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## THE MAN OF WALDEN POND

Next month, we mark the sesquicentenary of the death on 06 May 1862 of Henry David Thoreau. This great American author, poet, naturalist, historian and libertarian helped to redefine Unitarianism in his own country and, later, the English-speaking world. In a short lifespan of 45 years, he wrote over twenty volumes of books, articles, essays, journals, and poetry.

He was born David Henry Thoreau in Concord, Massachusetts on 12 July 1817, son of pencil-maker John Thoreau. He attended Harvard University, studying rhetoric, classics, philosophy, mathematics and science in 1833–37. (His maternal grandfather, Asa Dunbar, had led the 1766 ‘Butter Rebellion’ against Harvard’s notorious food – the first recorded student protest in America.) After he graduated, Thoreau reversed the order of his first names but he never sought a legal record of that.

In those days, college graduates could proceed to careers in law, ministry, business or medicine – none of which interested him. He took a position at the Concord public school but resigned after a few weeks rather than administer corporal punishment. With his older brother, John jr., he opened a grammar school called the Concord Academy in 1838, introducing such progressive concepts as nature walks and visits to local shops and businesses. Unfortunately, John died from tetanus in 1842 and the school was closed.

During that time, Thoreau met the radical Unitarian, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who in turn introduced him to his circle of local writers and thinkers. These included the poet, Ellery Channing, and Margaret Fuller, editor of a Transcendentalist quarterly called *The Dial*. (Both were also Unitarians and adherents of the deist and naturalist Transcendentalist philosophy that would eventually supersede Unitarian Christianity.) Also in that group were the educator and philosopher, Bronson Alcott, and the writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Emerson encouraged Thoreau to keep a daily journal of his thoughts and to write for *The Dial*. His first essay was published in the July 1840 issue, followed by many more, as well as some poems. During that time, he worked as Emerson’s editorial assistant and tutored his children. He then returned to Concord and worked in his family’s pencil factory – but what he really wanted was solitude for his writing and a simple life close to nature. Accordingly, he lived for most of 1845–47 in a cabin that he built on Emerson’s land near Walden Pond. This lifestyle clearly suited him and he produced the drafts of three later books during that time. However, his first publication, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, was a commercial failure.

In 1846, Thoreau famously spent a night in jail for six years' worth of delinquent poll taxes, which he had refused to pay in protest against the Mexican War and slavery. His aunt paid the fines, against his wishes, but the experience inspired him to deliver lectures on civil disobedience in 1848. His essay, 'Resistance to Civil Government' (also called 'Civil Disobedience') was published by the Unitarian, Susan Peabody (sister-in-law of Nathaniel Hawthorne) in her anthology, *Æsthetic Papers*.

After years of revision, Thoreau published *Walden, or Life in the Woods* in 1854. Compressing more than two years into twelve months so that the seasons represent stages of human development, the work was part memoir and part spiritual quest. It received a largely cool reception at the time but was later seen as a classic American that derives conditions for a just society and culture from the simplicity, harmony and beauty of nature. The poet, Robert Frost, wrote: "In one book...he surpasses everything we have had in America."

From 1851, Thoreau had been increasingly interested in natural history, especially botany, and kept detailed records of everything in his locality – the ripening of fruit, times of bird migrations, even the varying depths of Walden Pond. He became a land surveyor and his journal ran to two million words over 24 years. His last writings had titles like *The Succession of Trees* and *Wild Apples*, in which he deplored the destruction of native vegetation.

Always a fan of books on exploration and travel, Thoreau ventured as far as Quebec, Philadelphia and the Great Lakes. From these voyages came his books, *A Yankee in Canada*, *Cape Cod* and *The Maine Woods*. But he had suffered sporadically from tuberculosis since 1839 and by 1859 his health was broken. He spent his last years revising unpublished works and died on 06 May 1862.

Thoreau's funeral service was arranged by Bronson Alcott, which included a eulogy written by Emerson and a hymn by Ellery Channing. Originally buried in his mother's family plot, he and members of his immediate family were later re-interred at the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord. Channing wrote his biography, *Thoreau the Poet-Naturalist*, in 1873 and, with Harrison Blake, edited a number of his works for posthumous publication in the 1890s.

The full text of his journals was published in 1906, leading to a revival of interest on the part of the next generation. Today, he is credited with being one of the first ecologists and having inspired people as various as Leo Tolstoy, Marcel Proust. William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw and Mahatma Gandhi.

## FOOTNOTES

It's interesting to note how the same names come up in articles from this seminal period of American UU history. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) was a famous essayist, lecturer and poet who served briefly as a minister in his younger days. His anti-Biblical address to the graduating class of the Harvard Divinity School in 1838 sent shockwaves through the Unitarian community of the day. However, his lectures so resembled sermons that he was said to have merely exchanged the pulpit for the lectern,

The feature article in the Winter 2010 issue marked the bicentenary of the birth of Margaret Fuller, writer and feminist. She travelled in Europe, met an Italian nobleman and took part in a revolution in Rome with him in 1849. When the pair came to America the next year, their ship was wrecked off the New York coast. Emerson sent Thoreau to search for them but only the Italian's body was ever found.

The poet, Ellery Channing (1818 –1901), was the nephew of the legendary Rev. William Ellery Channing, whose address on 'Unitarian Christianity' in 1819 hailed the inception of our denomination in the US. Like Thoreau, he attended Harvard and wrote poems for *The Dial*. It was on Channing's urging that Thoreau went to live at Walden Pond, after the former had spent a similar time in Woodstock, Illinois. He married Ellen Fuller, younger sister of Margaret, in 1842.

Bronson Alcott (1799–1888) was largely self-educated and took up teaching as a way of serving God. His progressive methods were not well received, making for a rocky teaching career even after William Ellery Channing supported his opening of the Temple School in Boston in 1834. Margaret Fuller was his teaching assistant for a time but the school failed and Bronson moved to Concord in 1840 at Emerson's invitation. There he joined the Transcendental Club and wrote for *The Dial*. Alcott eventually succeeded as a school-master, writer and philosopher. His daughter, Louisa May Alcott, was the author of *Little Women*.



## ICUU NEWS

### European Groups Conference

### ICUW Conference

### National Gatherings



The ICUU is pleased to announce the European Groups Conference planned for 31 August – 04 September. The focus will be on the health and sustainability of Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist groups in Europe, so this effort is now being known as Health & Unitarian Growth in Europe Project or the HUGE Project.

The ICUU Member Groups in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Transylvania, UK and the EUU will each be invited to send up to four delegates to this important gathering to be held in the headquarters building of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church in Kolozsvár, Romania.

