the water.

The wedding reception did not take place in Aurich but, instead, in a town called Neuharlingersiel on the coast. We were driven there by one of the other guests. After the lunchtime meal, we went for a walk along the dyke, which was a grassy raised area with gentle slopes on both sides rather than being like a dam wall. It is unusual for people to walk there while wearing formal clothing and I was asked a friendly question about that by a stranger. Fortunately, I can speak enough German to understand him and give an explanation!



On the seaward side of the dyke, there was some sand but it wasn't like most of our beaches. There was a much bigger area of mud flats, stretching out for kilometres, as the tide was out. Because it was cool and windy, the sand was dotted with little shelters which people could hire to sit in, two people per shelter. They're called '*Strandkorbe*', which means 'beach baskets'. On the horizon we could see several little North Sea islands. On the northern shores of these, we were told, are beaches that look like our beaches in Australia, so they're very popular with German tourists.

After spending a few days in Aurich, during which we enjoyed meeting a lot of our new son-in-law's friends and relatives, we spent a few days in Lüneburg. This delightful city is much easier to get to than Aurich; it's just a 35-minute train ride from Hamburg. It is a Hanseatic city on the old Salt Trade route. A Salt Museum has been set up to explain all about the salt trade and how it made Lüneburg very prosperous in the Middle Ages. The entry 'ticket' is a little souvenir packet of salt!



The historic old part of town is nearly all a pedestrian-only area with cobblestone streets. There are dozens of shops, cafes, restaurants and bakeries, housed in beautiful old buildings with charming architecture. There are several magnificent churches with extremely tall spires, and a very impressive town hall with rooms decorated with mediaeval art. On the outskirts of the old city precinct is an old convent, through which you can have a guided tour. Some of Lüneburg, including the convent, dates back to the 13th Century! It was interesting to see the wooden rooms in which the nuns slept – they were surprisingly spacious, but there was no running water or heating! No nuns live there now.

I have a couple of general experiences of travelling in Germany which I would like to share. Breakfast is a sumptuous meal, not at all like the limited fare we are often offered as a 'continental breakfast' in Australia. Nothing is cooked and hot apart from boiled eggs, tea and coffee, but there is cereal, fruit, yoghurt, wurst, cheeses, salads, a variety of breads, the most delicious little bread rolls, spreads and pastries. You can, of course, toast the bread if you wish.

The other thing I wish to comment on is the behaviour of the cyclists. In Germany, they don't have to wear helmets but they are permitted to ride fast on the footpaths! In some places, a part of what we would think of as being the footpath (there is a kerb separating it from the road) is clearly designated as a bikeway and pedestrians must treat the bikeway like it was a road. In other words, it's not for walking on! But in other places the pedestrians and cyclists share the whole width of the path. Our daughter warned us to walk at a steady pace and not stop or change directions without first looking for cyclists. They will dodge you so long as you don't do anything unpredictable! It is great that cyclists don't have to mix it with motor traffic but they're a hazard for tourists! Or perhaps it's the tourists who are a hazard for the cyclists. In any case, it isn't only the fact that people drive on the other side of the road that means an Aussie visiting Germany has to be careful as a pedestrian.

Despite the cyclists, I'm already planning to visit Germany again next year for a river cruise followed by a guided walk in Bavaria, on walking trails where speedy cyclists aren't allowed, I hope!

[Jane Brooks is a member of the Adelaide Unitarian Church and, after many years on the Committee, is now their representative on the ANZUUA Council. She and her husband, Clive, travel a great deal and she has written reports on their previous trips in other issues of this journal.]

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

By Pam Baragwanath

[Text of an address given to the Melbourne Unitarian Church on 31 July 2011.]

Last Monday morning on ABC Radio 774, John Faine was introducing a new book on Australian history. "Australian history?" said Red Symons, "We haven't got any!" This deserved comment observes quite rightly that Australian history is rather overlooked. Mechanics' Institutes are one of the casualties. "But we need to know who we are from deep memory." ¹ Surely we are more than just cricket teams and Gallipoli?

