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## **150 YEARS OF HUMANITARIAN SERVICE**

The International Committee of the Red Cross has a lengthy and unique history of protecting human life and alleviating suffering since its foundation in Geneva on 17 February 1863. Starting with a meeting of just five men, what is now called the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has national bodies in 188 countries and its operatives have served in countless war zones, disaster areas and public health campaigns.

Our story begins in 1859, when a Swiss businessman named Jean-Henri Dunant went to Italy to meet with the French Emperor, Napoléon III. He arrived at the town of Solferino just after a major battle against Austria (which controlled northern Italy at the time) had left 40,000 casualties in its wake. Dunant was shocked by the paucity of medical facilities on both sides, so he forgot about his business and organized a corps of locals to care for the many wounded. Back in Geneva, he wrote a book about his experiences, paid for its publication and sent copies to political and military leaders all over Europe. In his book, he called for the formation of voluntary relief organisations to care for wounded soldiers, as well as international treaties to guarantee the safety of such neutral medical workers and their field hospitals.

In 1863, Gustave Moynier, a lawyer and president of the Geneva Society for Public Welfare, received a copy of Dunant's book and presented it for discussion by his society. It was decided to form a committee to investigate Dunant's recommendation and eventually call an international conference to discuss their implementation. In addition to Dunant and Moynier, the 'Committee of Five' consisted of physician and former field surgeon Louis Appia, Théodore Maunoir of the Geneva Hygiene and Health Commission, and General Gillaume-Henri Dufour of the Swiss Army. Its first meeting is regarded as the foundation date of the ICRC, though the group took as its name the 'International Committee for Relief to the Wounded'.

That same year, the Committee organised a conference on 26–29 October in Geneva that was attended by delegates from 12 European states, six representatives of non-government organisations and seven observers from some other countries. It was agreed to found national relief societies for wounded soldiers, whose operatives on the battlefield would treat men from either side and wear a white armband bearing a red cross as a protection symbol. (That is thought to be a reversal of the Swiss flag rather than having any religious significance.) Noting the need for an international treaty to cement these provisions, the Swiss government invited all European countries, the US, Mexico and Brazil to an official diplomatic conference in 1864. Of the 16 countries that attended, 12 signed what became the first Geneva Convention.

Immediately after the conference, national bodies were founded in seven European nations and the first Red Cross volunteers served during the Second Schleswig War between Denmark and Prussia in 1864. More countries followed and, in 1876, the Committee took its present name. In 1901, the first Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to Jean-Henri Dunant and Frédéric Passy, a French economist who had campaigned for resolving international conflicts through arbitration. By 1914, there were Red Cross Societies in 45 countries in Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa.

World War I placed unprecedented demands on the resources of the ICRC and its national members, drawing nurses from all over the world to the European battlegrounds. As early as October 1914, they established the International Prisoners-of-War Agency and 1200 mostly volunteer staff were recruited by the end of that year. The Agency distributed letters, parcels and cash to millions of POWs, located missing persons and organised the exchange of 200,000 soldiers from the opposing sides. ICRC delegates inspected POW camps and monitored the warring parties' compliance with the Geneva Conventions, reporting violations to the respective governments. The ICRC even claimed a mandate under the 1907 Hague Conventions to assist war-affected civilians in occupied territories. For all of these works, the ICRC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1917. After the war ended, the Agency organised the return of some 420,000 POWs to their home countries.

In 1919, representatives of the national Red Cross societies of Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the US met in Paris and founded the League of Red Cross Societies. This was prompted by Henry Davidson, president of the American Red Cross, which had a long history of relief work in natural disasters. The League's goal was to do the same elsewhere in the world, which it did during a famine and typhoid epidemic in Poland, in the Russian Civil War (the Geneva Conventions did not extend to internal conflicts) and when Japan suffered a catastrophic earthquake in 1923. The ICRC was not happy with the exclusive and independent nature of the League, but it proved its worth by raising phenomenal amounts of money for missions in 34 countries in its first five years. In 1928, the two groups adopted a common statute defining their respective roles and the League moved its headquarters from Paris to Geneva in 1939.

In the lead-up to World War II, the Red Cross had given assistance during Italy's war against Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War. During the actual war, it carried out the same activities as it had in WWI, only on a much larger scale. ICRC inspectors conducted 12,750 visits to POW camps in 41 countries and the Central Information Agency had a staff of 3000 that maintained 45 million records. As in Abyssinia, the Axis powers refused to cooperate and their national societies were oblivious to the Geneva Conventions. Once the reality of the concentration camps became known, the ICRC met even more obstruction, though it did succeed in identifying 105,000 detainees in those camps and delivering 1.1 million parcels. And, once again, massive relief work was done during the post-war reconstruction.

In 1944, the ICRC again won the Nobel Peace Prize – as in 1917, that was the only such prize awarded while the war was going on. It won that award again in 1963, the centenary of its foundation, in conjunction with the League of Red Cross Societies. In 1983, the LRCS became the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, changing again to the International Federation thereof in 1991. History was made in 1990 when the United Nations gave the ICRC observer status at its General Assembly sessions and sub-committee meetings, making it the first private organisation to receive such an honour.

The first Red Crescent organisation was formed in the Ottoman Empire and served during a war with Russia in 1877–78. That symbol was officially adopted in 1929 and is now used by 33 Islamic countries. However, the Federation would not accept the proliferation that might ensue when Israel and Iran wanted to use red versions of their national symbols, so the only other recognised symbol is the Red Crystal. (National societies can do as they wish within their own borders, though, and Israel does use a red Star of David as its emblem. Iran changed from the Red Lion and Sun to the Red Crescent when the Shah was overthrown.)

Today, over 97 million people worldwide are in the service of the ICRC, the International Federation and the national societies. The highest institutional body is the four-yearly International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which elects five members to the Standing Commission for the next period. That group also has two delegates (each) from the ICRC and the Federation, including their respective presidents. The Standing Commission meets every six months on average to supervise implementation of and compliance with the resolutions of the Conference. There is also a Council of Delegates that meets every two years to plan and coordinate joint activities for the Movement. Curiously, the International Committee is not legally a non-governmental organisation because all of its 15 to 25 members must be Swiss nationals – the Swiss government regards it as a private organisation with tax-free status and other special privileges.



## ICUU NEWS

### Travel Opportunities

#### Disasters in the Philippines and Burundi

#### EUU Spring Retreat



The travel service of the UU Partner Church Council has organised a unique pilgrimage to Transylvania over 11–23 May. Unlike many such tours in previous years, this will have a ‘budget’ price of \$US 1140 – a 40% reduction made possible by accommodation in dormitories and guesthouses, cheaper meals and eliminating travel from and to Budapest.