Facilitating the conference will be Rev. Jill McAllister and Rev. Steve Dick from the ICUU Staff as well as Rev. Dávid Gyero and Rev. Celia Midgley from the ICUU Executive Committee.

From 04–07 October this year the second International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women will be held in the historic town of Târgu Mure (Marosvásárhely, in Hungarian) in Transylvania. The focus of the gathering will be ‘Keeping Your Balance in a Changing World’. Speakers will include Unitarian women from the UK, USA, Japan, Hungary, the Netherlands and Romania. Cost of the Conference, which includes accommodation and meals is \$US300-\$400. Both pre- and post- conference tours are being offered. For more details of the ICUW go to: [www.icuww.com](http://www.icuww.com).

The pre-tours are from Vienna to Kolozsvár via Budapest or around Transylvania. The latter takes in the historical Unitarian landmarks of Kolozsvár, Torda, Mész , Gyulafehérvár and Déva, as well as the 13<sup>th</sup> Century castle at Vajdahunyad, the Saxon fortress church at Biertan and the medieval citadel in Segesvár. The post-tour goes to the Maramure region on the border with Ukraine, where four of the most famous painted monasteries are located in Vorone , Humor, Moldovi a, and Suceavi a – all UNESCO World Heritage sites. Again, see the ICUW website for details.

The annual General Assembly of the UUA will be held at the Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona, over 20–24 June. It doesn’t appear to have a theme but the focus will be on human rights and justice issues that affect indigenous peoples, minorities, immigrants and migrant workers. The state of Arizona has recently enacted draconian laws, ostensibly to counter illegal immigration from Mexico, that will require all Hispanic residents (including citizens) to carry their documentation everywhere or risk arrest.

The GA will be a typically ‘action packed’ gathering, as the 34-page program indicates. Thousands of people attend these events, which are covered in detail by their own media team. Local, regional and special interest groups have information stalls and there are various forms of entertainment in the evenings. Visitors from other countries are welcome, so go to: [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org) if the travel bug is biting.

Those wanting a longer trip can start with the Annual Conference and Meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council on 18–20 May in Ottawa. This will incorporate a special Spiritual Leadership Symposium, jointly organised by the CUC and the UU Ministers of Canada. See: [www.cuc.org](http://www.cuc.org) for details.

Unfortunately, it’s too late for the Annual General Meeting of the UK General Assembly, which was held over 03–06 April at Keele University in Staffordshire. That event included the John Rely Beard Lecture, given by the Anglican minister and author, Rev. Peter Owen-Jones. In addition to several books, he is noted for the BBC documentaries, ‘Around the World in Eighty Faiths’, ‘Extreme Pilgrim’ and ‘How to Live a Simple Life’. (John Rely Beard (1800–1876) was a minister and principal of Unitarian College, Manchester, also the author of over 30 books – see p. 12 for a report on the lecture.)

The ICUU website is currently being reconstructed, after which there should be much more current news. At this time, we only know that another Leadership Conference is to be held in Nairobi shortly.

## On the edge of the nuclear abyss: Why Aotearoa New Zealand must stay nuclear free

By Larry Ross

[Reprinted with permission from the Summer 2006/07 issue of *Pacific Ecologist*, hence some dated references to the then governments and leaders of the US, UK and New Zealand. *Aotearoa* ('land of the long white cloud') is the Maori name for the country.) We are reproducing this article as a memorial tribute to the founder and long-time secretary of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Peacemaking Association.

Lawrence Frederick James Ross (to give his full name) was also a founding member of the Christchurch UU Fellowship and spoke at the 2005 ANZUUA Conference in that city. He died at 84 on 17 April this year, following a stroke earlier that month.]

"We live on the edge of the nuclear abyss," said Lord Louis Mountbatten, UK Chief of Defence in 1979. Since 1945, many famous people, including nuclear experts like Dr Helen Caldicott have warned humanity with similar words.

Yet conventional wisdom has it that with the end of the Cold War, the major nuclear dangers are over, we've got the nuclear threat under control, and there's nothing to worry about. National's [New Zealand National Party, ed.] attitude was summed up by former Party leader Don Brash, in his comment to visiting US Senators in 2005 that we can get rid of New Zealand's nuclear-free legislation "by lunchtime." It's possible, new National Party leader, John Keys, could become Prime Minister of Aotearoa New Zealand after the next election. As National knows it's pro-nuclear, pro-US Iraq war lost it votes, John Keys now claims: "New Zealand's nuclear-free legislation should [but] changing circumstances will always dictate a need for fresh thinking and new ideas." (New Zealand National Party Press Release 30/11/06).

Keys further softened his "new" anti-nuclear stance by adding: "I have a much more positive view of the United States and its role in world affairs than most ministers in the Clark Government." In other words the illegal US-led invasion of Iraq based on a litany of lies, killing 655,000 Iraqis so far, creating chaos and civil war is "a positive role"? The Bush Government created a similar litany of lies about Iran, its legal nuclear enrichment plans and prepared plans to "shock and awe," mass bomb it. It also blamed Iran and Syria for events in Iraq, then wants talks with these nations to help it out of the crazy war it started.

All this suggests the actions of an out-of-control rogue state, rather than a responsible super power, "playing a positive role in world affairs." National still seems to have a dangerous blind spot when it comes to the realities of international affairs and US policy. John Keyes may wish to reverse a vote-losing policy, but does he really understand the national and international value of New Zealand's priceless nuclear-free policies? Can he be trusted to preserve this?

### Some dangers if nuclear-free policies reversed

1. In wartime, ports that may harbour US or UK nuclear warships could become targets for sabotage, by conventional or nuclear attack particularly if a war became nuclear. If we repealed our Nuclear Free law and hosted nuclear warships, New Zealand would become a potential target. Some politicians and media avoid the weapons and war issues and focus attention on the alleged "safety" of nuclear powered warships. Few mention there are now nine nuclear weapon states and the nuclear risks are increasing.
2. If New Zealand became a nuclear target by hosting nuclear warships, we could experience many deaths, destruction of infrastructure and radiation of land, animals and crops. That could destroy our agricultural trade for the foreseeable future. Is hosting nuclear warships to please rogue allies in order to gain alleged benefits, worth these risks?
3. The US has launched a war against Afghanistan, an illegal war on Iraq, supported an Israeli war on Lebanon, and talks of war against Iran, that could become nuclear. As George Bush says: "All options are on the table." If a new New Zealand Government took "a positive view" of this madness it would no doubt soon find that due to "changing circumstances" it needed to reverse our nuclear-free policies and welcome its allies' nuclear warships and participate in their wars.

