



Quest



Journal of the Australia New Zealand
Unitarian Universalist Association

Autumn 2020



FRANCIS BACON AND THE *NOVUM ORGANUM*

This year of 2020 marks 400 years since the publication in 1620 of a book whose full title was *Novum Organum, sive indicia vera de Interpretatione Naturae* (New Organon, or true directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature). The original *Organon* was written by Aristotle and Francis Bacon chose that title because he proposed a new system of scientific logic that he believed was superior to Aristotle's syllogism. This work was instrumental in the historical development of the scientific method, to the point that Voltaire called him "the Father of the Experimental Philosophy".

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was born in London to Sir Nicholas Bacon, a high-ranking politician, and his second wife, Anne, who was the daughter of the noted Renaissance humanist, Anthony Cooke. It is believed that he was educated at home due to poor health but, at the age of 12, he entered Trinity College at the University of Cambridge, where his older brother was already studying. His three years of tutelage there followed the medieval curriculum, conducted largely in Latin, caused him to reject Aristotle's philosophy and, particularly, his approach to science.

After qualifying in law, Bacon went to France with Sir Amias Paulet, the English ambassador to France, and did further study at the University of Poitiers. During his travels in that country, Spain and Italy, he studied languages, statecraft and civil law while performing routine diplomatic duties. He had to return to England in 1579 when his father died and, while resuming legal practice, he was elected to Parliament in 1581. He held various seats from that time until 1614 but his attempts to attain higher office were largely unsuccessful. However, he did become Elizabeth I's Queen's Counsel in 1597 and, under King James I, he was knighted in 1603, became Attorney-General in 1613 and was made Lord Chancellor (prime minister) in 1618.

One thing Bacon was not good at was handling his finances, as he fell into serious debt on at least three occasions between 1597 and 1621. On the third occasion, he was charged by a parliamentary committee with corruption, sentenced to a fine of £40,000 and committed to the Tower of London. He was released after only a few days on orders from the King, who also remitted the fine. There seems little doubt that Bacon had accepted gifts from litigants, but this was an accepted custom of the time and not necessarily evidence of corrupt behaviour. While Bacon acknowledged that his conduct had been lax, he insisted that he had never allowed any gifts to influence his judgement – in fact, he had sometimes given a verdict against those who had paid him. Although the Parliament declared him incapable of holding public office, he was not deprived of his titles.

With his political career at an end, Bacon devoted the rest of his life to writing. However, he had started much earlier than that, publishing a book called *Sacred Meditations* in 1597. In the same year, he produced a collection of 10 essays, which was expanded to 38 in the 1612 edition and 58 in 1625. (The essay was a relatively new literary genre in those days.) His first scientific work, *Valerius Terminus: Of the Interpretation of Nature*, is thought to have been published in 1603 and *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, in which he sought to find hidden meanings in Classical Greek fables, appeared in 1609.

The *Novum Organum* was actually the second of an intended six-part work called *Instauratio Magna* (The Great Instauration, meaning ‘restoration’ or ‘renewal’). He envisioned a great reformation of all processes of knowledge for the advancement of learning, divine and human, that would lead to great advances in science and new inventions that would relieve mankind’s miseries and needs. The first part, *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (Partition of the Sciences), appeared in 1605 but it is not clear when the third and fourth parts were written (and the last two parts never were).

The title page of *Novum Organum* (pictured at left on p. 1) depicts a galleon passing between the Pillars of Hercules (i.e., the Strait of Gibraltar), leaving the well-charted waters of the Mediterranean to explore a new world in the unknown reaches of the Atlantic Ocean. So, too, Bacon hoped that his proposed method of empirical investigation would generate new knowledge and lead to greater understanding of the world.

Bacon’s departure from the ‘natural philosophy’ (i.e., science) of his day was that he rejected the Aristotelian method of explaining observed phenomena by deductive reasoning from preconceived higher principles. Instead, he advocated inductive reasoning from the particular to the general in gradual steps:

The understanding must not however be allowed to jump and fly from particulars to axioms remote and of almost the highest generality...and taking stand upon them as truths that cannot be shaken, proceed to prove and frame the middle axioms by reference to them.... But then, and then only, may we hope well of the sciences when in a just scale of ascent, and by successive steps not interrupted or broken, we rise from particulars to lesser axioms; and then to middle axioms, one above the other; and last of all to the most general. For the lowest axioms differ but slightly from bare experience, while the highest and most general...are notional and abstract and without solidity. But the middle are the true and solid and living axioms, on which depend the affairs and fortunes of men; and above them again, last of all, those which are indeed the most general; such, I mean, as are not abstract, but of which those intermediate axioms are really limitations.