The tour begins and ends in the Transylvanian capital of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), where the headquarters of the Unitarian Church and its seminary are located. Participants will visit the most significant of the Unitarian holy places from the days of King John Sigismund II and Ferenc (Francis) Dávid: Torda, site of the famous Diet of 1568 where King John proclaimed the Edict of Tolerance; Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), where he and his wife are entombed in the 1000-year-old cathedral; and Déva, where Dávid died in prison.

Other sites of interest are the frescoed Unitarian churches of Székelyderzs (Dârjiu) and Karácsonyfalva (Oclund), the spectacular 13<sup>th</sup> Century castle at Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara), the medieval walled city of Segesvár (Sighisoara) and the Saxon fortress church at Berethalom (Biertan). (Székelyderzs, Segesvár and Berethalom are all UNESCO World Heritage sites.) Worthy of special mention is the Alabaster Village of Mész (Mihai Viteazu), where the minister, poet, author and social reformer, Ferenc Balázs (1901–1937), rebuilt the jewel-box church and painted it himself. (The Romanian names are provided because they are more likely to be found on maps.)

Those with partner congregations will spend a long weekend with them, while others will have a range of villages to choose from. It will also be possible to add a trip to Budapest to either end of the pilgrimage. For more information and application forms, go to: [www.uupcc.org/trips.html](http://www.uupcc.org/trips.html).

As most of us are aware, the Philippines were badly hit by Cyclone Bopha in the first week of December. Its unusual course caused damage to the property and crops of about half of the UUCP congregations on the island of Negros, which is usually sheltered by islands to the east. The capital of East Negros, Dumaguete City, suffered flooding on the seafront and much destruction of property, including damage to the façade of the UUCP headquarters church.

In Bujumbura, capital of Burundi, the huge Central Market caught fire on 27 January and was totally destroyed by the time the flames were brought under control. With 5000 resident businesspeople and at least that many suppliers and distributors, this market is arguably the biggest single employer in the country – and some of them were members of the UU Church of Bujumbura. In addition to the many casualties and people left homeless, food prices have tripled and supplies are being sent from overseas. The UUCB is providing what food, shelter and counselling it can and has appealed for help from the worldwide U\*U community.

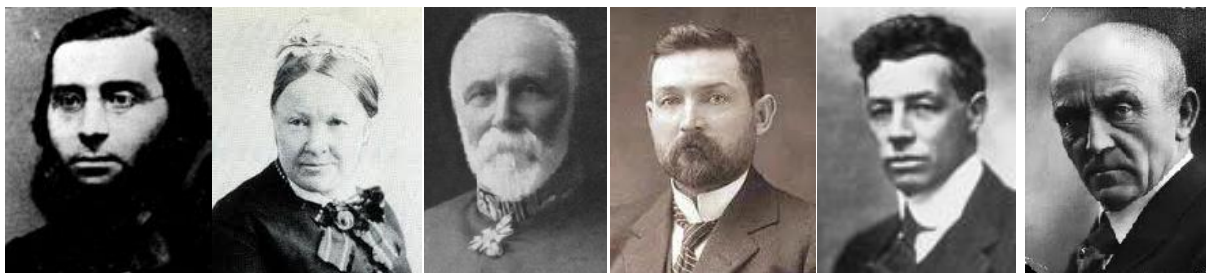
The ICUU will accept donations through the PayPal account of: [treasurer@icuu.net](mailto:treasurer@icuu.net); alternately, cheques can be sent to the ICUU Finance Office. P.O. Box 300, Hastings on Hudson, New York 10706 (Attn: Susan Greenberg). Either way, please indicate which project your donation is intended for.

The European UUs are holding their annual Spring Retreat on 12 –14 April at Mittelwihr in Alsace, with the theme: ‘How did we get here? Where are we going?’ The theme speaker will be Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed, former president of the Canadian Unitarian Council and a regular visiting minister to various EEUU congregations. As at other EEUU Retreats, there will be activities for children and families, music and other festivities. Mittelwihr is on the eastern side of the Vosges Mountains near the Rhine River and set along the Route du Vin (Wine Road). Nearby Riquewihr is a well-preserved picturesque medieval market town, complete with walls and a castle.

As luck would have it, the EEUU’s representative to the ICUU Council, Lara Fuchs, has just been co-opted to fill the vacant Member-at-Large position on the Executive Committee. She is the founding president of the UU Fellowship of Basel, Switzerland.

## GREAT UNITARIAN POLITICAL LEADERS OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

By Lev Lafayette



As a human interest, politics retains a strong relationship with religion even in contemporary society. Challenged by scientific independence in the study of facts and, to a lesser extent, individual rights in aesthetic tastes and expressions, it is in the relations between people where we hear religious leaders of various denominations attempting to influence public opinion, according to their faith. Unitarians tend to be a little different in this regard. Our religious principles lead us to be suspicious of faith-based claims. Faith, to the Unitarian, is a matter of individual belief and certainly not something that is to be imposed on others. It is not surprising then that the primary political activity of Unitarians is the establishment of freedom of religious thought and expression. From the Edict of Torda in Transylvania to the Religious Tolerance Act of the United Kingdom to the Bill of Rights in the United States, Unitarians have been at the forefront of protecting individual liberty, first and foremost, and, as a secondary but logical consequent, democratic governance of public institutions.

The following brief biographies, mere sketches of some great men and women of Australia and New Zealand, are those Unitarians who involved themselves in public life, not usually as religious leaders but in politics, legislation, and the debates of political economy. Theological issues were part of their life, and it is hoped that their political ideas give some indication of how their Unitarianism influenced them. The list is, of course, far from complete. An attempt was made to make the selection as objective as possible – from the attainment of political office to even the calculation of column-inches from the National Archives.

The first person of this measure was Ebenezer Syme, born in 1825 in North Berwick, Scotland. A student of theology at St. Andrew's college and missionary student to village kirks, he desired to become a missionary to China and became educated in language for such a venture. But his conscience troubled him and he rejected Calvinism to join the Unitarians. He was installed as pastor at the Sunderland Unitarian Chapel but in 1851 he left that profession to become engaged in journalism. In 1853, he and his family moved to Australia, where he became a regular contributor to *The Argus* and helped launch and edit *The Digger's Advocate*, which supported the most radical positions of the miners, especially those who fought at the Eureka Stockade whom he furiously defended in his editorials.