These are a few of the questions an honest politician should consider and answer. These key questions deal with the real issues of nuclear warships, nuclear war and the increasing nuclear risks to those countries involved in supporting these wars. So far, National has avoided the key issues and confined itself to questions on the safety of nuclear power and nuclear propulsion.

### **Benefits of being independent of big power politics**

Kiwis have been given a few years grace on this issue because Labour won the last election, though barely. Hopefully there's still time to educate the public and National Party politicians about nuclear issues, such as the real and growing nuclear war threats. We were very lucky when the US expelled New Zealand from ANZUS for our impudence in banning their wonderful benign, ultra-safe nuclear warships from our ports. That gave us time and a degree of independence to make up our own minds about such wars as Iraq, Lebanon and the probable war on Iran.

Our nuclear-free laws banning military support for those controlling nuclear weapons also helped New Zealand stand firm for negotiated peaceful solutions. New Zealand's major and traditional allies, the United States, Britain and Australia, are all engaged in an illegal war in Iraq. It's been a great evolution of New Zealand's foreign and defence policy to be able to stand on principal and say "no" to allied pressures to join the Iraq war. We have also made a name for ourselves as trusted, independent UN peacekeepers, and instigators of peaceful solutions in conflicts such as in Bougainville and the Solomons. It's unlikely we would have reached this independent state, without having made our Nuclear Free Declaration in 1984, and rendering it into law in 1987. It's been a great success, and I think most New Zealanders prefer being a more independent country than we were prior to 1984, when it was "all the way with LBJ," and before that when it was "all the way with Britain and Empire, right or wrong." There's something refreshing about New Zealand not remaining an unthinking automaton in a form of military serfdom, ready to always answer "yes" when the war calls come.

However we must be aware and diligent, as there are still some Kiwis, who yearn to return to the days of glory, and super patriotism to the great foreign deity and the heroics of the battlefield. New Zealand's independence from big power politics and contribution to peaceful solutions to conflict is appreciated in international forums. We must ensure it's kept this way.

### **Need to educate on nuclear dangers**

We are still teetering on the edge of the nuclear abyss as Mountbatten warned. President Kennedy warned the UN in 1962: "The world hangs by a thread under a nuclear sword of Damocles, ready to be cut at any time by accident, miscalculation or act of madness." Today over 40 years later, the situation is worse, some say much worse. Dr Helen Caldicott has warned she expects a nuclear war before the end of the Bush presidency in 2008.

The main reason for this is that the Bush regime has decided to revise the rules covering nuclear warfare. No longer are nuclear weapons to be regarded with fear and loathing; no longer, according to the Bush vision should we proceed to nuclear disarmament as promised by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The US regards nuclear non-proliferation as applying only to others, not to itself. No longer are nuclear weapons to be thought of as an unthinkable device to be used only as a last resort if attacked. The once prevalent idea that nuclear weapons are global suicide weapons seems to have been banned from our media.

But the reality is, once some nation uses a nuclear weapon in anger, or by accident or miscalculation, it can cause a response by one or more countries. Then a chain reaction of nuclear response is possible. In this volatile fast-moving situation, nuclear strategists believe if they don't use their nuclear missiles and bombs, the enemy will launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike and catch them in their nuclear silos. They believe a sudden pre-emptive nuclear strike could win the war if their enemies don't launch their nuclear missiles in anticipation. This is a very mad, irrational situation. It's no longer cavemen with clubs, or knights in shining armour playing with bows and arrows, swords and spears. World War I, "the slaughter to end all wars," led to World War II with 50 million killed. Today it's millions of armed high-tech humans with cavemen emotions and trained robotic responses gambling with gigantic global death devices that can end life on earth in an afternoon. Is this progress and "a positive role in world affairs"?

### **Cuban missile crisis saved by saying no**

There have been several incidents where nuclear war has almost happened by accident or miscalculation as President Kennedy warned. In the famous 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the Russians threatened to station nuclear missiles in Cuba. The US and Russia came within a whisker of global nuclear war against each other. Some saner heads around at that time, including President Kennedy, saved the human race by saying "no" to the gung-ho Pentagon generals, who were keen for a nuclear response. The saner ones believed there must be another way, a better way to solve this crisis than destroying each other and the world.

Today things have radically changed with the Bush regime's right-wing extremists, coupled with right-wing Pentagon generals. With their faulty thinking, they have decided nuclear weapons should be useable and not just in principle. They have devised the plans and situations, where they could use the US, UK and Israel's great nuclear weapons advantage to achieve its extremely dangerous, insane military objectives. Slyly and carefully, they are bringing nuclear weapons out of the closet, with propaganda to rival Goebbels' propaganda in the Second World War. They have issued edicts saying nuclear weapons may be introduced into conventional warfare under certain conditions, and that the President may wage pre-emptive nuclear war against both nuclear and non-nuclear nations. The media presents this dangerous revolution in small print, without comment.

In their Nuclear Posture Review, 2002, the US even named seven possible nuclear targets including non-nuclear nations, and also the nuclear states of China and Russia. It's hair-raising, stupefying stuff. Again the media were both accepting and silent about this extraordinarily, threatening new stance. Mass media in the US, and even some media in New Zealand do their best for the Bush regime, portraying this new nuclear insanity as a perfectly normal development in the best of all possible worlds. The very quiet, "business-as-usual" way it was done was brilliant propaganda. Adolf Hitler himself would envy the new sophistication in pro-war propaganda and the adept way mass media accepted the new doctrines of nuclear war permissiveness.

Criticism? Not likely because the pro-war propagandists are trying to condition and mould people's minds to accept as truth, whatever the Bush regime decides to tell the public. Bush neocon extremism has become the normal order of the day. Media make no comment, little if any criticism is allowed. In other words, Neoconservative nuclear extremism and all the lies that go with it are being rammed down your throat whether you like it or not.

What they choose to call "terrorism" is portrayed as a threat and an enemy. But nuclear weapons are portrayed no longer as a general threat, but as something we can use when wise President, George Bush, in consultation with his fundamentalist God, decides there's a threat that requires a nuclear response. Bush and his entourage, tell us what's right and moral, who we are to regard as enemies, who we should make war against and kill, and if they think necessary, why they must use nuclear weapons against them.

With this new psychopathic nuclear ideology, unchallenged by the media at large you can see the extent and depth of the new nuclear threats. It's easy to understand why so many experts like Dr Helen Caldicott are deeply worried by the situation. At least in the past our nuclear strategists were a little saner, more aware and cautious, regarding the dangers of using nuclear weapons.