After purchasing the Healesville Mechanics' Institute and Free Library, intending to restore the 1892 heritage building and reopen it to the public, people dropped in all the time asking me what the building was. I needed information only to find there was very little. I was to discover that some of it was misleading and not evidence based. There was too much accent on failure and comparison with the Institutes in the United Kingdom, where civic infrastructure was well organised in the early part of the 19th Century, as opposed to Victoria where there was none. It was the Institutes themselves that provided the early public and civic facilities, many in partnership with a Town Hall such as exists today in Collingwood, Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Traralgon and Daylesford.

When I began to research the Institutes in Victoria in 1984, I was to discover that we had our own brand, the Australian version of Mechanics' Institutes and Free Libraries and as such, they had proved to be an important, influential and essential movement in our Australian history from the early 1800's to the present day. You can seldom travel in country Victoria without seeing one, or in the suburbs for that matter – there are three Institutes close to where I live in Ringwood, at Warrandyte, Wonga Park and Croydon.

I was to discover the role they had played in their local communities as well as the wider history of Victoria and, to a lesser extent, of Australia and the other commonwealth countries. Heritage bodies and Government Departments have provided much assistance with this work. For this talk I will aim to define the term Mechanics' Institute and look at the origins, both in the UK and Australia and, focussing on Victoria, where I will answer questions such as how many were established, who owned them, how many are still there and what are they used for now.

This anachronistic term, of course, belongs to another time, the early 1800s. In the United Kingdom, the word 'mechanic' was a more general term meaning tradesman, craftsman, artisan, working man, working class. An Institute is a place of learning, so broadly speaking a Mechanics' Institute is a place of learning for working class people. They were the first adult education schools, libraries and public halls in Australia, sometimes called poor man's universities or workingman's colleges. The names Mechanics' Institute, School of Arts and Athenaeum are all used, as are Literary Institute or even Pioneer Library, but these days many are called just by the name of the building – e.g., Poowong Hall or Pimpinio Public Hall – or even Community Centre.

The Institutes began in Scotland as a radical movement incorporating the ideals of self help, adult education, hard work with an extra dollop of Scottish thrift and temperance thrown in. Mechanics' Institutes were most unpopular with the ruling classes, who felt they alone had right of access to education. They not only feared that the masses might rise up and try to take over but that their right to cheap labour would be compromised. But the radical and, at times, somewhat derisively referred to as the 'improving' movement, to civilise and educate the labouring classes was too strong and 600 to 700 Institutes were established during the 1800s in the United Kingdom.

It took only six years from the beginning of the movement in Scotland to come to the Australian colonies. The first Institute was the Edinburgh School of Arts, established in 1821, and the first Australian Institute was the Van Diemen's Land Mechanics' Institution in Hobart, established 1827. So the fashion had taken on here at the same time as in the UK; new settlers brought the idea with them and they were keen to establish a new more educated and fair society. Institutes or Schools of Arts or Athenaeums were established in Sydney in 1833, Newcastle in 1835, Melbourne and Adelaide in 1839, Launceston in 1842, Brisbane in 1849 – all before the gold rushes – then Swan River Mechanics' Institute in Perth was established in 1851.

But the growth in Victoria was far more than in any other State. To quote Geoffrey Blainey: “Victoria, overall, was the best colony for the reader. Its Public Libraries and Mechanics’ Institutes held twice as many books as those in New South Wales in the late 1880s, a time when the population of the two was almost equal.”² Indeed, many hundreds of libraries had been established in settlements right across rural, suburban and city areas. In Victoria, the three early Institutes at Portland, Geelong and Melbourne were rapidly overtaken by the major influx of gold rush population, during which time about one Institute a month opened in Victoria.

Why? I believe these early quotes set the scene, this one from *The Collingwood Observer* of 1/5/1865: “The locality devoid of an Institution for the promulgation of knowledge, must be regarded as still in a state of barbarism.” Similarly, from *The Castlemaine Advertiser* of 15/2/1859: “The necessity for a Mechanics’ Institute in every town is so well appreciated nowadays, that a long disquisition on the merits of such a question, are altogether unnecessary”. And *The Portland Guardian* of 7/1/1843 wrote: “The object of such an Institution shall be the intellectual improvement of its members. Of the advantages desirable from a well conducted Institution, there can be little diversity of opinion.”