As *The Advocate* closed, Ebenezer joined David Blair as an editor of *The Age*, along with his brother, David Syme. Elected in 1856 to the Legislative Assembly for the seat of Lodden, he continued as an independent in parliament to engage in the chamber the same message that he hammered out in the press – support for the eight-hour day, suffrage for working men, electorates of equal size, abolition of state aid to religion, support for free and secular education. His words made *The Age* popular in the goldfields and among the working class of Melbourne, but he paid scant attention to the commercial success of the paper, or, for that matter, to the potential of libel in much of his material. A fiery person who took on almost the entire management and editing of the paper, he exhausted himself and retired for health reasons in 1859. He died a year later at the age of thirty-five.

The next person of note is, alas, the only female in our sketch – Catherine Helen Spence, whose image we find on the Australian five-dollar note. Born in Melrose, Scotland, her family emigrated to South Australia and her father became the first elected Town Clerk of Adelaide. Spence showed skill in writing and in 1854 her novel *Clara Morison* was published in the UK, the first novel about Australia written by a woman. This, and her second novel, *Tender and True*, were published anonymously, but her next six novels actually bore her name.

Much distressed with the doctrines of the Church of Scotland, under which she had been raised, Spence joined the Unitarians around 1850 and gave sermons from 1878 onwards, usually in Adelaide but also occasionally in Melbourne and Sydney. Increasingly however her interest lay in politics. An advocate of proportional representation as early as 1861 with her book *A Plea for Pure Democracy*, in 1892 she developed the Hare-Spence system which she argued in her book *Effective Voting* was the only method of ensuring proportional representation. The problem was, as Spence ruefully remarked, that the proposed system did not offer any advantage to existing political parties: “‘Too damned fair,’ I have heard it called by the profane.”

By this stage however Spence was fully immersed in the political life. In 1893 she attended the Chicago World Fair, where she addressed the International Conference on Charities and Correction, the Proportional Representation Congress, the Single Tax Conference and the Peace Conference. She then lectured and preached across the United States, Britain and Switzerland. She ran for the Federal Convention in 1897, becoming Australia's first female political candidate. Spence had also joined the campaign for women's suffrage in 1891 and became a vice-president of the Women's Suffrage League of South Australia. After South Australian women were enfranchised in 1894, she supported campaigns in New South Wales and Victoria and spoke at meetings of the Women's League. In addition Spence helped found the Boarding-Out Society, which sought appropriate foster families for orphans that would otherwise have found themselves institutionalised. She herself raised three families of such children in succession.

Shifting our gaze across the Tasman, the next subject of our journey is one Sir Robert Stout who reached the office of Premier of New Zealand from 1884 to 1887, the highest elected office of the land, taking that position at the young age of 39. Born in the Shetland Islands in 1844, his father was a controversial Elder of the Free Church of Scotland who encouraged religious debate. It was not only this experience that would influence him in later life, but also his witnessing of renter evictions which led him to develop a lifelong passionate hatred of landlordism. Stout was primarily responsible for promoting a leasehold system of property which survives in New Zealand to this day, a method which ensures affordable home ownership and encourages employment.

An exceedingly intelligent man, he completed the teacher's qualifying exam in Scotland at the age of 13. Having emigrated to Dunedin, he completed studies in moral science and political economy with honours, and lectured in law at the University of Otago. Robert, along with his wife Anna, was also an early supporter of women's suffrage and equal pay. His wife also was an active member of the Freethought and Temperance movements, which Robert also supported. He opposed the Bible in Schools movement and voted against the awarding of Divinity degrees.

Elected to the House of Representatives in 1875, he became Attorney-General and Minister of Lands and Immigration in 1878. Under his Premiership, the government made reforms to secondary education, organised health and welfare reform, introduced a system of probation in criminal law for first-time offenders, abolished the automatic transfer of women's property to their husbands upon marriage, banned liquor in King's Country (at the Maoris' request), and nearly succeeded in getting women the vote. His strong belief in individualism, however, led him to argue against general social welfare and his government was defeated on this basis.

For the last twenty-five years of his life, Stout was a founding and leading member of the Unitarian Free Church in Wellington, where he moved in 1895 and continued his promotion of free thought and rationalist ideas, arguing against religious funding and teaching in public schools. He also served in the senate of the University of New Zealand from 1884 to 1930. As the Chief Justice of New Zealand from 1899 to 1925, he was responsible for the consolidation of New Zealand statutes and the reform of the Privy Council in Britain.

The next character, John Christian Watson, best known as Chris Watson, was born in Valparaíso, Chile, in 1867, raised in Oamaru, New Zealand, and at 13 became a printer's apprentice. In 1886 he moved to Sydney, working for several newspapers, and developed an interest in politics. Watson became a founding member of the New South Wales Labor Party in 1891 and Vice-President of the Trades and Labour Council in early 1892. By the middle of the year he was both President of the Council and Chair of the Party. In 1894 he was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly for the seat of Young. In 1898 he played a major role in defeating the draft constitution for Australian Federation, arguing that it was anti-democratic with the Senate being given too much power. With the referendum rejected, Watson and Labor Party representatives were able to force concessions.

Watson then went on to win the Federal seat of Bland in the first elections of 1901 and became the leader of the Federal Labor Party. Labor, at this stage, was the smallest of the three parties in parliament but held the balance of power, extracting concessions that implemented the party platform. A difference over industrial relations laws led to the Protectionist government resigning in 1904 and the opposition refusing to take office. This left the office of Prime Minister in the hands of Watson, the first Labour Prime Minister of Australia and leader of the world's first national Labour government. At 37, Watson is still the youngest Prime Minister in Australia's history. Although a minority government with less than a third of the seats in Parliament, and lasting but four months, Watson's government did manage to advance the industrial relations bill which was passed by a subsequent government. Watson led the Labor Party until 1907 and retired from politics in 1910. Although it cannot be said that Chris Watson was a particularly active Unitarian – he had other pressing concerns – his two marriages were held at the Sydney Unitarian Church and he did present lectures there on the topic of Christian socialism.

Another Labor moderate who took a different direction was Crawford Vaughn, born in Adelaide in 1874. Initially working as a clerk, then in the Western Australian goldfields, he returned to Adelaide to work for the Crown Lands Department. During this time he became Secretary of the Single Tax League and a committee member of the Effective Voting League. From 1899 to 1904 he edited *Quiz*, a radical newspaper, and stood as an independent for Federal parliament in 1901 and 1903. In 1904 he joined the United Labor Party and won the Legislative Assembly seat of Torrens in the following year. He became honorary secretary of the Party that year, Vice-President two years later and President the year after that. In 1910 Vaughan became the state Treasurer and Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration. He became the leader of his party while it was in opposition in 1913 and Premier in 1915 in a ministry which included his brother and brother-in-law, a matter of some criticism.