### **The new nuclear abyss**

But the Neoconservatives are different. They have tied this nuclear strategy to their extremist views of the world outside the US and built it in into their plans and doctrines as if there were no real or extraordinary dangers in the use of nuclear weapons. They are treating the US's nuclear weapons superiority as a tool to use in their objectives of achieving global domination and control of Middle East oil fields. We are still on the edge of the nuclear abyss because little has changed. Russia and the US still have thousands of the nuclear missiles on a "launch-on-warning" status. They can be launched at each other in minutes "by accident, miscalculation or act of madness," as President Kennedy warned in 1963. Although they claim to have reached an agreement to retire some weapons, these can quickly be restored to action if one or both sides say there's a crisis.

There are now nine nuclear weapon states. It's no longer just two, but now nine different sets of military and political fingers on the buttons of planet-destroying nuclear arsenals. Thus the risks of nuclear war by accident, miscalculation, anger, calculated pre-emptive strike or escalation of a conventional war or madness has greatly increased. All it takes is just one mistake, or just one intentional act of nuclear madness to end life on earth in an afternoon, because of nuclear overkill. With at least 27,000 nuclear weapons we know about in the world, the human race has more than enough to kill every person on earth many times over. As mankind has a long history of some 5,000 wars – with each side using every weapon they can find in desperate attempts to prevail over feared and hated enemies, it's amazing we have until now survived over 60 years without using nuclear weapons. We've gambled with our 27,000+ nuclear weapons and won. So we keep on even more recklessly and mindlessly. But gambler's luck inevitably runs out.

## **Depleted Uranium – Slow motion nuke war**

However, unknown to most, we are already engaged in a form of slow-motion nuclear war with Depleted Uranium (DU) weapons. They have been used by the US, and UK, in four wars, and by Israel in Lebanon. DU weapons are preferred by some military because the DU coating on shells, bullets and bombs makes them penetrate heavier metal more easily and then explode into a mist of radioactive particles that kill, kill and kill for a half-life of 4.5 billion years. During all that time the particles contaminate and poison wherever they reach, as they drift around the world killing and causing all kinds of radiation diseases.

Military establishments like the Pentagon and in the UK don't worry about the long-term effects. They don't worry about contaminating and killing endless future generations, or even their own soldiers. Their job apparently is to kill and win today for "freedom and democracy," not to worry about tomorrow. Most politicians in the US and UK agree with this proposition.

That's why George Bush and Tony Blair approved the use of DU-coated weapon wherever they want, such as the tons they used in their illegal Iraq war. The US and UK claim DU weapons don't have long-term effects on the land and humans. This is similar to the US claim during the Vietnam war that Agent Orange was only a defoliant and not injurious to human health. In both cases the US and UK knew they were lying and that it killed humans, both quickly, and slowly, painfully by disease.

Slowly, by stealth, the idea of using nuclear materials in weapons of war has been planted in the public mind. The extreme, present and long-term dangers hardly get a mention by the mass media in most Western countries. People really have no idea what this means and where it will lead the human race. The mass media won't tell them. This is why it's urgent and important to have a public education campaign on nuclear and war issues.

[*Pacific Ecologist* (formerly *Pacific World*) is one of a family of journals now published around the world in Brazil, Colombia, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Portugal, Spain (and Latin America) and the UK. The overseas journals were inspired by Edward Goldsmith, who founded of *The Ecologist* magazine in the UK in 1970 (however, it became an electronic publication in 2009).

The New Zealand journal is published in Wellington by the Pacific Institute of Resource Management and edited by Kay Weir, with the objective of educating on issues affecting vital sustainability, global ecology and social justice, including peace concerns. Their websites are, respectively: [www.pacificecologist.org](http://www.pacificecologist.org) and: [www.pirm.org.nz](http://www.pirm.org.nz).]

## **VALE, LARRY ROSS**

Larry migrated from Canada with his family in 1962, believing that New Zealand was the safest place in the world in that tense era, and he spent fifty years there campaigning on nuclear issues. In 1981, he established the New Zealand Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Committee and coordinated a campaign around the country to achieve 105 nuclear free zones at local council level. The NZ Labour Party adopted the issue in the 1984 election and, in power, passed the Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act in 1987. He continued working at the New Zealand Nuclear Peacemaking Association until 2007 when he was forced to retire due to illness.

His funeral was conducted by Rev. Derek McCullough on 23 April, with the local MP, some city councillors and many veterans of the peace movement in attendance. Derek stated in the service:

We are gathered here to acknowledge and celebrate Larry's life, a man whom we have known and loved and respected. I am sure that some of you who knew of Larry's strong atheist views might be surprised that his service is being held in a Baptist church, but it is however quite appropriate. Larry's mother was a Baptist, therefore you could say he was born a Baptist, so it in some ways this is a full circle. As a Unitarian he would appreciate that at times like this we all need each other for understanding and support, and at such times, any differences between various faiths disappear as we come together in a harmony that acts across all creeds and assures us of the permanence of human goodness and hope.

Leo Leriche of the Perth Unitarians wrote: Larry Ross was a giant killer of epic proportions. He carried his anti-nuclear battle to the highest level to keep New Zealand nuclear free and the success of his nearly lifelong battle is evident today. He devoted his life to this fight, thus allowing New Zealand to take an independent stance in world affairs. Goodbye, Larry, the world is going to miss you.

## OLD MAN ATOM (TALKING ATOMIC BLUES)

Well, I'm gonna preach you a sermon 'bout Old  
Man Atom,  
I don't mean the Adam in the Bible datum.  
I don't mean the Adam that Mother Eve mated,  
I mean that thing that science liberated.  
Einstein says he's scared,  
And when Einstein's scared, I'm scared.

Here's my moral, plain as day,  
Old Man Atom is here to stay.  
He's gonna hang around, it's plain to see,  
But, ah, my dearly beloved, are we?  
We hold these truths to be self-evident  
All men may be cremated equal.

The science guys, from every clime,  
They all pitched in with overtime.  
Before they knew it, the job was done;  
They'd hitched up the power of the gosh-darn sun,  
They put a harness on Old Sol,  
Splittin' atoms, while the diplomats was splittin'  
hairs...

Then the cartel crowd put on a show  
To turn back the clock on the UNO,  
To get a corner on atoms and maybe extinguish  
Every darned atom that can't speak English.  
Down with foreign-born atoms! Yes, sir!

But the atom's international, in spite of hysteria,  
Flourishes in Utah, also Siberia.  
And whether you're white, black, red or brown,  
The question is this, when you boil it down:  
To be or not to be! That is the question...

