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## **‘THE PREACHER WHO SAVED CALIFORNIA’**

As our American confreres commemorate 150 years since the end of their Civil War in 1865, this story of a Universalist minister who arguably ‘saved’ the State of California for the Union deserves to be told.

Thomas Starr King was born in New York City on 17 December 1824, to a Universalist minister, Thomas Farrington King and his wife, Susan. He was always known as ‘Starr’, though that was his mother’s family name. He grew up in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and in Charlestown, Massachusetts, where he studied to attend college and then divinity school. However, Starr King was 15 when his father died and he worked as a clerk, assistant teacher, grammar school principal, and bookkeeper at the naval yard to support his mother and siblings. That last job particularly suited him, as his working hours enabled him to attend some classes at Harvard College, even though he had never completed high school.

King was assisted by the Unitarian minister, Rev. Hosea Ballou II, a friend of his father, who designed a systematic course of study for the ministry for him. He gave his first public address in 1845, at the age of twenty, and preached his first sermon later that year. He was recommended to the ministry by the legendary Rev. Theodore Parker and, after a short apprenticeship at a small church in Boston, became the minister of the Charlestown Universalist Church. That had been his father’s church and he felt the congregants still thought of him as a boy, so he resigned and, after a brief period at the Second Unitarian Church of New York, took the pulpit of the Hollis Street Unitarian Church in Boston in 1848. Shortly thereafter, he married Julia Wiggin, by whom he would have two children, Edith and Frederick.

King did not feel that he had actually changed denominations, as he said the only reason the Unitarians and Universalists had not already joined together was that they were “too near of kin to be married”. (He also liked to say: “The one [Universalist] thinks God is too good to damn them forever, the other [Unitarian] thinks they are too good to be damned forever.” – however, that adage was probably first expressed by another Universalist minister, Rev. Thomas Gold Appleton.)

The Hollis Street church had been riven by discord over temperance and Abolition, so it was King’s task to rebuild the membership. He was there for eleven years, during which time he increased the church’s numbers to five times what it had been when he arrived. For all that, he had to supplement his meagre salary by giving public lectures around New England and beyond, from Maine to Missouri. On the strength of his academic and religious activities, King was awarded an honorary Master of Arts degree by Harvard College in 1850.

For all that, King became dissatisfied in Boston, where he felt looked down on due to his lack of formal credentials. He wrote to his friend and erstwhile mentor, Rev. Henry Bellows: "I do think we are unfaithful in huddling so closely around the cozy stove of civilization in this blessed Boston, and I, for one, am ready to go out into the cold and see if I am good for anything." In 1860, he moved with his family to San Francisco – which, in those days, meant taking a boat to Panama, crossing the isthmus by train and sailing north again. The San Francisco Unitarian Society, founded 10 years earlier, was the only Unitarian church on the west coast of the United States. He preached twice each Sunday and, under King's careful supervision, the Society built a beautiful gothic church which was dedicated in January, 1864.

However, King saw his ministry as threefold: to his congregation, to the Christians in the region and to the people of California. He had a vision of a unified liberal Christian church and his preaching brought people from well inland to hear him. With his orations throughout Northern California, he helped to educate the San Francisco elite, labourers, blacks and miners about Socrates, contemporary poets, materialism and the beauty of nature. He also became involved in politics in the lead-up to the Civil War, campaigning for Abraham Lincoln from his pulpit and travelling by stagecoach throughout California to promote the Union. His skills as an orator and the power of his personality helped to elect a Republican (i.e., pro-Union) governor and state congress in 1861, after which he worked tirelessly to raise massive funds for the US Sanitary Commission (later the Red Cross), which oversaw the health and medical care of the Union Army. The commander-in-chief, General Winfield Scott, later said that King had "saved California to the Union".

King had always been a short and slight individual whose health failed at times. On 04 March 1864, after only four years in California and barely 39 years old, he died from diphtheria, pneumonia and (in the words of his future son-in-law) "the slow suicide of overwork". His memorial service was attended by some 20,000 people as flags flew at half-mast from public buildings and even on ships in the harbour.

Before he left New England, King liked to have his vacations in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, about which he wrote the only book published in his lifetime: *The White Hills, Their Landscape, Legends and Poetry*. Today, there is a mountain in that region named after him and another in the Sierra Nevada ranges of California. There were also two statues erected in his memory, one of which still stands in the vast (70 blocks long) Golden Gate Park in San Francisco; the other was in the Hall of Statuary of the Capitol building in Washington, DC, until its recent replacement by a statue of Ronald Reagan!

[This article is based on an address written by Arliss Ungar of the Mt. Diablo UU Church in Walnut Creek, California, and an article in the Dictionary of UU Biography by Celeste DeRoche and Peter Hughes.]

## THE STARR KING SCHOOL OF THE MINISTRY

The Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, is the western UU seminary and part of the Graduate Theological Union in that city. It opened in 1904 as the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry at a time when there was no such facility west of Pennsylvania. (The Meadville Theological School moved from that state to Chicago in 1926.) Although it was not renamed after Thomas Starr King until 1941, the PUS followed his example in emphasising the practical skills of religious leadership and individualised study from the beginning.

The School's first president was Rev. Earl Morse Wilbur, who held the position for 30 years and also wrote the first comprehensive histories of European Unitarianism. In 1962, local seminaries officially formed the Graduation Theological Union, a diverse consortium that now numbers nine theological seminaries, two academic centers, and six affiliates and institutes; the Starr King School joined in 1964.

By 2010, the Starr King School had grown from seven students and one faculty member in 1904 to 87 full-time and 60 on-line students, supported by a faculty of 30 senior staff. Its offerings are not just for future ministers studying for the Master of Divinity but also for those pursuing the MA in Social Change or the Certificates in UU Studies and Religious Studies. The School is a leader in on-line theological study and also conducts residential and immersion/intensive courses during the recesses.

The prolific Arliss Ungar has written a history of Starr King School for the Ministry entitled: *With Vision and Courage: The History of its First Hundred Years, 1904–2004*. It is available from major on-line book-sellers in both paperback and e-book forms. (But please see p. 8 for another Ungar connection.)