(By ‘limitations’, he means corollaries or specific instances.) It should be noted that modern science employs both inductive and deductive reasoning, now that the latter has been freed from metaphysical trappings.

The term, ‘natural philosophy’, originally just meant the study of nature; however, in Bacon’s time, ‘natural’ also meant without reference to Scripture or other canonised works. He saw religion (i.e., theology) as concerning itself with the Word of God, whereas science investigates the Work of God. In words that Unitarians will surely appreciate, he declared that the two realms are and should remain totally separate:

...some moderns...have endeavored to build a system of natural Philosophy on the first chapter of Genesis, the book of Job, and other parts of Scripture; seeking thus the dead amongst the living. And this folly is the more to be prevented and restrained, because not only fantastical Philosophy but heretical Religion spring from the absurd mixing of matters – Divine and Human. It is therefore most wise soberly to render unto faith the things that are faith’s.

Bacon’s other well-known book, at least today, was a work of fiction called *The New Atlantis*, even though it was unfinished and published posthumously in 1626. Clearly inspired by Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), it describes an island in the Pacific west of Peru named Bensalem whose ideal society is based on science and technology. Its cardinal feature was Salomon’s House (pictured at right), a large academy for research into both pure and applied sciences, such as Bacon advocated being established in England when he was in the government. Of course, that academy used the Baconian method of inquiry exclusively and had made many advances that were unknown in the outside world.

Bacon died from pneumonia on 09 April 1626, leaving an estate worth £13,000. True to form, his debts at the time were more than £23,000, equivalent to £3 m. in today’s money! However, it could be argued that his contributions in a number of fields were worth a good deal more than that.



International
Council of
Unitarians and
Universalists

ICUU NEWS
Council Meeting and Conference
Holdeen India Program
Asia Pacific News



As mentioned in previous issues, the biennial ICUU Council Meeting and Conference was scheduled for the week of 26 October – 01 November in Montreal, Canada, hosted by the Canadian Unitarian Council. The ICUU's Executive Director, Rev. Sara Ascher, has recently advised that, given the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the Executive Committee has seen fit to postpone the opening of registrations for that event until further notice. While it is still hoped that the CM&C can proceed, this will also depend on whether restrictions on international travel have been lifted in time.

The Holdeen India Program is a UUA initiative founded in 1984 with funding from Jonathan Holdeen, a lawyer and businessman with a deep concern for India's economic development. It provides aid for humanitarian service ventures and social enterprises that seek to advance prosperity for all of India's people. A recent broadcast from its Director, Derek Mitchell, read as follows:

“India faces an unprecedented humanitarian crisis today. A national lockdown, introduced to slow the spread of coronavirus, has had devastating consequences for impoverished communities. Millions of migrant workers, who spread out across the country each year in search of work, are now stranded far from home, struggling to find food and shelter, with no way to earn a daily wage. Countless other workers, who even before the crisis earned barely enough to get by, now have no income at all.

Federal and state authorities have promised assistance to all those affected. Yet over 500 million people in India don't have the identity cards or paperwork needed for government food support. In a crisis of this scale and magnitude, many people are slipping through the cracks. The Holdeen India Program's partners have been working around the clock since this crisis began, fighting for their communities' survival by:

- Identifying those most at risk, especially those unable to access government relief programs, and delivering food directly to those groups;
- Helping get migrant workers safely back to their homes and advising communities how to set up village-level quarantine centers for all those returning;
- Closely monitoring the implementation of state relief programs, ensuring that support reaches all those in need.

Government officials, acknowledging these groups' expertise and grassroots networks, have sought their support in the relief efforts. In the state of Gujarat, one partner has helped hundreds of women get back to work by sewing masks from home – they've already produced over 500,000 and new orders are pouring in. Together, Holdeen partner organizations have secured relief for tens of thousands of people across India.

For many of our partners, these last six weeks have been the most challenging of their lives. Yet they know this is only the beginning. The first 21-day lockdown in India has been extended until at least May 3rd. Covid-19 cases in the country are still comparatively low, but we don't know yet how well the counter measures are working – or how widely the virus will spread.”