Atoms to atoms, and dust to dust,  
If the world makes A-bombs, something's bound  
to bust.

No, the answer to it all isn't military datum,  
Like "Who gets there fustest with the mostest atoms",  
But the people of the world must decide their fate,  
We got to stick together or disintegrate.  
World peace and the atomic golden age or a push-  
button war,  
Mass cooperation or mass annihilation,  
Civilian international control of the atom – one world  
or none.  
If you're gonna split atoms, well, you can't split ranks.

It's up to the people, 'cause the atom don't care,  
You can't fence him in, he's just like air.  
He doesn't give a darn about politics  
Or who got who into whatever fix –  
All he wants to do is sit around and have his  
nucleus bombarded by neutrons.

So if you're scared of the A-bomb, I'll tell you what  
to do:  
You got to get with all the people in the world with  
you.  
You got to get together and let out a yell,  
Or the first thing you know we'll blow this world to ....

We must choose between  
The brotherhood of man or smithereens.  
The people of the world must pick out a thesis:  
"Peace in the world, or the world in pieces!"

Vern Partlow (1945)

Larry Ross' article gives me a good excuse to print this old favourite. Vern Partlow (1910–1987) was a folk singer and union activist who also worked as a journalist. He was inspired to write this memorable song (which also had some choruses) after conducting a series of interview with nuclear scientists for *The Daily News* of Los Angeles. Possibly the first anti-war song of the post-war era, various versions of 'Old Man Atom' were recorded by Pete Seeger in 1948 and by Sam Hinton and others in 1950.

Despite the song's widespread popularity, the recordings were suddenly withdrawn from circulation when it was condemned as 'pro-communist'! Despite the support of some prominent American publications, Partlow was named to the House Un-American Activities Committee. He was fired from his job and blacklisted in the newspaper industry, but he went on to a career in public relations and government. The song, however, rose again as part of the folk revival of the '60s and was performed by numerous artists – you can hear a number of versions by searching either title on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)).

[Still with the Charles Dickens bicentenary (see previous issue), not many people know that he also wrote some poems. The one on the next page was published in *The Examiner*, a Liberal journal, shortly after the Conservatives had won government. It was a parody of a popular ditty with the same title, though that gentleman was philanthropic, loved a drink and eschewed extravagance.

Two William Pitts, father and son, were prime ministers before Dickens was born and we don't fully understand the reference in the poem. Neither were officially Tories, though Pitt the Younger led two Tory governments and is credited with redefining that party in such a way as to hold power for 25 years.]



## A FINE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

I'll sing you a new ballad, and I'll warrant it first-rate,  
Of the days of that old gentleman who had that old estate;  
When they spent the public money at a bountiful old rate  
On ev'ry mistress, pimp, and scamp, at ev'ry noble gate,  
In the fine old English Tory times;  
Soon may they come again!



The good old laws were garnished well with gibbets, whips, and chains,  
With fine old English penalties, and fine old English pains,  
With rebel heads, and seas of blood once hot in rebel veins;  
For all these things were requisite to guard the rich old gains  
Of the fine old English Tory times;  
Soon may they come again!

This brave old code, like Argus, had a hundred watchful eyes,  
And ev'ry English peasant had his good old English spies,  
To tempt his starving discontent with fine old English lies,  
Then call the good old Yeomanry to stop his peevish cries,  
In the fine old English Tory times;  
Soon may they come again!

The good old times for cutting throats that cried out in their need,  
The good old times for hunting men who held their fathers' creed,  
The good old times when William Pitt, as all good men agreed,  
Came down direct from Paradise at more than railroad speed ....  
Oh the fine old English Tory times;  
When will they come again!



In those rare days, the press was seldom known to snarl or bark,  
But sweetly sang of men in pow'r, like any tuneful lark;  
Grave judges, too, to all their evil deeds were in the dark;  
And not a man in twenty score knew how to make his mark.  
Oh the fine old English Tory times;  
Soon may they come again!

Those were the days for taxes, and for war's infernal din;  
For scarcity of bread, that fine old dowagers might win;  
For shutting men of letters up, through iron bars to grin,  
Because they didn't think the Prince was altogether thin,  
In the fine old English Tory times;  
Soon may they come again!

But Tolerance, though slow in flight, is strong-wing'd in the main;  
That night must come on these fine days, in course of time was plain;  
The pure old spirit struggled, but its struggles were in vain;  
A nation's grip was on it, and it died in choking pain,  
With the fine old English Tory days,  
All of the olden time.



The bright old day now dawns again; the cry runs through the land,  
In England there shall be dear bread – in Ireland, sword and brand;  
And poverty, and ignorance, shall swell the rich and grand,  
So, rally round the rulers with the gentle iron hand,  
Of the fine old English Tory days;  
Hail to the coming time!

Charles Dickens (1841)

## UU-ISM IN KENYA

By Josphat Mainye



In Kenya, freedom of worship is enshrined in the Constitution. For that reason, several religions have emerged, the major ones being Christianity, Islam and other sects that are affiliated with them.

The history of the Kenya Unitarian Universalist Council (KUUC) dates back to the year 2006 and its origin was bi-directional, so to speak. Two different UU groups existed, each without knowledge of the other. One group, led by Bishop Patrick Magara, operated from their bases in Kisii District and among its active members were myself, Kevin Abuga Ragira, Alice Kemunto, Nancy Njeri, David Okelo and others. Another group, operating from Nairobi city, was led by Muigai Kimani and among its members were Benard Macharia (current Chair of the KUUC), John Mbugua, Elizabeth Kariuki, Mary Njambi and others.

In 2007, Janice Brunson, a UU from Arizona, USA, was visiting Kenya and it happened that she knew a few members from each group. She was instrumental in bringing the two groups together in a meeting which she organized in Nairobi. After introductions and discussions, all the members in that meeting felt the need to operate under one umbrella.

In July 2007, the then president of ICUU, Rev. Gordon Oliver also visited Kenya and met the two groups. It was in that meeting that the Kenya Unitarian Universalist Council was proposed. A task force was formed to work on the modalities for the successful registration of KUUC. By the end of 2007, the final draft of the constitution was done and approved by the members, and immediately thereafter a formal application to register KUUC was sent to the Registrar of Societies, as required by law in Kenya.

Just before the constitution was finally drafted, the task force committee collected views and opinions from all UU members in Kenya at that time. However, not all UU members agreed with the proposed new name. Nevertheless, democracy prevailed and the wishes of the majority carried the day. On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2009, the KUUC was officially registered as a society, *vide* registration certificate No. 29838.