International  
Council of  
Unitarians and  
Universalists

## ICUU NEWS

### Conference Updates

#### Hungarian Church Elections

#### Opening of Quimada House Dormitory



The Annual Meeting of the UK General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches will be held on 20 March–01 April at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole. The event, as always, begins with the John Relly Beard lecture, sponsored by the Ministerial Fellowship. In 2015 this will be a play entitled ‘Jesus – Queen of Heaven’, on issues of gender, transsexuality and spirituality, presented by its author, Jo Clifford.

The Keynote Speaker will be Rev. Jill McAllister, Senior Programmes Consultant with the ICUU. The Anniversary Preacher will be Rev. John Harley, a minister, art teacher and drama therapist who coordinates youth events for young British Unitarians. For details and registration, go to: [www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk), click on ‘How We Work’ and then on ‘Unitarian Meetings’.

The Canadian Unitarian Council will hold its Annual Conference and Meeting at Algonquin College in Ottawa (the national capital) on 15–17 May. The theme will be ‘Seeking Justice in a Changing Land’ and, while no speakers have been identified, it looks like a very musical event. See: [www.cuc.ca](http://www.cuc.ca) for details.

The General Assembly of the UUA will take place over 24–28 June at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, with the theme of ‘Building a New Way’. This is far too large and diverse to describe but the Ware Lecture will be given by the author and actor, Dr. Cornel West. See: [www.uua.org/ga](http://www.uua.org/ga) for details.

Just in is an invitation to the European UUs’ Spring Retreat on 10–12 April in the historic German town of Oberwesel. The keynote speaker will be Rev. Dávid Gyer, President of the ICUU, whose address is titled ‘Many and Universal – Our Faith in the World’. More on: [www.europeanuu.org](http://www.europeanuu.org).

The Synod of the Hungarian Unitarian Church held its triennial meeting on 06 December 2014. The agenda focused on the ordination of new ministers, the election of the bishop and the officers of the Supreme Disciplinary Court. Ferenc Bálint was re-elected as Bishop for another term of six years. The new Deputy Bishop is the aforementioned Dávid Gyer, and 12 new ministers were also ordained.

From the UU Partnership Council’s quarterly magazine: For many years, the UU Church of the Philippines has had a dream of creating a dormitory in Dumaguete that would provide safe and affordable housing for young women attending universities in the city. This project was also envisioned as a way to provide employment to UUs in Dumaguete who work on the project as well as becoming a source of income to support the health and growth of UUism in the Philippines.

Although fundraising had been ongoing for almost eight years, the amount needed to bring the original dream of a 180-bed dormitory into reality was still far off.... This November, the UUCP came up with a new plan for a dormitory to be built on the UUCP grounds which would house 40 young women in nine air-conditioned rooms, most of which would have attached bathrooms. The building complex would also include four 2-room guest rooms complete with kitchens, and a third floor all-purpose room. The cost of this new project is equal to the amount of the funds which have been raised...and now construction is underway.

Plans are for the construction to be finished in April and for Rev. Fred Muir to dedicate the building on April 24<sup>th</sup>, during the Annual Meeting [of the UUCP]. Please plan to come to Dumaguete and visit. There will be guest rooms! [Dumaguete City is the capital of East Negros Province, where most of the UUCP’s congregations are located. Rev. Fred Muir of the UU Church of Annapolis, Maryland, wrote a history of the UUCP entitled *Maglipay Universalist* (Rejoice, Universalist) in 2001.]

In breaking news, the International Association for Religious Freedom has moved its headquarters back from Osaka to London at the beginning of this year and is now in the Essex House building of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Its secretary is Rev. Eric Cherry, who spoke to the 2013 ANZUUA Conference in Auckland in his capacity as Director of the UUA’s International Office.

## THE FUTURE OF RELIGION

By Jim Craig

[Text of an address to the Perth Unitarians on 04 March 2012.]

We have all lived long enough to know that unexpected things happen. Who of us could have guessed that 50 or 60 years ago that we would be here today? Talking about the future is either an exercise in arrogance or perhaps foolishness, so I hope that you will forgive me for doing it any way.

One of the first things to say is that there has been a movement in recent years by many people, especially certain intellectual types, to say that religion has no future. That religion is at an end. It's somewhat copying, I suspect, the idea of the end of history.

About twenty years ago, an American commentator named Francis Fukuyama published a book called *The End of History*. This was shortly after the downfall of the Soviet Union and he was there proclaiming that all of the other methods of history had been wiped out and democratic capitalism had emerged victorious over everything else and so history had finally come to a glorious culmination. We could expect it forevermore. Well, twenty years later, we can see that was a bit premature at best and things are moving apace even without certain other things.

But there is certainly some kind of evidence about the end of religion. Churches in many traditional parts of the world are empty on Sunday mornings and partly, of course, this is because over the last 300 or 400 years science and the Enlightenment have increasingly expanded to explain many things which religion typically and traditionally argued.

It's easy to make the case, at least intellectually, that religion as we have know it for the past couple of thousand years has ended. However, practically speaking, we see also the fact that over the last twenty years or so there has been a resurgence of the power of religion in certain parts of the world, especially the Middle East as you are well aware. In certain practical ways religion seems to be having a renaissance, especially among some of our more evangelical or fundamentalist friends, which movements seem to be increasing.

So I think it's premature to say that religion is at an end. Perhaps that's wishful thinking on the part of some. Historically, as we see, religion has been ubiquitous if not universal. That is to say, we have found religion in every human society that has ever been discovered or investigated. Not to say that every individual or every person has been religious but certainly, in every society or culture, religion has played an important role.

The question then becomes not just the end of religion but what kind of religion is there going to be? And it seems to me that the traditional religion that we have perhaps known over many centuries is, in fact, weakening in the face of increasing forces of, let us call it, modernity.

There have been certain periods in history which were especially important. One of the most important was the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, 2500 years ago, a period which is so important that it has been called by historians 'the axial age'. It was an axis that we can see looking back and, if we look at roughly the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, we see in various parts of the world enormous changes taking place. In ancient Greece, it was the beginnings of what would later become Classical philosophy, the great names such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Greek tragedians and comedians were writing their epoch-making plays at that time.

In ancient Israel in roughly the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, there was the flowering of the ancient Israeli prophets, the prophets of the Old Testament whose message continues to resonate about the need for social justice in our world. In ancient India there were the writings of the Upanishads, the important writings of the Hindu tradition. The Buddha lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century and his almost exact contemporary in China was Confucius, whose teachings have resonated in Chinese culture every since. So it was a period that was extraordinarily important even in axial times.