As mentioned in the last issue, the first UU Asia Pacific Regional Conference was held in the UU Church of the Philippines' headquarters of Dumaguete City on 23–27 October (see pp. 8/11 for the full report). Since then, the Asia Pacific group has held three worship services via the Zoom videoconference platform on 18 April, 02 May and 23 May, in which all participants could join in the chants, verses and meditations.

People in Australia, Hong Kong, India, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and even Ireland took part in the first of those services. (The two participants in Vietnam were actually from the Czech Republic!) The third was led by Khasi Hills musician and singer, Banjop Nongbri, and some of his colleagues, with the theme of 'Weaving Art and Science to Touch the Divine'. Anyone interested in joining these services should contact our Secretary, James Hills, at: james@brookfield.fastmail.fm.

MOTHER'S DAY

By Helen Whatmough

Initially, I would like to acknowledge a sermon, which I have drawn on in part, by Rev. Steve Edington of the UU Church of Nashua in New Hampshire. He maintains that in his experience 'the sermon topic most avoided' is the one about mothers on Mothers' Day!

Why? Praise mothers too much and too uncritically and you invite criticism from anyone who has some unpleasant issues they do not want to be reminded of; if you refer to any of these types of issues you then have criticism from those who do not have any of these issues and don't need to hear of them.

Then you may have women who aren't mothers, by choice or circumstance, and are not needing to hear about the virtues of motherhood, or even those who aren't greatly thrilled about motherhood – then there are the traditional family structure mothers, the single mothers, the same sex mothers, etc, etc, who need to be acknowledged.

He feels that the topic becomes a minefield and has decided the way to go is to talk about the history of Mothers' Day. This is the path I had decided to follow when preparing for this talk on Mother's Day and before reading this particular sermon.

Spiritual Origins of Mother's Day

The traditional practice of honouring motherhood is rooted in antiquity when societies tended to celebrate Goddesses and symbols of motherhood rather than actual mothers. The personal family orientation of Mother's Day is a relatively new phenomenon; only in the past few centuries did these celebrations develop a human focus and only in the last century did it take on commercial overtones.

One of the earliest historical records of a society celebrating a Mother deity can be found among the ancient Egyptians who held an annual festival to honour the goddess Isis; her head is typically crowned by a pair of bull horns enclosing a fiery sun orb and she is most often depicted sitting on a throne. She gave birth to Horus, whom she hid among the reeds lest he be slaughtered by Seth, her jealous brother. Horus grew up and defeated Seth and became the first ruler of a unified Egypt – Isis then was known as the mother of the Pharaohs.

Isis also held a place at the Roman temple, despite being a foreign deity; the Festival of Isis was used by the Romans to commemorate an important battle and mark the beginning of winter which centred around mostly female dancers, musicians and singers. The Mother and Son imagery of Isis and Horus – in which Isis cradles and suckles her son – is strikingly similar to that of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus.

The emergence of two other mother goddesses, Cybele from Phrygia in ancient Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Rhea from Greece may be the precursors for the worship and celebration of motherhood in Europe. Cybele has roots dating back 6000 years to Neolithic times when Phrygians celebrated a 'Mother Goddess' whose realm was the earth's natural surroundings (mountains, caverns) and wild animals, and she was also known as 'Mother of the Animals'.

By around 600BC she had been adopted as a Mother Goddess into much of Asia Minor and parts of Greece. At about the same time Greeks also worshipped another mother goddess, Rhea, the Greek mother of the Gods; she was born from the union of Gaia, the personification of Earth, and Uranus, the sky god. After a meteor shower and failed harvest, which seemed to predict doom for the Roman Republic, Rome officially adopted Cybele as its own Mother Goddess; the Romans simply referred to her as Magna Mater, the Great Mother.

The Roman festival of Megalesia, to celebrate the goddess, was held from April 4–10 – related to the Vernal Equinox (March 20/21) and to the Roman festivals of Hilaria (March 15–28) in celebration of Cybele. The earlier festivals became so notorious and wild, they were eventually banned whereas the more conservative celebrations of Hilaria involved eating honey cakes and sharing flowers.

European Celebration

By the 16th Century, as ancient Roman traditions in Europe and England gave way to the spread of Christianity, Hilaria celebrations became part of Laetare Sunday – the fourth Sunday of Lent in the Christian liturgical calendar. Early English Christians initially used the day to honour the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ in the church in which they had been baptised – their Mother Church, which would be decorated with jewels, flowers and other offerings.