After the registration, members resolved to share their new faith with other members of the community, forming new congregations wherever a number of people accepted UUism. I am proud to mention to you that Kenya has the fastest growing UU church membership in the world. So far up to now, we have 12 congregations with 14 religious leaders and a total membership of 476 adults and 348 youth or children. Last year, the ICUU directed that the KUUC's by-laws be updated to meet the requirements when applying for membership and this was done. Also, elections of KUUC officials were held in accordance with the by-laws.

Let me briefly tell you a little more about UUism in Kenya. The UU faith was first introduced in Kenya in 2001 and most of our members were initially Christians. The UU beliefs, teachings and doctrines have appealed to many Africans because the common African custom and social life blends with UU beliefs/teachings; for example, every African community have their own way of expressing who God is and also a good man to the community must also be good to God. All these agree with UU principles. The general confusion caused by different doctrines within the so-called Christian churches has prompted many people to look for a more united faith, which they have found in the Unitarian Universalist Church.

The Kitengela UU Church, which I lead, was started in the year 2004. We have 82 adult members and 53 children, 30 of whom are orphans. Most of our members belong to the low income class; i.e., living on a dollar or less per day. While some of them are jobless, others do small-scale business. From our experience, this class of people is the easiest to preach to and accept the new faith of hope for their future. Irrespective of their economic background, members always come together to assist one another whenever difficult situations arise. They also contribute towards the feeding, clothing and education of the orphans, who are accommodated by several members in their homes.

We meet every Sunday for worship and, because we don't have a permanent venue, we always move from one member's house to another. We have an exchange program with other congregations, whereby ministers move from place to place to promote understanding and friendship among congregations. Apart from

preaching, sometimes ministers conduct seminars based on issues that affect the people; e.g., intertribal conflict, family matters, HIV/AIDS management and disaster preparedness related to drought and hunger.

The objectives of our congregation since it was started have been and are as follows:

1. To spread the UU faith and values to as many people as possible who are non-UUs.
2. To encourage and develop our own personal theologies, to present openly our religious opinions without fear to others.
3. To demonstrate and express the necessity of the democratic process when dealing with issues involving all members, who may have diverse opinions but work together towards one goal.
4. To better the lives of our members who are disadvantaged by engaging ourselves in social and community development programs.

Our greatest achievements have been the increase in membership. Also, five members of our congregation attended the leadership training conference which was organized by the ICUU in Nairobi in February 2008, where we obtained reading materials and management skills.

In our Church, we have several departments with different duties and responsibilities. For instance, we have the women ministry department which leads the congregation to provide food and shelter to the orphans. We also have the youth department, which is normally involved in community services; e.g., garbage collection in the neighbourhood, visitations to the hospitals and prisons, among other activities. Most of these youths are trained but there is a major crisis of unemployment in Kenya. This has left most of them frustrated and this has raised concerns from the entire membership to try to find a solution to this.

We look forward in future to having land to build a place where we will conduct our services and, at the same time, build a centre where the orphans can learn and stay. This is seemingly an uphill task which would take decades to achieve but we are optimistic that we will achieve this.

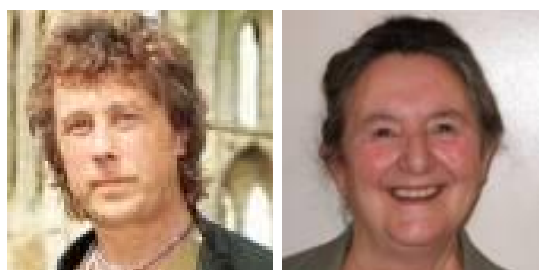
[Josphat is the Executive Secretary of the KUUC and attended the ICUU Council Meeting and Conference in the Philippines with the Executive Chairman, Benard Macharia. His church in Kitengela, a town of 9000, is in the Rift Valley cluster of congregations – there are two other groupings, in Nairobi and points north on the central plateau and around Kisii, in the tea-growing region near Lake Victoria.

As was mentioned in James Hills article on the CM&C in the previous issue, Josphat is an accomplished guitarist and songwriter, which renders his services both lively and interactive. He is very keen to visit Australia and learn to swim. This article has already appeared in *The SUN*, journal of the Sydney Unitarian Church, after which the ICUU asked to put it on their website.]



## INSIDE THE LENS

By Janet Briggs



Rev. Peter Owen Jones was invited to give the John Relly Beard lecture which opened our annual general meetings at Keele. He is an Anglican clergyman, though his experiences have changed his interpretation of the regular wording of the Anglican liturgy.

He began by telling us briefly of a couple of his encounters. One was with Coptic Christians in rural Ethiopia. He described this as a beautiful land, with very physically beautiful people. They took him to a temple in Tigre, hollowed out of one of the many tors, and painted inside with stories of Jesus. He was there in time for the most important service of their year, the Harvest Festival.

About six hundred people, men, women and children, came for the celebration, which lasted throughout the hours of darkness, from 6 pm to 6 am, with singing and prayers and feasting. He had contrasted this with the 'tin harvest' that has become commonplace in Britain, as we become increasingly remote from the countryside. Someone there asked him, "When, in the West, did you forget how to share?" Nothing stays the same, he reflected.

He also visited some independent islands off the Eastern coast of Australia, describing them as paradise islands, with a stone-age culture. They took him to see their active volcano and, as he stood on the rim of the crater inhaling the strong smell of sulphur, he realised that he had encountered no safety fence, or health and safety notice that we consider so vital in Western culture. The people there drink kava, to produce hallucinations through which they engage with the spirit world. People seek the numinous and weave ritual around it.

Peter suggests that religion as we knew it was turned on its head in our lifetime, when we first saw pictures of our blue planet taken from the darkness of space. This vision makes divisions meaningless. The environmental movement is the first truly global movement. Most religions began, and many still are, about our relationship with the environment. And now we can see clearly that the welfare of our planet is our foremost concern. He has come to consider the Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as the most damaging of all, because they are so anthropocentric. A new spirituality is emerging in the West that is pluralistic and experimental. Any sense of the sacred is informed by personal experience and a sense of wonder at all life. In the end is a new beginning.

He said that he admired the openness of the Unitarian approach, saying that it deserved to be more widely known. But, he cautioned, we need to learn to speak as a movement with one voice, or those who would be attracted would become confused.

[Reprinted with the author's permission from the May 2012 issue of the Glasgow Unitarian Church's colourful *News & Views* monthly newsletter (see: [www.glasgow-unitarians.org](http://www.glasgow-unitarians.org) to see how attractive that is). Janet Briggs is co-editor of that publication and secretary of the Scottish Unitarian Association. She attended this year's Annual Meetings in the latter capacity. Just with the article, 'Inside the Lens' was the title of Rev. Jones' address. A 'tin harvest' is a collection of canned goods for charities.