It's, of course, a little bit premature to say yet but I have the suspicion that we are in a similar period today. The problem is that none of us will ever know it because we are talking about time spans now in the future. We're talking not in terms of days or months or years but in terms of centuries and it won't be for another 300 or 400 years, presuming that the human race survives that long, that we will know for sure just what this period we are now in is all about.

But it seems to me we are in this period, especially religiously, of tremendously epochal change. One of the traditional images of the Christian church over the past two thousand years has been that the church was a great ship sailing out over the waters, saving people from the destruction of the floods. Well, it seems to me that ship is now sinking. Now what do you do when you are in a sinking ship? Well, of course, one way to deal with that very courageously, I suppose, is to say, "I will go down with the ship." And that I think is what some of our fundamentalist friends may be about. But it seems to me the more prudent course is to say, "OK, the ship is sinking, let's see what we can do to build a raft of some sort to float on the tumultuous waters." Be constructive, in other words. It is easy enough to decry the sinking of the ship but let us try to be a bit constructive.

And that brings me to this book, *Religion for Atheists*, written by a British man named Alain de Botton. I had never heard anything about him before I saw this book reviewed two weeks ago. Some of you may have seen it in *The Weekend Australian Review* magazine. The reviewer there was not very impressed by the book, as she thought it missed the point. I think her review missed the point of the book but you can check it for yourself.

What de Botton is suggesting here is that the traditional theology of the Christian church has run its course, basically – the whole idea that there is some omnipotent omniscient being who has created the world and who will have some care for us here on the earth, who will respond to us if we pray to him, who will make sure that we go to good and not evil, who will keep us from certain terrible things happening. That whole idea is simply incredible for many of us. Not the majority, it appears, but for many of us. So, what are we going to do if we don't have a God to rely on so enormously?

Well, says de Botton, let us not throw out the baby with the bath water. Maybe we should look at some of the things which inspired people to think about such a being or such a God. So, let me just read a few paragraphs from the book.

*One can be left cold by the doctrines of the Christian Trinity and the Buddhist faithful path and yet at the same time be interested in the ways in which religions deliver sermons for the morality engender a spirit of community make use of art and architecture, inspire travels, train minds, and encourage gratitude at the beauty of spring. In a world beset by fundamentalists of both believing and secular varieties, it must be possible to balance a rejection of religious faith with the selective reverence for religious rituals and concepts.*

*It is when we stop believing that religions have been handed down from above or else that they are entirely daft that matters become more interesting. We can then recognise that we invented religions and that is what we are saying, all religions are human creations, after all. We can recognise that we invented religions to serve two central needs which continue to this day and which secular society has not been able to solve with any particular skill. First the need to live together in communities in harmony despite our deeply rooted violent and selfish impulses. And second the need to cope with terrifying degrees of pain which arise from our vulnerability to professional failure to troubled relationships to the death of loved ones and to our own decay in the minds. God may be dead but the urgent issues which impelled us to make him up still stir and demand resolutions which do not go away when we have been nudged to perceive some scientific inaccuracies in the tale of the seven loaves and fishes. The error of modern atheism has been to overlook how many aspects of the faiths remain relevant even after their central tenants have been dismissed. Once we cease to feel that we must either prostrate ourselves before them or denigrate them we are free to discover religions as repositories of a myriad of ingenious concept with which we can try to assuage the few of the most persistent and unattended ills of secular life. So, even though the traditional ideas may be bankrupt, perhaps there is something there that we can still find useful.*

*The signalled danger of life in a godless society is that it lacks reminders of the transcendent and therefore leaves us unprepared for disappointment and eventual annihilation. When God is dead, human beings, much to their detriment are at risk to taking psychological centre stage. They imagine themselves to be commanders of their own destinies. They trample upon nature, forget the rhythms of the earth, deny death and shy away from valuing and honouring all that slips through their grasp until at last they must collide catastrophically with the sharp edges of reality.*

But to take a specific example, he refers to the practice and condition especially in Roman Catholic churches of devotion to the Virgin Mary.

*From a robustly rational perspective Marian devotion seems to exemplify religion at its most infantile and insulting. How could any reasonable adult trust in the existence of a woman who lived several thousand years ago if she ever lived at all much less draw comfort from a projected belief in her unblemished heart, her selfless sympathy and her limitless patience.*

*The drift of the question is hard to refute. It is simply the wrong question to raise. The apposite point is not whether the Virgin exists but what it tells us about human nature that so many Christians over two millenniums have felt the need to invent her. Our focus should be on what the Virgin Mary reveals about our emotional requirements and in particular on what becomes of those demands when we lose our faith.*

So I commend *Religion for Atheists* to you.

I commend also the work which I only learned of a couple of years ago from an old friend, the work of a New Zealand theologian named Lloyd Geering. I think the main point that he tries to make seems to be imminently sensible: that the classic Christian doctrines, especially the doctrine of God, should be seen reasonably as symbols – not as focuses in themselves – but as symbols which point to some deeper realities that we may better focus on. So that's another plank in the raft that we might build in an otherwise sinking ship.

Another one that I will commend to you – and it's printed on the back of your Order of Service – are the Principles of the Unitarian movement. We can argue with them and find things that might not be there that we would wish were there. These were formulated a little over fifty years ago when, in America, the Unitarian and Universalist traditions came together and thought they had to have something to say about what they really wanted to emphasise in this new Unitarian Universalist movement.

Religion, as I have said, has been ubiquitous, always found in humanity, and so the religion of the future or the future of religion is really talking about the future of humanity. That, of course, raises a whole much bigger and more significant problem and question. There seems to be at least two possible options. One of them, of which a great deal of evidence can be adduced, is that humanity has no future. That we, especially in the modern world, with the opportunities for nuclear holocaust not to mention environmental degradation, have produced the instruments for our own demise as a human race. Will the human race survive this century? Well, most of us will not be here to discover the answer to that but it's at least a good possibility and there seems to be lots of evidence to make that point.

Another possibility is that we will instead, as we have always seemed to manage to do in the past, kind of muddle through even some of these terrifying problems that confront the human race. It may even be that we are in the process of continuing to evolve. After all, we should not presume that the evolutionary status which has come to this point of us humans, has ended. It's still going on. What it will go on to we may not even know.