Another quote is from Mr. Day, speaking at the Windsor Institute in NSW: “This district has hitherto been shrouded in comparative ignorance and more attention has been paid to the accumulation of sordid riches than to the acquirement of education and knowledge. So long therefore as this district solely pursued its money making course, so long will it be classed as the least elevated of the country.”³

When the new free European settlers came to Victoria, they brought with them reforming ideas about the new colony. Aristocracy was to be left behind in the old country. There was enthusiasm for moral and social elevation, a more egalitarian, democratic and intellectual existence. Institute Libraries and classes were set up and eagerly attended; even elocution lessons were popular. The committees were like missionaries of knowledge, advocating the reading of good literature which would have a liberating effect and lead to self-improvement.

As district fortunes waxed and waned depending on the gold strikes, and land, roads and rail were being opened up, some Institutes disappeared altogether. But, overall, 1100 were established in Victoria, one a month in the early part of the 19th Century. Each new settlement would quickly establish an Institute of their own individual design – it was their Institute and they ran it according to the community’s needs. The buildings were opened in great style with marches, public holidays, banquets and speeches. Victoria had far more than in any other State and far more than in the UK, and over 500 of them remain.

I see it as a success story like no other. No other organisation in Victoria has been open to the public continuously since 1839 and still has over 500 ‘branches’ functioning along original, still relevant lines. The initial objectives, “The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge both literary and scientific and for the educative benefit of the community generally”, are still being met, because the majority of them are still in use as community centres and many are libraries, proudly retaining their heritage as well as contemporary collections.

The Melbourne MI and School of Arts, the first one in Victoria was established in 1839 only four years after John Batman and his party arrived in what was to become the new settlement of Melbourne. It became, like all the other Institutes in Victoria, a public building for everyone, everything important in the new colony happened there. Predating the Melbourne Town Hall or any elected councils, they became the main public meeting place, common ground between the church and the pub.

Reading the Melbourne Athenaeum (as it was renamed) Minute Books is like reading the history of our early settlement. Events were held such as the meeting to reward the first person to find gold in Victoria, a Eureka Rebellion meeting, the meeting to raise funds for the Burke and Wills expedition, elections, poultry shows, boxing matches, dances and lectures by visiting luminaries like Mark Twain. There was a museum and the art gallery hosted exhibitions by Arthur Streeton, Albert Namatjira, Hans Heysen and Rupert Bunny. From 1910 the first films were shown in Victoria and the Library continued to serve the public throughout.

It is the oldest public Institution in Melbourne continuously open to the general public. A true Mechanics’ Institute, it is owned by the community, its subscribers and is there for the benefit of the local community. At the inaugural meeting the following resolution was passed concerning religious matters: “*That the committee shall exclude from the library all such works as contain polemical divinity, or other matter which the committee may deem objectionable.*”⁴ In addition, sectarianism was to be avoided from the lecture program.

Nevertheless, from 1843, the committee were apparently agreeable to leasing part of the property in Collins Street for religious meetings on a Sunday. These included the congregations of the Baptist Society, Scots Church, St Paul's, the Church of England assembly and the Plymouth Brethren.⁵ So it is unsurprising to note that this Unitarian Church also began its life at the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute. It was on 30/1/1853 that the first Unitarian service in Melbourne was held, with the Rev. Maxwell Davidson officiating. This quote from Rev. Davidson would have gone down well with the Mechanics' Institute committee and is worth repeating.

*"If the great leading article of a creed be a contradiction of the intellect or understanding, or reason, then the whole religious system must be supported by contradictions and absurdities – if a nation's faith be superstitious and irrational, and they sincerely believe it, then all the laws and customs will, in some degree, be tinged with irrationality."*⁶

Finally, I feel that the Institutes were influential agents of change; they contributed an intellectual culture. The libraries with daily newspapers, important periodicals and journals of the time, reference collections, debates on current affairs and ideas, and lectures on relevant topics were pivotal in keeping the public informed thereby shaping public opinion.