In the 17th Century, an English clerical decree broadened the celebration to include real Mothers; this was a Lenten Sunday and it provided a reprieve from the fasting and penance of Lent. Mothering Sunday became a day when domestic servants (in service) were given a day off to visit their mother church with their mothers and other family members – this was one of the few days that they were able to gather together; the younger ones would pick wild flowers along the way to give to their mothers. The religious tradition evolved into the Mothering Sunday secular tradition of giving gifts to mothers. By the 1920s the custom had lapsed in Ireland and Continental Europe.

American Celebration

The first English settlers to the US discontinued the tradition of Mothering Sunday as it is believed that it conflicted with their Puritan ideals – they practised a more conservative Christianity and ignored more secular holidays and focused on a no-frills devotion to God. Even Christmas and Easter were more sombre occasions, taking place in churches stripped of extraneous ornamentation.

Julia Ward Howe and her husband belonged to the Boston Unitarian Transcendentalist congregation in pre-Civil War years; Ralph Waldo Emerson was also a member. When the Civil War broke out, both Julia and her husband worked for the organisation that was a forerunner of the Red Cross. After seeing the human toll of war she gained another perspective on war – far less exalted than that expressed in the words of ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic’ that she had written earlier! She became a committed peace activist and advocate of women’s suffrage which led her, in the later years of her life, to rally women – mothers and otherwise – to the peace cause.

She issued a proclamation on June 2, 1870, calling for a Mother’s Day for Peace which she envisioned as an international peace festival; this date was celebrated in some American cities. Before the Civil War, in the Appalachians – West Virginia, a poor part of the country, Anna Jarvis – a Methodist ministers’ wife – had organized Mother’s Day Work Clubs which raised money to help feed and provide medical aid to mothers and children.

After the Civil War, during which that part of the country changed sides and formed the 35th state – the State of West Virginia – soldiers returned home, some of whom had been fighting on opposite sides, causing conflict and tension in their communities. So, in 1865, Anna Jarvis organized a Mother’s Friendship Day to bring together both sides; some feared this might generate fights and violence, but it was a success and it became an annual event for several years in West Virginia.

So, Mother’s Day was used by both women to promote peace and reconciliation in the wake of the Civil War. Her daughter, also Anna Jarvis, began a crusade after her mother died in 1905, to have a national Mother’s Day recognised; as the white carnation was her mother’s favourite flower, it became the symbol of her cause. After much lobbying, Pres Woodrow Wilson signed a Congressional Proclamation designating Mother’s Day as an official holiday on the second Sunday in May – the first of which occurred in 1907.

However, in the years before her death in 1948, Anna Jarvis became frustrated and disillusioned with what happened to ‘her holiday’ – the commercialisation with the buying and giving of flowers, chocolates and greeting cards. She incorporated herself as the Mother’s Day International Association to try to retain some control; trademarked phrases such as ‘Mother’s Day’ (to be in singular form for each individual mother); organized boycotts, threatened lawsuits and attacked Eleanor Roosevelt for using the day to raise funds for charities. She would never acknowledge Julia Ward Howe’s attempts to establish a ‘Mother’s Day for Peace’ and always said the creation was hers alone. Anna died penniless at 84 in a sanatorium, as her attempts to reform Mother’s Day had cost her everything.

(Continued on p. 12.)

EULOGY FROM A PHYSICIST



You want a physicist to speak at your funeral. You want the physicist to talk to your grieving family about the conservation of energy, so they will understand that your energy has not died. You want the physicist to remind your sobbing mother about the first law of thermodynamics; that no energy gets created in the universe, and none is destroyed. You want your mother to know that all your energy, every vibration, every Btu¹ of heat, every wave of every particle that was her beloved child remains with her in this world. You want the physicist to tell your weeping father that amid energies of the cosmos, you gave as good as you got.

And at one point you'd hope that the physicist would step down from the pulpit and walk to your brokenhearted spouse there in the pew and tell him that all the photons that ever bounced off your face, all the particles whose paths were interrupted by your smile, by the touch of your hair, hundreds of trillions of particles, have raced off like children, their ways forever changed by you. And as your widow rocks in the arms of a loving family, may the physicist let her know that all the photons that bounced from you were gathered in the particle detectors that are her eyes, that those photons created within her constellations of electromagnetically charged neurons whose energy will go on forever.