I am often encouraged by the ideas of paleontologist and Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Back in the 1950s, he wrote a book called *The Phenomena of Man*, in which he pointed out that, if you look at the whole process of life over the many hundreds of millions of years, you can see that a couple of processes happen. At first, various molecules came together in increasingly complex ways and a life form emerged and then over billions of years various of these life forms, of these one-cell organisms, came together with other cells and more and more of these cells came together in increasing and complex ways, so that life forms began to develop and emerge over the millennia.

Well, now maybe we are at a new level where increasingly, for the first time in history over the last century, humans are now interacting with humans all over the globe. That has never happened before in the significant ways it does now, especially with our electronic ways of interacting with our fellows all over the world instantaneously. We can now know instantaneously what is happening 12,000 miles away. So, maybe we are in the process and we will be finding increasingly complex ways to do this. Maybe we are in fact evolving into some new and greater form of humanity of life forms, who knows?

Well, those at least are the two very opposite reactions. Will we destroy ourselves or will we perhaps evolve into some greater reality?

As for me, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I tend to think that we are likely to destroy ourselves. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays I harbour the hope that we will perhaps evolve, and on Sunday I go to church or whatever.

[Jim Craig is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Napa, California. He was theologically educated (at Princeton Seminary) and was for some time a Presbyterian minister. While still ordained, he served for six months in 1983 as interim minister for a Uniting Church parish in Applecross (a suburb of Perth). Since then, he demitted the ministry and has identified as a Unitarian Universalist for more than 20 years. □For most of his career, he was a teacher of Religious Studies in a private boarding school.]

### 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)

Not a lot is known about Vern Partlow (1910–1987), but he 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 interviews with nuclear scientists for *The Daily News* of Los Angeles. Possibly the first anti-war song of the post-war era, various versions were recorded between 1948 and the early 1950s.

Despite the song's widespread popularity, the recordings were suddenly withdrawn from circulation when it was condemned by right-wing media as 'pro-communist'! Some prominent American publications lambasted the record companies for their cowardice. Partlow was investigated by the FBI, dismissed from his job and blacklisted in the newspaper industry. From 1952 to the 1970s, he worked in public relations and continued to write protest songs. 'Old Man Atom' made a comeback as part of the folk revival of the '60s and was performed by numerous artists, as you will see if you search the title on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)).

## TO MY VALENTINE



More than a catbird hates a cat,  
Or a criminal hates a clue,  
Or the Axis hates the United States,  
That's how much I love you.

I love you more than a duck can swim,  
And more than a grapefruit squirts,  
I love you more than a gin rummy is a bore,  
And more than a toothache hurts.

As a shipwrecked sailor hates the sea,  
Or a juggler hates a shove,  
As a hostess detests unexpected guests,  
That's how much you I love.

I love you more than a wasp can sting,  
And more than the subway jerks,  
I love you as much as a beggar needs a crutch,  
And more than a hangnail irks.

I swear to you by the stars above,  
And below, if such there be,  
As the High Court loathes perjurious oaths,\*  
That's how you're loved by me.



Ogden Nash

\* Nash liked making up words or misspelling them to create rhymes.

[Frederic Ogden Nash (1902–71) was an American writer of children's books and light verse who produced 14 volumes of poetry between 1931 and his death. He worked in advertising and as an editor for the Doubleday publishing house before his writing became known, after which he went on lecture tours of US and British colleges and universities. He also wrote the lyrics for two Broadway musicals and made guest appearances on comedy and radio shows. Here are a few more snippets for St. Valentine's Day.]

Come live with me and be my love  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
Of a marriage conducted with economy  
In the Twentieth Century Anno Donomy.  
We'll live in a dear little walk-up flat  
With practically room to swing a cat  
And a potted cactus to give it hauteur  
And a bathtub equipped with dark brown water.  
We'll eat, without undue discouragement,  
Foods low in cost but high in nouragement  
And quaff with pleasure, while chatting wittily,  
The peculiar wine of Little Italy.  
We'll remind each other it's smart to be thrifty  
And buy our clothes for something-fifty.  
We'll line [queue] for miles on holidays  
For seats at depressing matinees,  
And every Sunday we'll have a lark  
And take a walk in Central Park.  
And one of these days not too remote  
You'll probably up and cut my throat.  
[Love Under the Republicans (or Democrats)]

Husbands are things that wives have to get used to  
putting up with.  
And with whom they breakfast with and sup with.  
They interfere with the discipline of nurseries,  
And forget anniversaries,  
And when they have been particularly remiss  
They think they can cure everything with a great  
big kiss....  
[What Every Woman Knows Sooner or Later]

To keep your marriage brimming  
With love in the wedding cup,  
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;  
Whenever you're right, shut up.  
[A Word to Husbands]

Sure, deck your limbs in pants,  
Yours are the limbs, my sweeting.  
You look divine as you advance . . .  
Have you seen yourself retreating?  
[What's the Use]



## PASSOVER



*Then you shall take some of the blood, and put it on the door posts and the lintels of the houses . . . and when I see the blood, I shall pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.*

– Exodus 12: 7 & 13



They thought they were safe  
that spring night; when they daubed  
the doorways with sacrificial blood.  
To be sure, the angel of death  
passed them over, but for what?  
Forty years in the desert  
without a home, without a bed,  
following new laws to an unknown land.  
Easier to have died in Egypt  
or stayed there a slave, pretending  
there was safety in the old familiar.

But the promise, from those first  
naked days outside the garden,  
is that there is no safety,  
only the terrible blessing  
of the journey. You were born  
through a doorway marked in blood.  
We are, all of us, passed over,  
brushed in the night by terrible wings.



Ask that fierce presence,  
whose imagination you hold.  
God did not promise that we shall live,  
but that we might, at last, glimpse the stars,  
brilliant in the desert sky.



Lynn Ungar

Rev. Lynn Ungar is the daughter of the aforementioned Arliss Ungar and an accomplished poet of the current UU generation. She is what American UUs call a ‘Jewnitarian’, meaning a Unitarian whose parents were brought up in the Judaic faith.

Lynn graduated from the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley and, after eight years of parish ministry, became Director of Religious Education at the Starr King UU Church in Hayward, California. Her current position is Minister for Lifespan Learning in the Church of the Larger Fellowship, a special congregation of the UUA which caters to those who, for such reasons as remote location or overseas residency, don’t have a church to attend. That position, which she has held for thirteen years, includes being editor of the CLF’s monthly journal, *Quest*.