Relations between radicals in the Labor Party and the Vaughn administration were never good however and, when the issue of conscription in the First World War reared its head, Labor split. Vaughn and most of the parliamentary caucus supported conscription but the unions and radicals did not. In 1917, Vaughan and other Labor parliamentarians who had favoured conscription were declared by a Labor conference to be disloyal to the party.

Vaughan and his allies split and formed the National Labor Party, later styling themselves the National Party. The new party lost the election later that year to the Liberals but accepted a role as a junior coalition party. Vaughan lost his seat in 1918 whilst lecturing abroad, which he continued to do so for three years before turning to business and fiction writing, with the occasional unsuccessful foray into parliamentary politics. Increasingly conservative as he aged, his religion also changed. Although he was married as a Unitarian in his youth, he was buried with Anglican rites at a state funeral.

Born in Rockhampton in 1865, Henry James Chapple is our next subject. An active Salvation Army officer, he was appointed to Invercargill, New Zealand, in 1890. Over the next four years he and wife served in Oamaru, Dunedin, Gore, Blenheim and Ashburton. In 1897 James was appointed editor of the *War Cry*, based in Christchurch, before becoming a Presbyterian minister in 1903. Joining the New Zealand Socialist Party in 1905, he propounded such politics from the pulpit and was expelled from the ministry in 1910. He then became the founder of the Timaru Unitarians, who opened a new church in 1912. Strongly opposed to the First World War, he claimed that it allowed for capitalist profit and impoverishment for the poor. After a lecture tour of the West Coast, he was arrested for sedition and jailed for 11 months with the magistrate describing him as a “dangerous man”.

After his release he continued as minister in Christchurch until 1925, with two books published in England expressing his combination of religious principles and political views: *The Divine Need of the Rebel* and *A Rebel's Vision Splendid*. From 1939 he alternated with William Jellie and others as the Unitarian minister in Auckland, but he retired voluntarily in 1941, fearing that his public support for the Soviet Union may create problems for the church. Dying in 1947, his grandson used his life as the basis of the novel *Plumb*, which was published in 1978.

There are a number of other Unitarians who have been involved in politics which will be mentioned here, albeit only in passing. In Sydney, ANZUUA's Vice-President, Peter Crawford, was the Labor member for Balmain from 1984 to 1988. Peter Milton, a former member of the Melbourne church, was the federal member for La Trobe from 1980 to 1990. A regular attendee of our church, Giovanni Sgro, was a member of the Victorian Legislative Council for Melbourne North from 1979 to 1991 and, of course, our public officer

for many years, Len Cooper, is the Communications Division President of the CEPU. Regrettably, this address has also had to exclude the details of Arthur (Reynold) Clarey, the former president of the Clerk's Union, auditor and treasurer of the Australian Natives' Association, president of the Amalgamated Institute of Secretaries and Member of the Legislative Assembly for the seat of Melbourne from 1955 to 1972. Also missing is Frederick Samuel Wallis, member of the South Australian Legislative Council from 1907 to 1912, Minister of Industry in 1909, Chief Secretary in 1909–12 and Opposition Leader in 1912–13. Others such as the Sydney-based nineteenth century co-operative agitator, union organiser and founder of the Australian Socialist League, William McNamara, have been excluded because we are uncertain of his religious convictions, although he was buried "in Unitarian form".

But the purpose of this address is not merely a rendition of the biographies of some particular influential political activists who happened to be Unitarians. Rather, it is hoped that it illustrates how the Unitarian commitment to religious rationalism and individual freedom develops into a sense of egalitarianism and democracy in the public sphere. But there is another issue here, and that is the question of political involvement. There is no suggestion that everyone must be deeply dedicated to the political, especially if one's disposition and interests are towards religious and spiritual concerns, or science and technology, or the aesthetic expressions. Indeed, a society where everyone is involved only in politics will have zero production! But it is suggested that everyone have some interest in public affairs and dedicate some of their time to these interests.

It was Plato who first argued that one motivation to be involved in politics is that, if one is not, then they will inevitably be ruled by people with less virtue than themselves. So if you can realise your own personal weaknesses, consider for a moment that if you are not involved in politics, your rulers will be even worse than you are! So become involved in politics, as these Unitarians of Australia and New Zealand have done, attain power, and do so with a sense of justice and for freedom and democracy.

By way of conclusion, consider these words from one of the last speeches of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, an address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in August 1967:

Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political and economic change. ... Now a lot of us are preachers, and all of us have our moral convictions and concerns, and so often have problems with power. There is nothing wrong with power if power is used correctly ... What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

[This is the text of an address given at the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church on 08 April 2012. The pictures on p. 4 are those of the six main persons, in order of appearance.

Lev Lafayette has been a member of that church for some fifteen years and sat on its Committee for much of that time. He is also convener of the Philosophy Forum, a special interest groups within the church that has been meeting for over ten years. He wrote an article on ministerial training in Australia in the Spring 2010 issue, following the Growth Workshop in Brisbane.

Lev is a sociologist by profession and a systems administrator by vocation, working at the Victorian Partnership for Advanced Computing, a registered research agency established by a consortium of universities. He has worked for the Parliament of Victoria as a database administrator and trainer, and for East Timor's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as their Information and Communications Technology Advisor in their first year of independence.

He is also a 'perpetual student', starting with an Honours BA in Politics, Philosophy and Sociology from Murdoch University, followed by an MBA in Technology and a Graduate Certificate in Project Management from the Chifley Business School. He is now in the process of completing a PhD at the Ashworth Centre for Social Theory of the University of Melbourne, with a thesis entitled 'A Social Theory of the Internet'.

The Melbourne Unitarian Church was established in 1852 at a meeting chaired by the first Chief Justice of Victoria, Sir William à Beckett. Its third regular minister was Martha Turner (1839–1915), the first ordained woman minister in the British Empire, who was elected by the congregation in 1873 and served until 1883. She has been compared to Catherine Spence as a pioneer of the women's movement in Australia.]

## COFFEE, COFFEE, COFFEE!

Coffee, Coffee, Coffee,  
Praise the strength of Coffee.  
Early in the morn we rise with  
Thoughts of only Thee!  
Served fresh or reheated,  
Dark by then defeated,  
Brewed black by perk or drip or instantly!