And the physicist will remind the congregation of how much of all our energy is given off as heat. There may be a few fanning themselves with their programs as he says it. And he will tell them that the warmth that flowed through you in life is still here, still part of all that we are, even as we who mourn continue the heat of our own lives.



And you'll want the physicist to explain to those who loved you that they need not have faith; indeed, they should not have faith. Let them know that they can measure, that scientists have measured precisely the conservation of energy and found it accurate, verifiable and consistent across space and time. You can hope your family will examine the evidence and satisfy themselves that the science is sound and that they'll be comforted to know your energy's still around. According to the law of the conservation of energy, not a bit of you is gone; you're just less orderly.² Amen.

Aaron Freeman (2005)

¹ British thermal unit (= 1.055 kilojoules, now obsolete)

² Properly, the principle that entropy (disorder) must always increase is the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

This is dedicated to all those who have died (or will die) from the coronavirus (but see next page) – my thanks to James Hills of the Brisbane UU Fellowship and Secretary of ANZUUA for the material. Aaron Freeman (1956 –) is an American journalist, stand-up comedian, author and cartoonist, who read this piece on National Public Radio for its flagship news program, *All Things Considered*, in June 2005. A long-term resident of Chicago, he is a convert from Roman Catholicism to Judaism.

Freeman is host of the weekly informational radio program *Metropolis* and a regular commentator on NPR. He co-wrote and directed the stage comedy, *The Arab/Israeli Comedy Hour* and, with Rob Kolson, created the long-running political and financial comedy, *Do the White Thing*, and its sequel, *Gentlemen Prefer Bonds*. For ten years, he hosted the television talk show, *Talking with Aaron Freeman*.

He is married to artist Sharon Rosenzweig, with whom he collaborates on projects including the comic strip, *The Comic Torah*. Freeman's books include: *How to Say "I Love You" in 30 Languages*; *Baby Boomers – Acid Rock to Acid Reflux* (2006), with Rebecca Rock; and *Confessions of a Lottery Ball, the Inside our world of Aaron Freeman* (1987).

HELP LORD

Help Lord, for godly men have took their flight,
And left the earth to be the wicked's den:
Not one that standeth fast to Truth and Right,
But fears, or seeks to please, the eyes of men.
When one with other fall's to take apart,
Their meaning goeth not with their words in proof;
But fair they flatter, with a cloven heart,
By pleasing words, to work their own behoof.

But God cut off the lips, that are all set,
To trap the harmless soul, that peace hath vow'd;
And pierce the tongues, that seek to counterfeit
The confidence of truth, by lying loud:
Yet so they think to reign, and work their will,
By subtle speech, which enters every where:
And say, our tongues are ours, to help us still,
What need we any higher power to fear?

Now for the bitter sighing of the poor,
The lord hath said, I will no more forbear,
The wicked's kingdom to invade and scour,
And set at large the men restrain'd in fear.
And sure, the word of God is pure, and fine.
And in the trial never loseth weight;
Like noble gold, which, since it left the mine,
Hath seven times passed through the fiery straight.

And now thou wilt not first thy word forsake,
Nor yet the righteous man, that leans thereto;
But will't his safe protection undertake,
In spite of all, their force and wiles can do.
And time it is, O Lord, thou didst draw nigh,
The wicked daily do enlarge their bands;
And that, which makes them follow ill a vie,
Rule is betaken to unworthy hands.

Francis Bacon

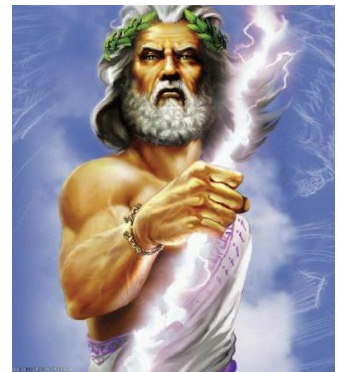
When I Googled for something to put on this page, I thought I'd be lucky to even find a poem about this man – so you can imagine my surprise when I found that he had actually written some verse. I have to assume that this (and the three other surviving poems) was written after the end of his political career, as that is the case for his other literary works, though I have no idea when or in what book it was published.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Regular readers will remember that I had said in the last two issues that I was having difficulty keeping up with the quarterly schedule and wanted an assistant. (Also more input if the issues were to have 16 pages.) They will also have noticed that the Summer 2019 issue did not materialise.