This poem appears in *What We Share: Collected Meditations*, Volume Two (Skinner House, 2001), which also includes work by Richard S. Gilbert, Bruce T. Marshall, and Elizabeth Tarbox. Her first publication was a collection of poems entitled *Blessing the Bread: Meditations* (Skinner House, 1995) and her most recent is *Bread and Other Miracles* (Author House, 2012). Some of Lynn’s work has been put to music and can be heard if you search ‘lynn ungar song’ on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)).

It’s good to know that we have successors to such Unitarian/Universalist poets as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, e. e. cummings and Ted Kooser, a former US Poet Laureate. (Yes! – they have one, nominated by the Librarian of Congress and a panel of expert advisors. Unlike the UK precursor, nominees usually serve for one year, but Kooser was re-appointed and so held the post for 2004–2006.)

## “OUR LAMPS MAY BE DIFFERENT, BUT LIGHT IS THE SAME”

[This is the text of an address by Rev. Rob MacPherson to a multicultural interfaith peace vigil that was held in Adelaide on 18 December 2014 to mourn the victims of the Lindt Café incident in Sydney and the school massacre in Pakistan. Those tragedies took place on the previous Monday and Tuesday, respectively.]



Good evening. I want to offer a thought that might kindle some light for us in this dark time.

Just last Sunday, a beautiful thing happened at our church – I wish you all could have seen it. We held a service in which Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Bahá’í, Unitarians, and Muslims came together to worship as one body – an interfaith service. This service was followed by a shared meal, during which people of these different faiths broke bread together and shared fellowship.

Guess what happened? No one died. No one made threats or was threatened. No one feared for their safety. No voices were raised, except in laughter. The peaceful fellowship we enjoyed that day was more than cordiality, more than the politeness that goes with the religious practice of welcoming the stranger at your table. It had more to do with really seeing that, as the poet Rumi said, ‘our lamps may be different but the light is the

same’. And so we could let the diversity of our faiths just be, together knowing that abundant plurality is how God actually expresses itself in this infinite, expanding, and varied creation. And for a brief time, we looked at the light, and we saw that it was good.

Then, of course, Monday happened. Then Tuesday happened. But by the light of this evening’s event, I can see that although our lamps may have flickered in the cold gusts that have come, the light still shines. Look around you. This is this shared future we must work toward.

What is that light known to all, the light that shines from so many different lamps of faith? Every religious or spiritual tradition that ever has been, has known it, though it is refracted differently. Here is but one way of putting it: “Love your enemies. Do good to those that hate you. Pray for those that persecute you.” We may know it as the Golden Rule, and its golden light shines through the lamps of every faith.

Friends, I cannot know what terrible inner crucifixion of spirit leads people to commit the cruel acts we’ve witnessed this week. I do know that hate-filled souls will always be among us. I also know what it is to fear them, and I know too the anger that comes after the fear, the urge to be rid of those who frighten you. My birth country, when it was attacked on 9/11, flailed around like a mad and wounded beast, and rained down blood and death with abandon—and tortured remorselessly—even those who had nothing whatever to do with the attack, killing hundreds of thousands of innocents. That was our old brain talking, insisting we make a quick, either/or choice – ‘fight or flee’. Both are futile strategies to make the world utterly, once and for all, safe. This will never be. Our best hope is that we neither fight, nor flee, but do something else.

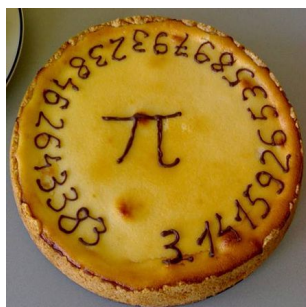
If we learn nothing else from the events of recent days, we must see the practical sense of the golden rule – not to allow our sadness, outrage, fear and hatred serve as a justification for us becoming the very things we deplore. And yes, even toward those filled with xenophobia (stoked by our irresponsible profit-driven media), we must not offer them our hate as a response to their hatred. This is not an empty piety. Think about it: If you hate a hater for hating, whither goes any moral authority? What does that do but make the hater feel more justified in his/her hatred, deepening and further inflaming it? And what happens to you, do you not become full of hate yourself? Instead, as Dr. King reminded us, we must offer love for hate. This is the light known to all faiths, but how hard it is to see!

Does that love mean we remain utterly passive doormats, praying in private for God or governments to fix things? No. You love your children, but when they stray from the light, your love for them requires you to confront, challenge, and gently admonish them, reminding them where the light is. So let it be when we are confronted, as we will be, with bigotry, racism, xenophobia, and vengeful hate, active non-violent resistance is the path that love illuminates. What is the alternative to this light? The one and only alternative is the world we have – division, mistrust, rancour and violence. Love is the only way to break that spiraling race to the bottom. You have to find a way to offer love to those who offer hate, if only out because those we hate haunt us, possess us, and ultimately become us. This is indeed our only hope as a species or we will go into the dark.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.” Let our shared grief tonight blossom into resolve, that we may we seek the pure light of love and let it guide us – together, forever, in peace. Thank you.

[The closing quotation is from the Gospel of John. With the title quotation, Jal 1 ad-D n Muhammad R m (1207–1273) was a Persian poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi mystic. His verse was mostly written in Persian but he also used Greek, Arabic and Turkish, and his works were known from Greece to South Asia. Today, they have been translated into many of the world’s languages and transposed into various formats.]

## PI DAY



For those who like numbers, there is a mathematical festival to commemorate the numerical constant, pi ( ). Because that number is 3.14 to two decimal places, Pi Day is 14 March (3/14 in the American system – not that there is any alternative). The festivities usually start at 1:59 p.m. because the value to five decimal places is 3.14159, though there are purists who use 24-hour time and start at 1:59 a.m.

The observations take many forms, such as eating and/or throwing pies, playing piñata and drinking piña colada cocktails. There are discussions of the significance of pi and contests to see who can recite its value to the most decimal places.

This year’s Pi Day will be special because 3/14/15 at 9:26:53 will express pi to ten digits.

Because 14 March also marks Albert Einstein’s birthday, the two events are sometimes celebrated together – most notably in Princeton, New Jersey, where he lived for over 20 years while working at the Institute for Advanced Study. In addition to pie eating and recitation contests, they have an Einstein look-alike contest.