One prime example was the proposed Federation of the Australian States. Given the difficulties in communication at the time, I believe the Institutes played a key role – information was on hand in the library or reading room; debates and meetings were held on the question in even the most sparsely settled areas in Australia; and, eventually, the momentous and informed decision could be made. In fact, Sir Henry Parkes' famous Tenterfield Address in favour of Federation was delivered at the Tenterfield School of Arts. Other topics debated were female suffrage, the price of land and labour, the installation of services such as the railways, roads and water supply, defence and colonial nationalism and many other serious concerns affecting people's lives.⁷

Many of the Institutes evolved to provide and promote secondary and tertiary level education; e.g., the Institutes at Ballarat, Ballarat East, Bendigo, Echuca and Warrnambool, and at Melbourne, Sale and Prahran in the form of Schools of Design, Schools of Art, Schools of Mines and Technical Schools. The Institute Libraries at Ballarat, Berwick, Footscray, Maldon and Melbourne are still serving the general public, as are 40 original Institute buildings still being used as regional libraries in Victoria. Far from being even thought of as a failure, the Institutes were seen at the time as a necessity and, indeed, proved to be so.

It's unfortunate when the Institutes are labelled with terms such as 'failure' and 'resembling a gentlemen's snuggery' because, in the majority of cases, this certainly wasn't the case. Hundreds of them were democratic institutions and continue in this way today, from Little River to Tallarook to Briagolong Their legacy to be of benefit to the local community has continued on. Aristocracy had been left behind in the old country and the credo became 'By the Community For the Community', celebrated in a spirit of mutualism and volunteerism.

After visiting Institutes and their present day committees and reading widely of their history and contribution over the last 25 years, I find much to admire and praise. To me they were so obviously successful that maybe we take them for granted. They provided essential venues and services for the first 100 years of settlement and, through their own democratic integrity, have forwarded the advancement of human achievement. They were a major contributor to a more tolerant, inclusive, egalitarian and better informed society and, as such, played an indispensable role in Australia's history.

General Reference: Baragwanath, Pam. *If the Walls Could Speak: a Social History of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria*, Mechanics' Institute Inc., Melbourne, 2000.

¹ Hughes, Robert, (1998) National Trust Heritage Lecture broadcast on ABC Radio National, as quoted in *If the Walls Could Speak*, p 26.

² Blainey, Geoffrey, 'The history of leisure in Australia: late colonial era' in *The Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol.49, 1978, pp12-13, as quoted in *If The Walls Could Speak*, p 16.

³ Nadel, George. *Australia's Pioneering Culture, Ideas, Men and Institutions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia*, F.W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1957, p 130.

⁴ Nadel, *op. cit.*, pp 131-2.

⁵ Archives at Melbourne Athenaeum, extract from Marjorie Dalvean, Volunteer Archivist, 15/7/2011.

⁶ Scott, Dorothy. *Halfway House to Infidelity: A History of the Unitarian Church 1853-1953*, Unitarian Fellowship of Australia and Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church, 1980.

⁷ Candy, Prof. Phillip C. 'Ex Unitate Vires: Mechanics' Institutes and the Federal Ideal', essay in *If The Walls Could Speak*, p 3.

[Pam Baragwanath is a member of the Melbourne Unitarian Church and, as seen in the footnotes, has written a book on the history of Mechanics' Institutes. She is also a founding committee member of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc., formed in 1998 as an initiative of Kilmore Mechanics' Institute with the aims of preserving the buildings, collections and histories of past and remaining Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria. She is involved in numerous MUC activities, including the Social Justice action group.]

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC had a very interesting guest speaker in October, a Muslim who is helping to achieve better relationships between local Muslims and the wider community. Most questions focused on customs that are not familiar to people. The service on 02 November celebrated the 1000th issue of their *Adelaide Unitarian* newsletter and their 159th Annual General Meeting was held a week later. (More news below.)

Auckland UC's new minister, Rev. Clay Nelson, conducted his first service in September. They also had a service-cum-fundraiser earlier this year. They have joined the movement to lift the minimum wage in New Zealand, in the face of some underhanded politics employed by opposing parties.

Brisbane UUF had a visiting UU academic couple from Houston with them for a couple of months, who were a welcome addition to their gatherings. Their Annual General Meeting took place in November.

Melbourne UC have received correspondence from the minister of the UUs of Transylvania County in North Carolina, whose daughter is in Melbourne. He has offered to give some services when he comes there to visit. Notable services in September were from Father Bob McGuire and David Bottomley. The first of four alternative ANZAC Centenary celebrations in conjunction with the Peace Coalition was held on 20 October, filling the church to capacity. (More on next page.) On 30 November, the past president of ANZUUA, Rev. Peter Ferguson of Perth, will lead the service celebrating their 162nd anniversary.