The reason for both problems was that my wife, Valerie, became seriously ill with cancer in the middle of last year and looking after her consumed more and more of my time and energy. She was hospitalised at the beginning of the year and she died peacefully and painlessly on 06 April. We spent 33 happy years together, leaving me with many happy memories.

I will now have more time for this purpose, so we'll think of this as a late Autumn issue and I'll endeavour to have the Winter issue out by July.



ANCIENT DIVERSE WONDERS

By Rev. Maria Theresa (Tet) Gustilo Gallardo

The First UU Asia Pacific Regional Conference has just finished. It ran from October 23–27, 2019 in Dumaguete City, Negros Island, Philippines, hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines (UUCP) and attended by about 75 participants, with the theme ‘Ancient Diverse Wonders.’ It was co-organized by Dr. Rica Lamar of the Unitarian Union of North East India, Rev. Tet Gallardo for the Philippines, and James and Renee Hills, who represented the Australia New Zealand UU Association (ANZUUA) member communities.



Rev. Tet Gallardo (in navy blue) and Jency Condez (third from left) from the Philippines are flanked by Indian delegates.

It came in a year of bittersweet developments in the region. Indian Unitarians had just celebrated their 132nd year of foundation; Rev. Tet Gallardo has been elected the first lesbian president of the UUCP; Taiwan had just had its first LGBTQ weddings; Hong Kong is undergoing an upheaval; Indonesia has for the first time provided Southeast Asian representation in the Executive Committee of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU); and ANZUUA is experiencing membership shifts as well.

There is a strong interest in building an Asia-Pacific U*U community and identity, since many international UU events are North America-centric. This caucus allows us to experience real conversations from a diverse set of U*U voices across the Asia Pacific region. "It is natural for us to meet," said Rev. Tet. "The region has, since ancient times, been cross-pollinating with each other in open migrations and trade before colonizers put up borders." It seemed important to rediscover our ancient and surviving humane tolerant and open sensibilities, "because sensibilities inform and form our theologies".

The organizers were faced with challenges due to the tight timeframes that had to be set to accommodate the meeting in 2019, so that it can continue every two years, alternating with years the ICUU meets, "because it seems we Asians want to meet every year", said Rev. Tet. We discovered that there are a couple of U*U identifying groups in Singapore, one of them organized as a book club studying U*U material, wanting to be taught about the faith. In Hong Kong there is a group of migrant Americans ('expats') who meet rarely for worship and more often for experiential gatherings like museums and exhibits.

In Japan, there are migrant Americans and Europeans who meet in fellowship and there are also members of Rissho Kosei-kai who have been involved with Unitarianism; Kenji Horiuchi wanted to come but had an emergency meeting in Sri Lanka. In Indonesia there are Christian Unitarians, and India has two groups of Unitarians – one 'on the mainland' in Chennai, who are Christian Unitarians, and one in North East India, in the states of Meghalaya and Assam, who are Unitarians and are the largest matrilineal society in the world. Some other U*Us in Taiwan appear unorganized.

For Rev. Tet, UU principles are common with local indigenous values. “I have never met a Filipino who said they were made a better person by being called Unitarian, because their values have always embodied UU principles. We are Unitarians for hoping that people who identify as such meet us in community.”



Members of Khasi and Jowai tribes rendering a folk song with dance about women at the center of society. Rev. Darihun Khriam, the highest official from the Unitarian Union of NE India national office, delivered the opening and closing words for the Indians, affirming the success of the endeavor and their determination to get the ball rolling. With Philippine visa requirements strict for Indian nationals, they had to apply for Singapore visas first and then make a stopover in Singapore. Eighteen of the 19 Indian participants came through the Singapore stopover route, so you can imagine the enthusiasm when everyone arrived safely at the first meeting!



Student ministers (here with Rev. Tet) gave their folk dance number, the rondalla. They also performed a moving spoken-word rendition of the life of UUCP founder Rev. Toribio S. Quimada. Sitting at the center wearing brown is Dipty Das from India.

All four major churches of the Unitarian Union of NE India were represented: Rev. Sowat Laloo, Unitarian Church of Jowai in Jaintia Hills (Mother Church); Rev. Darihun Khriam, Unitarian Church of Smit of Khasi Hills; Alldrina Nonglamin, Unitarian Nongtalang Church of Jaintia Hills, on the border of Bangladesh; and Mrs. Battinora Rani, Unitarian Church of Nongkrem in Khyrim State.