The earliest known official or large-scale celebration of Pi Day was organised by Larry Shaw in 1988 at the San Francisco Exploratorium, where he worked as a physicist, with staff and the public marching around one of its circular spaces and then consuming fruit pies. The US House of Representatives even passed a non-binding resolution recognising 14 March 14 2009 as National Pi Day.

There are also two Pi Approximation Days, one of which is 22 July (22/7). The other is 26 April, when the Earth has completed 7/22 of its orbit since the beginning of the year.

Interestingly, while some say that pi comes from the Greek equivalent of ‘periphery’ (i.e., circumference), the symbol was not used by mathematicians until the 1700s. Nevertheless, mathematicians of antiquity in Europe, India and China worked to establish its value with a surprising degree of success. It was only proven to be an irrational number in 1761 and calculated manually to 620 digits in 1946 (cf. 200 in 1844) before computers were able to extend it to millions of digits.

## ANZUUA NEWS

Melbourne UC’ sub-committee working on the 2015 ANZUUA Conference on 16–18 October have not yet decided whether it should be held in their church or at an external venue. The theme will be Unitarian activities for social justice and the Business Meeting will be held in the middle of the Conference.

ANZUUA has received an application to join form the First UU Fellowship of Melbourne, which will be considered at the Conference. (They are already listed on the ANZUUA website and have their own.) There has also been a request from some UUs in Darwin that we assist them with publicity to form a group there.

Our Treasurer, Henri van Roon has presented a budget for the current period and reported that ANZUUA’s finances are in good order.

Pauline Rooney, Vice-President of the ICUU, has received a request from Justine Mangara, a UU minister in Kenya, for women in Australia to communicate with women in his country. One such contact has been made but more are needed.

## INTERNATIONAL YEARS OF SOILS AND LIGHT

By Mike McPhee



In December 2013, the UN General Assembly designated 2015 as the International Year of Soils, after recognising 05 December as World Soil Day. The Food and Agriculture Organisation was tasked with implementing the IYS within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership. The official launch will take place on World Soil Day at the UN headquarters and also at the FAO's offices in Rome and elsewhere in the world.

The International Year of Soils aims to:

- raise full awareness among civil society and decision makers about the profound importance of soil for human life;
- educate the public about the crucial role soil plays in food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, essential ecosystem services, poverty alleviation and sustainable development;
- support effective policies and actions for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources;
- promote investment in sustainable soil management activities to develop and maintain healthy soils for different land users and population groups;
- strengthen initiatives in connection with the SDG process (Sustainable Development Goals) and Post-2015 agenda;
- advocate for rapid capacity enhancement for soil information collection and monitoring at all levels (global, regional and national).

The Global Soil Partnership is a joint initiative of the FAO and the European Union, formed in 2011 to: “Support and facilitate joint efforts towards sustainable management of soil resources for food security and climate change adaptation and mitigation” and to update the 1982 World Soil Charter. That Charter stemmed from the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held at the FAO's headquarters in Rome in 1979 with the objective of addressing rural poverty in Third World countries. It also resulted in the declaration of 16 October (the anniversary of the FAO's foundation in 1945) as World Food Day.

However, those initiatives were limited to the soil and its relation to agricultural productivity, whereas the GSP's ultimate goal is to achieve food security and restoration of ecosystems through conserving, enhancing and restoring soil resources through productive and sustainable use. The GSP also aims to create Regional Soil Partnerships to provide guidance on goals and priorities within specific regions and develop relevant activities within each region. To that effect, it established an Intergovernmental Technical Panel of Soils at its first Plenary Assembly, which was held in Rome in 2013.

It may be worth noting that much of the earlier work was done in Edouard Victor Saouma's three terms as the seventh Director-General of the FAO (1976–93). A Lebanese agronomist who had studied in France, he joined the FAO as its Deputy Regional Representative for Asia and the Far East in 1962 and became Director of its Land and Water Development Division in 1965. His achievements included a new program for the prevention of post-harvest food losses in 1977, the creation of an International Commission on Plant Genetic Resources in 1984 and the convening of the first World Conference on Fisheries in 1985.

In 1992, the first World Nutrition Conference was held in Rome in conjunction with the World Health Organisation. Also in that year, the FAO's World Agriculture Information Centre came into operation, which contained the world's most comprehensive data on agriculture, fisheries, forestry, nutrition and rural development. Saouma's commitment to Third World issues often upset the wealthy donor countries – for example, the Fisheries conference declared 200-km Economic Exclusion Zones – but he is generally seen as having done more than many of his predecessors.

If this all seems ‘earth-bound’, consider that 2015 is also the International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies, aiming “to raise awareness of the achievements of light science and its applications, and its importance to humankind”. It will be administered by an international steering committee headed by Prof. John M. Dudley, originally from Auckland and currently working in France, in collaboration with UNESCO and the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Italy. Other sponsors include a host of international and national scientific societies, educational and research institutions, technology platforms, non-profit organisations and private sector partners.

They couldn’t have chosen a better year for the number of scientific anniversaries affecting light, going back to the first systematic work in optics by the Arab polymath, Ibn al-Haytham, in 1015. In 1815, the French physicist, Augustin-Jean Fresnel, formulated a definitive wave theory of light that ended two centuries of debate on whether light consisted of waves or particles. Then came James Clerk Maxwell’s proof that light waves were electromagnetic in nature in 1865.

Albert Einstein made two contributions, firstly when he explained the photoelectric effect in terms of Max Planck’s quantum hypothesis in 1905; then, in 1915, he identified the speed of light as the universal constant in his Theory of General Relativity. Finally, in 1965, the Cosmic Microwave Background was discovered by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson and quickly recognised as the ultimate proof of the ‘Big Bang’. Also in that year, Charles Kao performed his pioneering work in fibre optical telecommunication.

The official launch of the IYL will take place at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 19 January 2015 with the unveiling of ‘1001 Inventions and the World of Ibn Al-Haytham’, part of a global campaign to publicise Ibn Al-Haytham’s achievements in optics, mathematics and astronomy. Please see its official website for more information: [www.light2015.org](http://www.light2015.org).

## **VALE, DOUGLAS WEBSTER**

The Reverend Douglas Webster died on Sunday morning, 15 February, following a stroke and a heart attack. He was 87 years old.