Though all else we scoff, we  
Come to church for Coffee;  
If we're late to congregate, we  
Come in time for Thee.  
Coffee, our one ritual,  
Drinking it habitual,  
Brewed black by perk or drip or instantly!

Coffee, the communion  
Of our Uni-Union,  
Symbol of our sacred ground, our  
One necessity.  
Feel the holy power  
At our Coffee hour,  
Brewed black by perk or drip or instantly!



Christopher Raible

Rev. Christopher G. Raible published this song, along with other humorous works of his, in *Hymns of the Celebration of Strife* (1990) – itself a play on the UUA hymnal, *Hymns for the Celebration of Life*. It is sung to the tune of ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’, the original Trinitarian words for which were written by Reginald Heber (1783–1826). However, the tune all churches use today is more recent, having been composed as ‘Nicaea’ by John Bacchus Dykes in 1861. (The name refers to the First Council of Nicaea, which formalized the doctrine of the Trinity in 325 CE.)

## YOU MAY BE DRINKING TOO MUCH COFFEE IF...

You can ski uphill.

You sleep with your eyes open.

You have to watch videos in fast-forward.

Your birthday is a national holiday in Brazil.

You can jump-start your car without cables.

You answer the door before people knock.

Water takes too long to boil, so you grind the beans with your teeth.

You've built a miniature city out of little plastic stirrers.

Your thermos is on wheels.

You haven't blinked since the last lunar eclipse.

Your coffee mug is insured by Lloyds of London.

You go to AA meetings just for the free coffee.

Starbucks owns the mortgage on your house.

You can blend a cocktail just by holding the shaker.

You get drunk just to sober up with huge amounts of coffee.

You can take a picture of yourself from ten feet away without using the timer.

Your first-aid kit contains two pints of coffee with an IV hookup.

You want to be cremated just so you can spend the rest of eternity in a coffee can.



## CHOOSE SOMETHING LIKE A STAR



O Star (the fairest one in sight),  
We grant your loftiness the right  
To some obscurity of cloud –  
It will not do to say of night,  
Since dark is what brings out your light.  
Some mystery becomes the proud.  
But to be wholly taciturn  
In your reserve is not allowed.



Say something to us we can learn  
By heart and when alone repeat.  
Say something! And it says “I burn.”  
But say with what degree of heat.  
Talk Fahrenheit, talk Centigrade.  
Use language we can comprehend.  
Tell us what elements you blend.



It gives us strangely little aid,  
But does tell something in the end.  
And steadfast as Keats’ Eremite,\*  
Not even stooping from its sphere,  
It asks little of us here.  
It asks of us a certain height,  
So when at times the mob is swayed  
To carry praise of blame too far,  
We may choose something like a star  
To stay our minds on and be staid.



Robert Frost

\* Interestingly, John Keats wrote a poem entitled ‘Bright Star, Would I Were Stedfast’, in which he refers to an eremite (religious hermit) staying in his cave just as a star maintains its position in the Celestial Sphere.

This favourite poem of mine is just to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Robert Lee Frost (1874–1963) on 29 January. Various websites say it was written in 1916, 1943 or 1949 but they do not say which of Frost’s many books of verse it appeared in. While the poem was doubtless reprinted in later collections, it appears to be regarded as one of his less significant works.

Frost was born in San Francisco and grew up in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where he completed high school and worked at different jobs, including teaching. However, he had always wanted to be a poet and, in 1894, he sold his first poem to *The Independent*, a New York weekly newspaper. He married Eleanor White in 1895 and attended Harvard University in 1897–99, though he left without graduating due to illness.

Frost then inherited a farm in Derry, New Hampshire, which he worked for nine years while writing some of his most famous poems in his spare time. Unfortunately, the farm did not produce sufficient income and he returned to teaching at a senior academy and a teachers college during 1906–11, after which he took his family to England in 1912. There, he published his first two books of poetry and met many contemporary British poets. The Frosts returned to the US in 1915 and he bought a new farm in Franconia, New Hampshire – but now he had a serious career in writing and lecturing at college level, mostly at Amherst College in Massachusetts but he also spent six years at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Between 1923 and 1964, Frost produced 23 books of verse and four plays. He won four Pulitzer Prizes and received over 40 honorary degrees, most notably from Harvard, Princeton, Oxford and Cambridge. In 1961, he read his well-known ‘The Gift Outright’ at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. His farms in Derry and Franconia (bottom right) are now museums and historic sites, as are the houses he owned in Ann Arbor and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## DIGNITY INTERNATIONAL

By Josphat Mainye



Dignity International (DI) was launched in November 2011 by a group of four like-minded Kenyans (all members of UU Society of Kitengela) in response to growing national concern about the deteriorating welfare of the nomadic/pastoralist and other marginalized communities living in the arid or semi arid areas in Kenya. Of greatest significance is the spell of severe drought, which has led to the serious scarcity of water and food both for human beings and animals. For this reason, the government has had to provide relief food rations to these communities, but this has not been sufficient to address the seriousness of the situation. This has led to insecurity, where different communities are forced to scramble for the meager available resources and sometimes fight with each other in order to survive.

Members of DI have visited the affected communities up to the village/*manyatta* level and, indeed, the problems facing these communities do not seem likely to end soon. While the rest of Kenya is enjoying development in terms of communication infrastructure, education, health and farming, very little attention is directed to these communities due to hostile climate, rough terrain, communication problems and lack of security. But DI feels that something can and should be done to improve the situation. It has dedicated and professionally qualified personnel who are willing to reach the marginalized people to discuss and plan with them how their problems can be tackled.

DI is specifically focusing to address the rights of the young girls being forced into marriage while underage and promote more awareness against the practice of female genital mutilation. Cultural practice amongst the communities featured here provides little chance for the girl child to access education because most girls are married off at the age of 12 years. The concerned community elders should be advised to allow every girl to pursue her education according to her own ability because it is their right. DI also wishes also to address the issue of the boy child who is always assigned the duty of looking after cattle, sheep and goats, thereby denying them the chance to go to school.

It has been noted that in most areas where nomadic/pastoralist communities live, most children walk long distances to get to a school. The school age children are often discouraged by hostile climate, wild animals, swollen rivers and insufficient food. So DI wishes to discuss with local communities the construction of more schools closer to the population. In addition to that, it will discuss with the pastoralist communities how they might change their nomadic way of life.

Scarcity of water in the arid and semi arid areas where these communities live is a huge problem. Women travel long distances to fetch water for domestic use and the available water is unhygienic, but families use it anyway. Because of the untreated water, water borne diseases are very common. Cattle and sheep also travel long distances to get water on a daily basis. DI wishes to recommend drilling of boreholes to provide safe drinking water for the homestead and for the animals.