Perth Unitarians had their Annual Retreat at the Franciscan monastery town of New Norcia in August, which included an interview with the Prior, Dom Chris. In October, they heard a talk by Gregory Jenks, Academic Dean of St. Francis Theological College in Brisbane and Senior Lecturer in the School of Theology at Charles Sturt University.

Spirit of Life UF recently heard an address from ex-ABC presenter, Neil Inall on how to feed a rising world population, as well as an amusing talk on the history of Rationalism in Australia by Steve Maxwell of the NSW Rationalist Society. They have also joined in a petition to the federal government to acknowledge the impact of climate change. Their president, Ginna Hastings, has done a cheerily artistic new needlework cover for the lectern.

Sydney UC had a Music Service in November featuring the works of Italian composers of the mid-19th Century. A number of its members have been overseas recently and are giving PowerPoint presentations about their trips to France, Russia, Brazil and North Korea. The end-of-year party will be held on 14 December.

NEWS FROM ADELAIDE

On 26 October, we had a very successful fundraising service for the 'One Girl' charity, which enables girls in Sierra Leone to pay their school fees. Our minister, Rev. Rob MacPherson, conducted the last part of this service while wearing a school dress because we reached the \$500 target that he had stipulated for wearing the dress. As a result, more donations came in and we raised just over \$1000! A new member of our congregation, Sandy Williams, who is an Ambassador for 'One Girl', was the guest speaker. She also wore a school dress, as did a few other members of our congregation.

We are having a service and congregational lunch with the Multifaith Association on 14 December 14, at which we will share halal chicken, biryani, salads and desserts. The Stream of Life group, 'Meeting in Style', are having an end-of-year party complete with music, song, comedy and poetic items. The Terrace Singers have two end-of-year concerts, one with a wind band to raise money for street kids and the other a Christmas presentation at the Resthaven nursing home. In December, the Sunday Club children will lead a service.

[My thanks to Jane Brooks and AUC's retiring president, Jennie Dyster, for this information. Stream of Life is Adelaide's community outreach group, which organises fundraising concerts and social functions.]

PROGRAM OF THE ANZAC CENTENARY PEACE COALITION

The Coalition comprises a broad range of multifaith and secular groups. It has organised a series of Forums whose dates and themes are:

- 20th October 2014: From Invasion to Federation – Indigenous Peoples, Convicts and Empire
- 16th March 2015: From Federation to the Aftermath of World War I – Progressive but racist beginnings, the call of the Commonwealth and ANZAC
- 10th August 2015: From ANZAC to Vietnam – World War II, great and powerful friends, the Cold War, farewell to monoculture
- 16th October 2015: From Vietnam to Tomorrow – Mixed blessings and mixed messages, peacekeeping, development and eco-wars

Although the remaining Forums may also be held in the Melbourne Unitarian Church, each will be facilitated by different member organisations (Quakers, Pax Christi, Uniting Church, Victorian Council of Churches). The first Forum was recorded (audio), as will be all future Forums. Please let us know if you require a copy for your Church/Fellowship (www.melbourneunitarian.org.au).

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Jan Tendys of the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship recently received the following communication:

Dear Jan

I don't know if this is divine providence. But I was going through old photos of my mum's today, and there is a postcard sent to her in February 1955 (60 years ago!). The address states: 20 Fitzroy St, Milson's Point.

This was the first place she lived in upon arriving in Australia in 1953. I thought it sounded familiar, so I looked it up. Do you know where it's situated? It's now Kirrabilli and sits next door to the Neighbourhood Centre [where the Fellowship holds their meetings].

When I saw it on Google Maps, I was very surprised. Then a memory came back to me, of being either 3 or 4 years old and falling down the steps of an old terrace. That terrace belonged to my mother's uncle since before WW2 (and possibly post-WW1?). I think that's when he immigrated to Australia.

Michael Bucciarelli



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As always, my thanks to the various contributors to this issue, but now my cupboard is almost bare and I will need much fresh input for next year. I'm wondering if it would be possible to have a theme for the 2015 issues, though I can't think of one just now. So, please send anything you have (including ideas) to me at: michael.mcphoe@optusnet.com.au. Oh! – and Season's Greetings to you all.