Having trained at Unitarian College, Manchester, Douglas served in the Unitarian ministry from 1961, first at Dundee, then as part of a group ministry in the Midlands, before moving to New Zealand in 1971. He was at the Auckland Unitarian Church for 12 years, before returning to the UK in 1983 for two years at Nottingham and Derby, then six years at Glasgow.

In 1991 he came to Australia for his final ministry at Sydney Unitarian Church, during which he met and married Vina. After his retirement in 1999, Douglas and Vina settled in Richmond. Douglas was a founding member of the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship, but eventually the long train trip to and from Kirribilli meant that he attended services increasingly rarely.

We record his service to the Unitarian movement, including ANZUUA and our own Fellowship, and offer condolences to Vina and the family.

[Written by Rev. Geoff Usher, himself a former minister of the Sydney Unitarian Church, on behalf of the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship.]

I first came to the Sydney Unitarian Church in 1995 and the minister conducting the service then, and for the next several years, was Douglas Webster. I learned that he had been minister since 1991, after an extensive career in the UK and New Zealand. He was especially esteemed by some of the older folk in the church and his talks were usually down-to-earth, chatty and often about subjects of commonsense import: friendship, love and social responsibility.

Douglas was probably the only minister of SUC to be married in our church – his wife being a Canadian Unitarian from Montreal. He seemed always in good health and good spirits, looking much younger than his years. He remained active in our church after his retirement in 1999 and I understand that he was involved with Unitarianism elsewhere until his sad death recently.

[Written by Peter Crawford, Vice-President of the Sydney Unitarian Church.]

## ELIZABETH GASKELL AND UNITARIANISM

By Dr. Max Lawson

[Text of an address to the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship on 02 March 2014.]

It may well not be politically correct to begin a talk on Elizabeth Gaskell by giving details of her husband's life, but it seems appropriate here. William Gaskell (1805–1884) was an extraordinary Unitarian minister whose only church was the prestigious Cross St. Chapel in Manchester, where he ministered for 56 years, and for 33 of these years, he was ably assisted by his wife, Elizabeth (1810–1865). Gaskell's church was fashionable (Manchester was the first industrial city of the world then) and Unitarians were disproportionately represented as 'the Captains of Industry'.

Like the Quakers (for example, the Cadburys, Foys and Rowntree families of chocolate and confectionery fame were all wealthy Quakers), similarly there were wealthy Unitarian textile manufacturers, bankers, brewers and the like. This meant that the Gaskells moved in all the levels of society. William Gaskell's very generous ministerial salary came with strings attached – he was expected to take a high profile in civic affairs. Accordingly, for example, he was chairman of the Manchester Library committee for 30 years, served on innumerable committees and helped organise relief during the Cotton Famine of 1861–1863.

He and his wife knew of much misery in Manchester, just as their fellow Unitarian Florence Nightingale did while working with prostitutes, victims of cholera, and others with severe illnesses at Manchester Hospital before going to the Crimea. At first it seems unconvincing that the central characters of Elizabeth's novel, *North and South*, were characters who lived in the drawing rooms of Manchester's industrial elite, were textile manufactures in particular, as well as being visitors of the homes of the destitute unemployed. However, the Gaskells did exactly that themselves.

William encouraged his wife to write a novel as an antidote to the depression she felt at the death of her only son, a baby, who died of scarlet fever. (The Gaskells had four surviving daughters – and one of her novels is called *Wives and Daughters*.) William helped his wife's literary activities in every way – proof-reading, checking all the historical facts etc. – all of which was very much appreciated by Charles Dickens in whose magazine, *Household Words*, Gaskell's novels were first serialised. Dickens (who had attended a Unitarian chapel for 10 years) was a friend of the Gaskells, as were many other eminent Victorians committed to social reform. Coincidentally, William Gaskell was a godfather of Beatrix Potter, though her family was not reformers.

This social reform movement included a championing of women's rights and the role of women, particularly in marriage itself. The Gaskell's thirty years of marriage is a case in point of an extraordinary nature of the egalitarian approach to marriage. Unitarian attitudes were far different from 'The Angel in the House' (to use the title of Coventry Patmore's popular poem) wherein women had separate spheres outside the realm of men. Elizabeth was active in her husband's ministry – all the minister's wife's usual duties, as well as running "a ragged school in the home" and meeting the weekly deadlines demanded by Dickens for his magazine. (Naturally she was also blessed with home help!)

Another example of the Gaskell's being on the same wavelength in their extraordinary marriage is that just as William in his sermons emphasized the role of individuals in society, this theme dominated Elizabeth's novels to which we now turn, in particular *North and South*, written in 1855. Although Elizabeth confessed that "I am not Unitarianly orthodox" (how far "out" can you get!) and does not mention Unitarianism by name in her novels, these novels do reflect Unitarian concerns of the day – social justice, compassion for the suffering, and social and political action, as well as "trust in Divine Providence", this Christian theme shared by most Unitarians at the time.

For many Christians, however, Unitarians were beyond redemption – for example, a Methodist hymn appealed to "Triune God" imploring him to "expel the Unitarian fiend and chase his doctrines back to Hell"! Because Unitarians were very liberal Christians, they were able to bypass all the agonies of religious doubt expressed by many Victorian era writers such as Tennyson and Ruskin, the latter being "unable to sleep because of those dreadful hammers" of geology which repudiated the world being formed in 4004 B.C. For Gaskell, true to her Unitarian background, believed there is a Heaven and Hell but they are on earth – and we must strive to build Heaven and ameliorate, at least, the cotton fluff of Hell.

*North and South* is an unremittingly serious novel and as Terence Wright has said, a novel full of pain, “of stress and disturbance, of pangs of conscience...” Gaskell herself in a letter describes William Hale “as weak and vacillating” and never fully realising the consequences of his beliefs on his family. As a personal aside, I remember a Portuguese student told me of her recoil from the radical politics of her father, because of the effects on his family of her father’s protestations. Although prosperous, her father was a critic of the Salazar regime, and often in prison and sometimes tortured, but the worse punishment in her opinion was that sons of dissidents were drafted as front line troops fighting to maintain Portuguese colonies. Her brother was the only survivor of his group and was leading an aimless life, and she herself had to enter teacher’s college under an assumed name.