The opening ceremony, with the theme “Whose are we? Where do we come from?” was marked by two rituals: First was throwing three balls of yarn of different colors to form interconnected webs while reciting words from Robert T. Weston’s ‘The Web of Life’.* Second was the ritual commemorating ancestors: People wrote on the board with colored chalks the names of their particular ancestor and lit a tea candle for each name.

The different sessions of the Conference enhanced and affirmed the Asian values of being together by cultural exchange, through original songs, ethnic dances and spoken word, as well as through speeches, talks, and prayers. Kiki Pakma from India provided introductory yoga for four days. The Conference also provided a session for beach sports, where participants played football, frisbee, and volleyball on the beach as the sun set over the water. Sports is a common vehicle for church building in India and the Philippines, the two largest Unitarian groups in the region. The senior women from India learned to play frisbee while dressed in their traditional attire, saying, “Our children would probably say, ‘Whatever happened to mommy in the Philippines!’”

People in the region have made U*Uism more than the religion of the intellect, including also the heart and the community. In this region we constantly talk about the word ‘peacebuilding’, a word rapidly being erased from Western discourse, if not already missing from it.

A guest speaker, Prof. Moner Bajunaid, a national figure in the Philippines and the secretary-general of the National Ulama Conference of the Philippines (the intellectual centre of the Philippine Muslim society), presented the challenges and promises of peace in the Muslim-dominant region of the Philippines.

A number of pilgrims from the U.S. also attended the Conference. This was the first Fall Pilgrimage of its kind, organically organized by Filipinos. Two pilgrims from White Bear UU in Minneapolis and two pilgrims from UU San Francisco, all members of the LGBTIQA community, made the trip, plus one pilgrim who is a retired American living in the Philippines. One pilgrim was unable to join after signing up as a leader in Elizabeth Warren’s campaign; nevertheless, he sent his regards. Three of the five pilgrims had Asian ancestry. Also, the Hawaiian backgrounds of pilgrim Lori Lai and Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons (who led a session on ARAOMC: antiracism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism) came into play in finding familial bonds with co-travelers and islanders.

One of the highlights of the event was storytelling by Renee Hills, who had recently published her children’s picture book, *Turtle Love*. Attendees resonated so much with the theme of environmental protection, especially as the visitors were given a chance to go to Apo Island to swim with huge turtles in the wild. Environmental concerns and climate change cast a shadow on the whole Conference. During the Conference week, there was a mini-heat wave – a week-long spike. October is supposed to be the start of cold weather but it was extremely hot, reaching 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit). Attendees lauded the lack of plastic materials used in the Conference and the efficiency of not having to use transport to get to the venue, very conscious of our carbon footprint.

The visitors also went on a trip to Siapo Congregation to see the native trees and taste some native fruits, while experiencing a typical UU church in the Philippines, and talk to members who walk up to five miles to attend church.

One of the UUCP trainee ministers and a recent university graduate had to walk two hours to school from their mountain community for ten years, starting at 4:30 am every day, and walk home for two hours after school at 5 pm. The stories told at mealtimes of people’s struggles, their strength and desire to improve their children’s opportunities, and their tenacity over many years, was truly inspiring.

Since the Conference was scheduled on the ‘Festival of Festivals’ known as *Buglasan*, there were many opportunities to see Philippine handicrafts and produce. One of the festival highlights was a fireworks competition on the coast or the ‘Boulevard’, the bay in Dumaguete.

* The words to that Reading from the UUA Hymnal were in the ‘centrefold’ of the Spring 2019 issue.

The Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) provided 23% of the funding for the Conference and about the same came from the proceeds of the pilgrimage. The rest was raised organically. Rev. Arman Pedro, UUCP Church Administrator, provided strong staff support to the needs of the Conference.

At the end of the Conference, a peace pole was erected, an initiative of Rev. Arman Pedro and the craftsmanship of Rev. Henry Legaje, which included the words “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in the Khasi language, Braille, Cebuano (Philippines), English, and languages that honor the multicultural history of the ancient Philippines – Arabic, Sanskrit, Indonesian and Chinese.