The Scottish Unitarian Association is a branch of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, though it was actually founded in 1813 after Unitarianism was legalised in the UK. There were many small Unitarian churches in Scotland in those early days but now the SUA has member churches in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. They have a retreat centre on Shapinsay in the Orkney Islands, where a fellowship also exists. (See: [www.sua.org.uk](http://www.sua.org.uk) for more information.)]

## **KENNETH SCOTT GEORGE McKENZIE**

**Humanist, Scholar, Gentleman**

**16 September 1940 – 29 March 2012**

Scott McKenzie was a member of the Brisbane Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and an active participant in many of our activities, especially the 2010 Growth Conference. He had begun helping with the organisation of the ANZUUA Conference in 2011 when he became ill.

Scott encouraged us to start our fundraising for KIVA microloans for the world's poorer people, and by doing so has assisted many people around the world to improve their lives. We miss Scott, with his logical clear thinking and his ability to move quickly to the essence of a matter, and even more as a member of our fellowship who is no longer with us.

Scott's wife Barbara said in his eulogy:

One evening during his last year at university, Scott had one of his 'light bulb' moments. During his school-days and the preceding years at university, he had been a committed Methodist, a stalwart of the Student Christian Movement and even a lay preacher. But on that particular evening the thought suddenly came to him: 'Man made God in his own image'. He had been tussling with doubts for some time, and from then on he never considered himself a Christian again. He had become an atheist, or perhaps an agnostic – he was never quite sure which.

This was the beginning of a lifelong quest for meaning in his life. He read widely, subscribed to journals and websites, joined organisations and attended conferences. He even had a brief sojourn at St Mary's, South Brisbane, attracted by some of Peter Kennedy's more rebellious homilies. He joined SoFiA (Sea of Faith in Australia), where he relished opportunities for stimulating discussion about faith and spirituality. More recently he discovered the Brisbane UU Fellowship and, for the past couple of years, he was an enthusiastic and committed member.

Jai Streeter, one of the founding members of the Brisbane UU Fellowship, writes:

The very name of the man gives indication of a Scottish ancestry with its traditions of caniness, applied common sense, thrift and sound business principles and wise management of scarce resources plus a profound respect for quality education and the way religious practice may permeate a whole society and give it purpose and values to live by, and to live out in daily life.

Scott was a life-long seeker of what makes life meaningful and purposeful and demonstrated an irenic spirit of free enquiry, being willing to link up with a variety of belief and value systems, to examine and evaluate what worked to the betterment of sound teaching and the transmission of sound values in schools, scout groups, and business.

I am glad that Scott graced our UU Fellowship with his presence: a natural dignity with a quiet sense of humour; a jaunty grin oft times and a keen enjoyment of the ordinary human pleasures of life. He also showed an affectionate appreciation of family and friends; a capacity to work and co-operate with others who sought to work together to improve things and clear the way to get things done; always making the effort to excel and attain the best quality result with sound research, and reasonable and diligent application. This is what makes social progress a living reality.

[The Sea of Faith movement began in the UK in 1984 as a response to Rev. Don Cupitt's book and TV series of the same name. Rev. Cupitt is an Anglican priest, theologian and philosopher, formerly a professor at Cambridge whose first qualification was in science. A group of radical Christian clergy and laypersons sought to recast religion in a mode that would counter the declining relevance of traditional doctrines. The Australian network was formed in Brisbane in 1988 and there are others in New Zealand, South Africa and the US. Scott was president of SoFiA in 2006–08 and editor of its *Bulletin*. (See: [www.sof-in-australia.org](http://www.sof-in-australia.org) and [www.sof.org.nz](http://www.sof.org.nz) for more information.)]

Scott's article, 'Why I Became a Unitarian', will appear in the next issue.

## ANCHORING IN SUEZ

By Kathy Nielsen

Scene: Port Suez at midnight on 8 April, 1983. Voyage 21 of *Bering Sea*, China to Germany.

*Bering Sea* is a large 75,000-ton bulk carrier – eight holds carrying 40,000 tons of cargo, each 720 feet in length. She has taken on water for ballast and is heading for Nordenham in Germany to pick up a cargo of wheat for China.

We are steaming towards Suez. There is almost complete blackness on the bridge except for the dull glimmer of green light from the radar screen and wheel panel. The wind wheezes past outside just discernable above the throb of the engine revolutions.

The Captain, Ole, is on the bridge. The engine is on ‘full ahead’. The Quartermaster is at the helm. Third mate scans black waters with binoculars, searching for separation buoys. First mate and second mate are making their way to fore and aft decks with the crew to prepare for anchoring.

Dead ahead to the naked eye glimmers the horizon of lights: through binoculars, the lights form clusters and group into individual lights of ships at anchor awaiting passage through the Suez Canal. On the radar screen, the mass of lights ahead looks impenetrable. We thunder on towards anchorage.

As we draw level with the first few ships at the outer anchorage, the Captain calls: “Slow ahead, 18 degrees port”, then “dead slow ahead” while we zig and zag our path through the outer anchorages of the ships.

Captain: “5 degrees starboard, steady as she goes, midships, 10 degrees starboard – shit! that bastard’s under way! – hard a port...full ahead.”

Then, after an hour of zigging and zagging, a possible anchorage looms ahead. We commence manoeuvring into position.

Captain: “Stop engines. Full astern.”

Quartermaster: “Engines full astern, Sir.”

The engines stop but nothing happens – they will not restart in ‘full astern’. We are still in fast forward motion, aimed at another ship dead ahead. The whistling of the wind grows louder into a hissing echo through the bridge as the thumping of the engine dies away.

One minute drags into two. In the ensuing silence the rushing wind sounds a warning of approach as the radar glows brighter and brighter with larger images growing at an alarming rate.

More minutes drag by.... The distant anchored ships seem to be rushing up at us. The whistle in the wind has muted into a whine echoing the whistle into looming disaster.

Captain: “What the hell are they doing down there in the engine room?”

“Full astern,” said rather more forcefully. There is still no response from the engine. The next couple of minutes’ shouted dialogue from the Captain is unprintable.

The Captain picks up the engine room phone and roars into the mouthpiece: “Chief, what’s going on down there?”

Chief Engineer: “She’s locked up again, Sir. We’re caught in the broken sprocket. We’re working on it.”