Beliefs have consequences and we must think carefully about imposing our beliefs on others. As a good Unitarian, Gaskell constantly emphasizes tolerance and understanding the viewpoint of others. One of the great strengths of *North and South* is how clearly Gaskell can see the position of the Masters of Capital as well as that of the workingman and unemployed poor. The danger is as Gaskell implies, that being able to see both sides of a question still demands action, not paralysis.

So not being bedevilled by the science versus religion questions of the Victorian era (after all Science asks *how* questions and Theology asks *why* questions), and also not being ground down by questions of doctrines or being concerned with such controversies as shook the Church of England to its foundations at that time, Unitarians were able to concentrate on social reform and alleviating suffering, as well as emphasising the development of moral character (if sin exists, we are punished by our sins not for our sins) and work towards God’s kingdom on earth.

Even for today *North and South* raises issues about the evils of the uneven distribution of wealth for labour done. It also causes us to think from the point of view of the employer, and the employee and the unemployed and how we face this in our moral decision making in our daily lives. Whereas so many people dodge the issue of working towards a better world for all, in a good Unitarian fashion (today as well as when she wrote it) *North and South* keeps our eyes clearly on this moral dilemma constantly in our lives. Sadly, the issues haven’t really changed in 150 years. Fortunately Unitarianism still gives a good compass with which to deal with them.

Elizabeth Gaskell is not only a good novelist but also a good Unitarian. The themes of her novels are timeless.

[Dr. Max Lawson was a Senior Lecturer in History of Education at the University of New England in Armidale and then taught World Literature at the International People’s College in Helsingør (Elsinore), Denmark, after he retired. He has travelled the US extensively in his quest for Unitarian history, for which reason his previous articles in local Unitarian publications were about people and places in New England.

This article was first published in the March 2015 issue of *Esprit*, the monthly newsletter of the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship in Sydney. That edition also has an article on Harriet Martineau, sister of the famous British minister, James Martineau (see the Spring 2013 issue of this journal for a feature on him). *Esprit* can be read on the SoLUF website: [www.sydneynunitarians.org](http://www.sydneynunitarians.org) under the ‘News and Services’ tab.

It comes at a very good time, as observant readers will have noticed that 2015 is the bicentenary of Elizabeth Gaskell’s birth. The feature article about her in the Summer 2010 issue of *Quest* marked the sesquicentenary of her death, which was the occasion of official commemorations by our UK confreres and the national literary community.

Just by way of background, the Cotton Famine was a period of mass unemployment in the mill towns caused by a shortfall of cotton (due to the American Civil War) and a surplus of finished products. It was a time of great suffering, mitigated by relief under the Poor Laws, public works and emigration.

On the literary side, Coventry Patmore (1823–1896) was an English poet and critic who started off as an artist. His most famous poem, ‘The Angel of the House’, consists of four parts written between 1854 and 1862, which were republished as a single book in 1863. John Ruskin (1819–1900) was also a painter but he is better known for the diversity of both his writing formats and his subject matter – geology, architecture, and political economics, to name a few. Dr. Terence Wright wrote a book entitled *Elizabeth Gaskell: ‘We Are Not Angels’* in 1995, when he was a Lecturer in English at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. (He is now Professor Emeritus of the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics there.)

## REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC had a multifaith congregational lunch on 14 December. Unlike most groups, the church did not close over January but lay speakers conducted the services while their minister, Rev. Rob MacPherson, had a few weeks off. On 25 January, they had a Water Service which is recorded on: [unitariansa.podbean.com](http://unitariansa.podbean.com).

The Committee of Management has endorsed the Vision 2015 program, which encompasses church growth and community outreach, amongst other things. Rev. Rob MacPherson will be attending a UUA Excellence in Ministry conference in the US as a newly welcomed Associate Member of the UU Ministerial Fellowship. This provides professional development as well as a chance to connect with UU Ministerial peers.

Auckland UC had a church auction in November that raised over \$5,000. Their Samoan literacy program is now beyond the pilot phase and looking at how to fund a part-time or full-time coordinator. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the project in different language situations.

Some members participated in the Rainbow Community's annual Auckland Pride Parade on 21 February. There is also a neo-pagan group starting up.

Brisbane UUF had their last service of 2014 on 14 December, followed by a Christmas party. Services recommenced on 08 February with a Water Communion and they have a good selection of speakers arranged for March/April.

Melbourne UC held a concert for the ANZAC Peace Coalition on 14 December. They will host the second ANZAC Centenary forum on 16 March, this time moderated by the Quakers. (See the Summer issue for the full program of these forums.) Another capacity crowd is anticipated.

Perth Unitarians had a Christmas barbecue on 21 December among the wildflowers, shady gum trees and green lawns of Kings Park. Services resumed on 18 January, led by their minister, Rev. Peter Ferguson.

Spirit of Life UF had their Christmas service on 14 December, which included a baby naming ceremony. In February, they were visited by an American family who were staying for a few weeks and had some good local contacts that the Fellowship means to follow up.

Sydney UC had their Christmas service and party on 14 December, with hymns and carols led by a pianist and singers from the Conservatorium. Services resumed on 01 February and the first guest speaker will be Peter Baldwin, former MP and federal Minister.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This issue started out as a simple exercise but became harder to complete, once I realised how little material I still had in my holding files. It also hasn't been fully proofread but I'd rather risk a few typos than miss my self-imposed deadline. I appeal to all member groups and individuals to send me anything you have at your earliest convenience: [michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au](mailto:michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au).

As always, my thanks to the various contributors, especially Dr. Max Lawson. His article came out just as I feared I could only manage a 12-page issue, something I really don't want to go back to. I hope he will write for us more frequently in future. I also hope the First UU Fellowship of Melbourne have some writers who will join us when the time comes.

The Winter instalment will come out at the beginning of June but I like to have plenty of copy in hand well before my deadlines. We can anticipate full details of the 2015 ANZUUA Conference in that issue and I'm sure there will be at least one substantial article.

I also hope by then to have done some historical research in the State Library, which I have found has issues of *Quest* dating back to 1950. This project was prompted by a recent gift I received of some issues from the early 1960s, published by the Australian Assembly of Unitarian and Liberal Christian Churches. (Has anyone heard of that body? – ANZUA only came into being in 1974.) But I don't want to spoil the many surprises these 'blasts from the past' contain, so that's all I will say for now.