The next Asia-Pacific UU conference is scheduled in June or July of 2021, either in India or Singapore, depending on consensus in the region. The goal of getting back to ourselves and rediscovering our stories and our Asian fellowship and U*U community is vital.



One of the longest farewells in UUCP history. Everyone felt the love of our siblings from the region and it was hard to let go!

Thanks to James and Renee Hills for their help with this blog post.

SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines was founded as the Universalist Church of the Philippines by Rev. Toribio S. Quimada, who was excommunicated by the Universal Church of Christ in 1954 for using materials provided by the (then) Universalist Church of America. Starting with the nine UCC congregations that he led on Negros, Quimada founded the UCP in 1955 and travelled all over the island, spreading the gospel of a unitary God and universal salvation.

After the merger that created the UUA in 1961, his church was renamed the UUCP in 1985. He was murdered in 1988 during fighting between government forces and rebels of the New People’s Army, after which the UUCP was led by his daughter, Rev. Rebecca Quimada-Sienes, until last year.

Negros is in the central island group known as the Visayas and the UUCP’s headquarters is in Dumaguete City, capital of East Negros province. In addition to being the major seaport of that province and a popular tourist destination, Dumaguete is a centre of learning, with four universities and a number of colleges and schools. The student population is about 30,000 – almost one-quarter of the city’s inhabitants.

(Mother's Day, cont'd.)

Today, Mother's Day is the most popular day for dining out in the US as well as giving flowers and cards. Mother's Day is celebrated mostly on the second Sunday in May in many countries, though in the Arab world it is on March 21; in Spain and Panama, it is on December 8 (Feast of the Immaculate Conception).

In France, following the lead of American soldiers in WWI, Mother's Day was initially celebrated in 1918; it was officially declared to be on 19 December in 1920 when the tradition of celebrating mothers was focused on the repopulation of France after the war – medals were awarded according to the number of children produced – eight or more, and the mother received a gold medal! Today mothers receive cakes resembling bouquets of flowers, cards and perfume.

After WWII, inspired by American servicemen, Britain began again to celebrate Mother's Day. One traditional cake, Simnel Cake, was served: a glazed fruitcake arising from the story of a couple who couldn't decide whether to boil or bake a cake, so they did both!

Flowers, of course, play a large part in this day:

- Carnations – white were prominent in the early US; now, red are for living mothers and white for deceased. According to Greek legend they were the symbol of a mother's eternal love.
- Roses – symbolically linked to motherhood; Isis – ideal mother; Aphrodite – goddess of love and beauty; and, in the Middle Ages, queen of flowers and symbol of the Virgin Mary.
- Chrysanthemums are traditional in Australia, where they are naturally in season and also end in the letters 'mum'.

Australian tradition followed the UK and US patterns in the 1920s and became commercialised in the same way!

[Helen Whatmough is President of the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship in Sydney, and she delivered this Address on Mother's Day in 2013.

Rev. Steve Edington is the Minister Emeritus of the UU Church of Nashua, which congregation he served for 24 years. He has also been an Interim Minister for several New England UU congregations and he is currently the quarter-time Consulting Minister for the UU Church of Franklin, New Hampshire.

He has published a book titled *God Is Not God's Name*, which traces his religious and spiritual journey from an evangelical Baptist church in southern West Virginia to a forty-year career as a UU minister and offers some of the insights and conclusions he has come to along the way. The title reflects his conception of how we explore and cultivate a relationship with that which we sense is greater than ourselves without getting too ensnared in religious language or terminology.]

ANZUUA NEWS

In late April, our Secretary, James Hills informed the ANZUUA Council of the UU Church of the Philippines' concerns about supporting congregations struggling with COVID-19 restrictions and the resulting food shortages. On 01 May, the Council unanimously approved a motion to donate up to \$5000 to the UUCP on the basis of receiving a proposal from them outlining the need and intended purpose.

The UUCP President, Rev. Tet Gallardo, responded with thanks and made the following commitments:

- (1) We will respond to significant individual needs as they emerge.
- (2) We will gather proposals from congregations on their communal responses and needs and attempt to mitigate any aggravation that the drought or climate change will bring on top of the stresses already occurring because of the pandemic (i.e., water tanks, deep wells, communal food gardens).
- (3) We will address immediate needs for relief should there be any domestic violence reports. We plan to work with UU Women's Association in this regard.

We will report how the funds have assisted people in our congregations at a general level and any significant projects completed upon funds exhaustion and after reports are in.