The rushing wind echoes the mounting alarm of the men on the bridge. Those onlookers (the Chief Mate’s wife and myself) serving no useful purpose on the bridge rush outside onto the bridge wing and gaze hopefully up at the funnel (no smoke there) and down at the sea, praying to see the first churnings in the water from reverse rudder. We are by now washing very close to the ship dead ahead. Without the rudder we have no steerage.

By now the Chief Mate, Vishwa, is on deck with four seamen receiving instructions through their walkie-talkies. I follow my husband out onto the bridge's right wing, my stomach turning inside out as he yells into his walkie-talkie.

"Let go the port anchor, Vish." The words roar above the confusion. "Three shackles on deck. What are you doing down there? – easy does it – don't break the anchor chain." The ship shudders and we feel the drag of the massive clanking anchor and chain as *Bering Sea* veers to the left and we narrowly miss our first victim.

Suddenly the engine springs to life in 'reverse engine' and relief sweeps through the ship like a surging tsunami to the sound of cheering voices echoing up from the engine room. Those on the bridge are still breathing in numbed silence.

Captain: "20 degrees port."

Quartermaster: "20 degrees port, Sir."

*Bering Sea* slews around with now decreasing speed as we steer neatly away from a second unsuspecting (we hope) victim. Finally, we steady into position between two of the anchored vessels bearing the red signal lights of tankers. We'd normally not anchor beside tankers but there was little choice this time.

"Drop anchor!" (if we still have a port anchor after all that drag)...further manoeuvring and we finally anchor up.

My husband, Captain Ole, rubs his hands together and says: "Well, I've just saved the company another 16 million dollars!"

[Kathy Nielssen is Secretary of the Perth Unitarians. She wrote this piece in August 2010 but only submitted it to *Quest* late last year. In case anyone is wondering, Nordenham is across the Weser River from the better-known port of Bremerhaven.]

## ANZUUA NEWS

Our President, Rev. Peter Ferguson, is currently on a two-month holiday in the UK and Europe with his wife, Carol. They are due back in mid-June.

The Treasurer, Peter Abrehart, reports that he has completed the changeover of documents from his predecessor, Laurence Gormley. Peter intends to bring out quarterly reports on ANZUUA's finances and he is investigating accountancy software suitable for that purpose.

Reports on ministerial accreditation and training options in Australia and New Zealand have been submitted by Pauline Rooney and Rene Hills. These have been circulated to the member groups for consideration and comment. Rev. Eric Cherry of the UUA has offered to help with the UU aspect of the training.

The first draft of the 'Under the Southern Cross' anthology has been completed and a cover design is being produced. However, it has been decided that the title should be A Southern Chalice and that it will take the form of a 160-page A5 booklet. The Editor and Editorial Board feel comfortable that the product will be of good quality.

A prototype new website, based on a content management system, has been started by James Hills with the assistance of Hugh Lambert of Adelaide.

## CHALLENGE FROM BRISBANE

Brisbane Unitarians have committed to support the Quimada House project to build a dormitory for female students in Dumaguete City in the Philippines, with a minimum contribution of \$4 per person (i.e., the cost of a cup of coffee at a restaurant) from all members. If we can do this across Australia and New Zealand, we can then challenge the USA and UK UU groups to match ANZUUA members in committing comparable amounts per registered member to the project. (Please see: <http://:filipinasafehousing.org> for more details.)

## REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC have recently had visiting speakers from the Buddhist and Baha'i faiths, which generated considerable interest. Their pastor, Rob McPherson, will be visiting the Canberra UU Fellowship on 17 June as a ministerial outreach.

Auckland UC have restarted their search for a short-term (two years) part-time consulting minister. They have already appointed a new children's Religious Education teacher, Anna Barge, who herself grew up in the church and was a member of their active youth group in her earlier years. Four new members joined on Sunday, 13 May, and their AGM was held a week later.

The Brisbane UUF are planning a retreat in mid-August at Springbrook Mountain in the hinterland of the Gold Coast. Visitors are most welcome – email James Hills at: james@brookfield.fastmail.fm for details.

Christchurch UUs had a successful service to commemorate All Heretics Day (01 April). The topic was 'Heresies and Dogmas in Economics', with speaker Dr. Geoff Bertram of the Victoria University of Wellington – five new members signed up after the day. They are co-hosting the Christchurch Interfaith Breakfast to raise funds for breakfasts in schools. They also have a Winter Solstice Breakfast coming up and plan to restart their Spring Equinox Retreats for the first time after the earthquakes. KIVA lending is going along well.

Melbourne UC had David Bottomley, son of their former minister, speak to them in April on "Robert Owen and the little Unitarians of 1817" and in May on "Richard Dawes and his 1847 fight with the Church for control of worker education" (Dawes was a Unitarian minister). Membership hit 100 last month.

Father Bob Maguire will be the guest speaker at their annual concert and the proceeds of that will go to his charity fund, which has donated to Médecins Sans Frontières and Hanover House in the past. They are now hosting some Migrant English classes that had been held at the Seventh-Day Adventists' premises until they learned that the lead teacher was gay.

Perth Unitarians are making do with other speakers and Open Forums in the absence of their minister.

The Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship has Rev. Andrew Usher speaking minister once a month and their membership is increasing. They believe we all need to work at understanding the Islamic faith, as Muslims make up one-third of the world and it is important to do some outreach work.

Sydney UC has upgraded their website, greatly enhancing its appearance and functionality. They held their AGM on Sunday, 20 May, where Mike McPhee showed pictures of the work done by the Philippine village congregation of Nagbinlod on their church buildings, using the money donated to them in February.

## SUPPORT THE KITENGELA CULTURAL CENTRE

Well, this is a 'virtual centre' for now, though some help from the international UU community could make it a reality. Josphat Mainye (see pp. 10/11) has formed a musical group, 'The Kenyan Trio', with his wife, Callen, and David Odhiambo Okelo, chair of their council of elders. Sponsored by your editor, they have recorded a DVD of songs with backdrops of African scenes and English captions, where needed. You can view by searching 'kenyan trio' on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) and selecting from the list that comes up. The songs to look for are 'Welcome to Kenya', '*Jambo Sana* (How are You)', 'Lets Go', 'The Word of God' and 'The Love of God'.

The Kitengela UU community also has some aspiring young painters who produce very lifelike portraits just from photographs, as well as doing native scenes. Their leathersmiths make sandals decorated with colourful Masai beads and are now developing lines with UU motifs. We should be able to refer you to a website displaying all of these products by the time the next issue comes out.

So, there you are! – 16 pages and just short of the beginning of June. It was sad to have two obituaries in a single issue but these things happen. I have a fair bit of copy in store for the September issue but I can always use more. So, please keep sending your input to me at: michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au.