Apart from providing meat and milk, cattle, sheep, goats, camels and donkeys can be sold and the finances put in a bank, especially when the drought season approaches to save the farmer from incurring losses when the effects of drought begins to bite. When the season improves, the farmer can then withdraw his money and the accrued interest to buy new stock. DI will advise the nomadic communities to avoid soil erosion and the spread of animal diseases which are normally associated with keeping large herds of cattle. The alternative is to maintain smaller herds of quality cattle, which are more profitable to the farmer.

DI will encourage the communities to enter into business activities which will generate the finances required for their daily needs. Private ranching, especially involving wild animals, could attract tourists who would pay fees to visit the ranch. Cattle marketing co-operatives and beekeeping for honey are other ways of making money. DI will assist them to develop various other ways of doing business, making money and owning property, instead of depending solely on cattle. Once boreholes are drilled, the water could be used for irrigation in the farms and this could yield crops for domestic and commercial use. DI will discourage the nomadic communities from selling their land indiscriminately simply because it is not of any significant value to them at the moment.

Most of the nomadic/pastoralist communities are used to living in isolation – i.e., away from other communities – and, for this reason, cases of cattle rustling and warlike activities against their neighbors are rampant. DI wishes to hold seminars that will encourage these communities to respect other communities and coexist with them, so that cattle rustling and warlike activities may cease. These seminars will also promote respect for the government, the law of the land and other community leaders.

DI will not encourage the people to simply disregard their customary laws, neither will it teach the people to replace the customary law with human rights. However, it will encourage these communities to learn to harmonize their customary laws with human rights principles so that the dignity of every person is protected in the community.

As one way of reclaiming the dignity of pastoralist/nomadic communities in the region and the world will be encouraging them to pursue education, to embrace communication technology and to promote infrastructural developments in their areas. They must keep in touch with the world communities to attract interest from their governments, friends and wellwishers to assist them in improving their image.

DI will identify with the local administrative leaders, village elders and the local people in order to focus on the most needy areas. Its officials will hold regular dialogues with local people in order to explain to them the programs that the organization is offering. The local people's priorities will be considered first before embarking on any other programs.

DI wants to share these challenges with both local and international friends, wellwishers and donors, and ask them to work with us and assist in improving the welfare of the pastoralist communities. Trained and dedicated personnel will be sent to meet the affected people for effective dissemination of skills and guidance. DI will also work with local security providers to ensure safety where and when necessary.

It is hoped that the programs and methods detailed above will serve as a template for branches of Dignity International that are founded in other countries.

[Joshat Gesimba Mainye is the Secretary of Dignity International and Executive Secretary of the Kenyan UU Council (please see his article in the Winter 2012 issue). DI is registered as an international non-profit foundation with the Kamer van Koophandel (Chamber of Commerce) in Amsterdam and has Special Consultative Status with the UN's Economic and Social Council. Their website ([www.dignityinternational.org](http://www.dignityinternational.org)) was built with the help of the New York-based Global Justice Institute and is well worth a visit.]

## ANZUUA NEWS

Ministerial training at lay and professional levels is advancing, with Pastor Rob McPherson of Adelaide going to Brisbane to conduct a lay worship workshop. Rev. Jill McAllister, who led the 2010 Growth Workshop, has presented a paper on our matter to the ICUU and hopes to send or bring a presentation to the next ANZUUA Conference. It has been decided to have a lay training session in Auckland just prior to that event (see below).

The music anthology, *A Southern Chalice*, is now complete and a printer is being sought. The book will be 112 A5 pages and has a good balance of sources and topics. Copies will cost \$15.00 for ANZUUA members and \$25 to others.

The 2013 ANZUUA Conference in Auckland will be held on the NZ Labour Day long weekend from 26 October and finishing at midday on the Monday. A one-day Lay Ministerial training workshop will be held on the Friday before. The Saturday sessions and the conference dinner will be in the historic Ferndale House in Mt. Albert and programs on the other days will be held in the Auckland church.

The theme, 'The Fourth Principle: A Free and Responsible Search for Meaning', will be addressed by an impressive list of speakers from the UK and US. Full details will appear in the next issue – meanwhile, there is some suggestion that we should book our plane tickets early.

ANZUUA's president, Rev. Peter Ferguson, will on holidays in South Africa and Namibia until Easter.

## NEW NORCIA RETREAT FOR PERTH UNITARIANS

By Kathy Nielsen

The retreat was a little earlier in the year this time (24–26 August), so we set off rugged up with heavier clothing, more red wine and cheese and biscuits as essential comforters. We tried to dodge the heavy traffic highway by travelling north along the coast to the Reid highway out of Perth. To change drivers at the beginning of the Great Northern Highway, we drove into a college grounds as numerous adjustments had to be made from a 5 ft driver to a 6 ft plus driver. As we drove in down the driveway of the college, we noticed that students' cars were ramping up waiting to gain access to the main highway. By the time we had parked and done the necessary driver adjustments, we had to join the queue of students, which took almost half an hour to get back on track – a small trial to test our patience. Once clear of the college grounds, the car enjoyed the higher speed of the open road as we finally sped onwards.

At New Norcia we found our rooms in the upper guesthouse of the monastery, which has twin rooms with ensembles and reverse-cycle air conditioning making for absolute comfort. This time we had the lounge area to ourselves and set up our projector, computer and screen to watch the Mayan 2012 end of calendar and Nostradamus' prophesies of 21/12/12 and another DVD – Martin Clunes' *A Man and his Dogs*, wherein he looks for the answer to “Did they choose us or did we choose them?”

We had an audience with Dom Chris, our favourite monk and asked the perennial question “What is God?” Dom Chris replied that he had spent his life seeking God and that there was definitely something more. At 25, Dom Chris, who at that stage had spent eight years studying for the Catholic priesthood in Melbourne, took a year off from his studies and visited New Norcia for two weeks – if there really was a God and if he really listened, something might come – listening was the thing rather than taking control of life.

His spiritual director was a Franciscan Priest who met with him for a year while he worked as a dry cleaner. The book, *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*, reinforced his ideas to let things take their own time. “Don't force the pace”, he joked, saying that he was living at home with mum still at 25. His spiritual director said that he, Chris, seemed to be suggesting that he should join a religious order, perhaps the Dominicans, instead of being a priest who worked in a parish.

During this stage in his life, Dom Chris was attending mass each night after work, then catching a train home, then walking up the hill to his house – thinking “Is there no answer?” Then one night, trudging up the hill and trying to listen, he had the realization that New Norcia was the place he was meant to be, so he sought more information about it. At that time he technically belonged to the Archbishopric of Melbourne – he was a deacon. The epiphany was a gift that seemed right – New Norcia was welcoming – they had a place for him and he joined the Benedictine Monks, where he was to remain for the next 31 years of his life.

The monastery and its monastic town underwent a crisis a few years after he arrived. In 1983, Dom Placid Spearritt visited while he was the Prior of Ampleforth Abbey in England. Dom Placid was invited to facilitate a community discussion about the future of the college, which was running in deficit and threatened to financially ruin the community and New Norcia. He was appointed Prior Administrator and then in 1997 was elected Abbot (13 years as Prior Administrator and almost 12 years as the sixth Abbot of New Norcia). Chris was made Procurator or business manager of the farm, the museum and other small businesses around town. In 1991 the Archbishop of Perth took on the lease of the school in order to keep it open and assist the monks and the town. However, the school eventually closed in 1991.

During this time, Dom Chris felt that he lurched from crisis to crisis. Overnight there was a drop in population from 200 to 50. Thirty buildings were emptied and they still had to pay insurance for empty buildings. Abbot Placid, Dom Chris and the monks worked on the problem, trying not to panic, trying new ideas as they came along and seeing how they fitted with monastic life, heritage regulations and whether they would work financially.

When Penhros College asked if they could use the school for a large music camp, the right idea came to New Norcia and Chris felt that he became a used car salesman for the next 22 years. The New Norcia Education Centre and its reconnection with the Aboriginal community in 1996 was another important development in Abbot Placid's time. On looking back, Chris now sees that the job gradually took over his life. In the beginning it was necessary but, as time went on, some progressive success sucked him in. He attended Mass and prayers each day but his mind was pretty well always elsewhere.

In 2008, Abbot Placid Spearritt went overseas to a meeting in Rome and died suddenly of a massive heart attack at Ampleforth Abbey, Yorkshire. A black ball-white ball election for the new Abbot was held and John Herbert became the new Abbot. There was a growing feeling with some of the monks that it was time to begin a new stage in New Norcia's history and disengage a bit from the tensions of running the town and move to lay management. Chris was Prior at this stage. This really was a gift progressing unrecognised ...

After 22 years of feverish activity, the new Abbot decided Chris should have a sabbatical year and, in 2010, Chris did a short intensive course on the Rule of Benedict in Rome and then ten months further study on monastic subjects at St. John's University in Minnesota. St. John's has a community of 150 monks and Chris was studying at post-graduate level, having not written an essay in 22 years. He was virtually in shock for those twelve months and, despite the numbers, felt very alone.

Chris: *During these last 18 months trying to live a conscious monastic life has been quite a battle. Just taking one moment at a time, trying to be aware of what's going on inside, especially what the demons are doing in my head to knock me off the programme, has been a huge change from pushing cars. However there is sense that I am on the project that really counts. In the old days certain parts of scripture used to haunt me... Mark 8:36 "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"*

These days, he has more time for his own prayer, too. Not that he has any particularly revelatory things to say. Chris: *I just sit in my chair feeling like someone sitting on a ledge looking out into the great unknown and repeating my mantra, between distractions – Come, Lord Jesus.*

There were eight of us attending the retreat this year. We participated in vespers in the Abbey Chapel and attended mass in the Cathedral. We had early morning walks through the paddocks and across the weir. On one walk, we just managed to clear the exit gate before the rams were herded toward another paddock up the hill, away from the paddock opposite where the ewes stood turning slowly as a group watching the departing rams disappear into the distance. I wonder what they were all thinking – "Where did I go wrong? You don't love me anymore." The rams were probably thinking, "There'll never be another you." Did you know that sheep can remember as many as fifty faces for two years? (From [www.thinkdifferentlyaboutsheep.com](http://www.thinkdifferentlyaboutsheep.com).)

On this particular walk we made our way through the sheep paddock and through a gate to cross the weir. My companion had long legs and balanced precariously from stone to stone, while I took the safer option of swishing through an inch of running river water on my 'corgi' legs. A dazzling slate-blue many-flowered fringe lily, *Thysanotus Multiflorus*, was in flower along the road, contrasting with the canola fields which were a blaze of the most vibrant yellow set against green rolling hills. Looking back down the hill towards the town centre, the cathedral and other buildings were now almost hidden from view amongst green foliage.

The Abbey food and wine was excellent as usual. We were able to seat ourselves around one large round table, which led to good communication with companionable banter. Dom Chris was our host for the weekend. He said to us that the monks were discussing what was 'hot' this weekend. And when asked what was 'hot', he replied: "The Unitarians, of course."

We managed to leave at the table one bottle containing a couple of glasses of some of our most silky-smooth Merlot-Cabernet, a cleanskin from Margaret River bought in 2003 and laid down for nine years – absolutely delectable and we hoped that Dom Chris might be able to help himself to a drop.

We did a bit of damage to our purses at the gift shop and also viewed the paintings in the upper gallery of the museum. The winner of the Mandala Award this year was *Palm Sunday*, a grey, black and white oil painting which absolutely drew you to it – something very unusual with the figures, palms and donkey almost leaping out of the frame as one stood at viewing distance.

Our return trip took us through more slate-blue fringe lily roadside blooms, bright yellow canola fields and green paddocks dotted with lacy trees. These unfolding scenes were reminiscent of Ireland, but much larger paddocks in this country and no vivid pink rhododendrons for boundaries surrounding the fields as there.

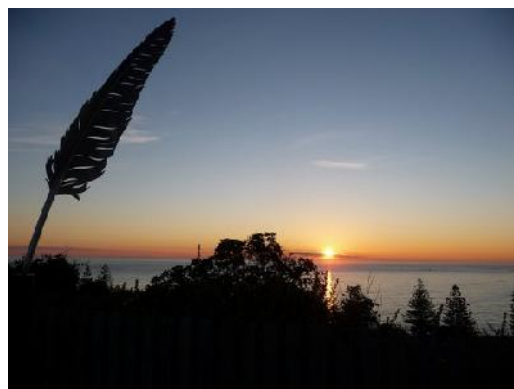
[Kathy is Secretary of the Perth Unitarians and acts as personal secretary to the President of ANZUUA, Rev. Peter Ferguson. There wasn't room for this article in the last edition but you can learn more about the history of New Norcia in the Summer 2011 issue. Briefly, it was founded by two Spanish Benedictines in 1847 and named after their order's headquarters in Italy. All of the Abbots prior to 1971 were also Spaniards.]

## TAKAHANGA MARAE RETREAT 2012

By Derek McCullough

The Christchurch Unitarians returned to the Takahanga Marae at Kaikoura last October for the first time since the earthquake season that started in 2010. A *marae* is a traditional Maori meeting place and has two large rooms – a *whareniui* for sleeping in and a *wharekai* for eating in. They are surrounded by wonderful grounds with many carvings and sculptures. The artwork at the Takahanga Marae has been created by both Maori and non-Maori artists.

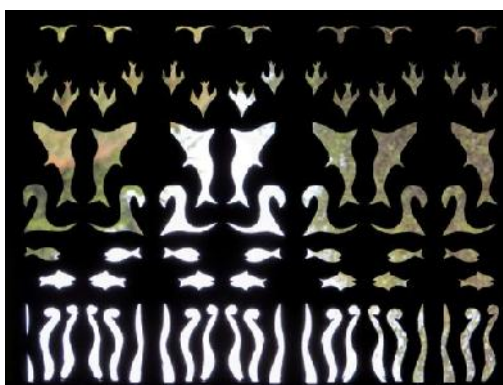
The 20 adults and 12 children settled in on Friday night and selected their sleeping areas in the *whareniui*. To enable a good night sleep it is recommended to bring earplugs! The children had fun outside with ‘glow in the dark’ *poi*, while the adults socialised and filled in the jobs roster. (A *poi* is two balls connected by a string, which are swung in rapid rotation from the midpoint – there’s definitely an art to it.)



Saturday morning started with a sunrise salutation – a silent gathering on the cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean where you can see the sun rise out of the sea, although in reality we are rolling towards a stationary sun.

After a warming breakfast, one of the elders of the marae, Maurice Manawatu, came and gave us a talk on the history of the Ngai Tahu tribe. This talk, called ‘Stories of the House’, covered over 800 years and is illustrated on the ceiling panels of the whareniui. Each panel was created by one of the sub-tribes that make up Ngai Tahu.

After morning tea, Brenda Crocker ran an art project that was based on the work of a well-known NZ artist, Lonnie Hutchinson. It involved creating panels cut into black paper that, when unfolded, produces an artwork with dramatic effect.



The afternoon was left free to explore the region’s many natural attractions. There are several seal colonies, wild coastline, surf spots and prolific birdlife. While some took off to explore, others basked in the relaxing environment on the marae.

We all reconvened for happy hour and dinner, followed by a home-grown cabaret, showcasing the many talents that reside in our group. That got us through till darkness, when a local astronomer, Hussein Burra, came and led us on a journey across the night sky. The skies had clouded over by the time he arrived, so he

explained Maori cosmology and the current position of the various constellations. After an hour or so, he ducked outside to check the conditions and, almost miraculously, the sky had cleared and the Milky Way was directly above. So, out came the telescope and we spent another hour or so looking at various stars. I think the one that wowed most people was the Jewel Box (a galactic cluster in the Southern Cross), which sparkled wildly.

Sunday morning started with the sunrise salutation again, then after breakfast we had our service. This year it was an interactive service, with everybody reflecting on the weekend. For several, it was their first marae experience – and it was obvious that it was quite a profound experience.

We have been going to the Takahanga Marae for twelve years and this was one of the best retreats we have had. With great food, spirited conversations, and surrounded by natural and created beauty, it was a weekend to remember. After the events of the last few years, it was a timely opportunity to come together as a spiritual community again.



### **BREAKING NEWS!**

It appears that Lev Lafayette (p. 8) is not the only ANZ Unitarian to have done foreign service work. Jane Lambert of the Adelaide church has recently been named Ambassador to Tunisia and High Commissioner to Malta. She is the daughter of their webmaster, Hugh Lambert, and former president (now VP), Margaret. From the DFAT website:



Ms Lambert is a career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and has previously served as Deputy High Commissioner to South Africa, Counsellor at the Australian High Commission in Nigeria, and First Secretary at the Australian Embassy to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg. She was most recently Director of the Department's Pakistan Section.

Ms Lambert holds a Master of Arts degree in Public Policy from the Australian National University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Flinders University.

Unitarian diplomats go back as far as John Adams, who was the US ambassador to France, Holland and the UK before he became president. His son, John Quincy Adams, is as famous for his work as Secretary of State as he is for being President of the US. William H. Taft also served as a diplomat, negotiated arbitration treaties with the UK and France during his presidency (1909–1913) and later advocated the formation of an international body for the peaceful resolution of disputes. Adlai Stevenson II was the US Ambassador to the UN and Elliott Richardson served as his country's representative to the Law of the Sea conferences.

Earlier workers with the United Nations were Dr. Brock Chisholm, who was Executive Secretary of the Interim Commission that set up the World Health Organisation and served as its first Director-General from 1948 to 1953. Later, Hugh Keenleyside, a former diplomat and head of government departments, was Director-General of the Technical Assistance Administration in 1950–58. Both were members of the First Unitarian Church of Victoria in British Columbia.

## REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC have confirmed Pastor Rob MacPherson in a settled ministry, with a brief to focus on the congregation, community connections with other faiths and involvement with ANZUUA. He is introducing a new religious education program, titled 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life' (after Karen Armstrong's book), starting in March. On 09 December, they were addressed by Rev. David Usher, current minister to the London District of Unitarians and founding president of the ICUU, who is originally from Adelaide.

Auckland UC have had both volcano alerts and a tornado! Their new minister, Rev. Matt Tittle, has arrived from the US and conducted his first service on 22 February. Their organist/pianist, Gerard van den Bernd, was farewelled after 14 years of service. The church camp at Manakau Harbour, just south of Auckland, on 19–20 January was well attended.

Brisbane UUF have also had problems with weather, having to cancel their first meeting of the year due to cyclonic wind and rain, fallen trees and an advisory that people not drive unless it was an emergency. Appropriately, their next gathering was a Water Service, whereat they collected \$350 for the Red Cross' flood appeal. They also collected \$200 in December for the ICUU's appeal to assist our cyclone-stricken brethren in the Philippines. Twelve members enjoyed a rich learning experience when Rob McPherson, pastor of the Adelaide Unitarian Church, led a workshop on UU worship on the last weekend in February. The Fellowship also thoroughly enjoyed Rob's Sunday sermon on 'The Flaming Chalice'.

The Christchurch Unitarians are celebrating their eighteenth year and recently held an AIDS service, looking at both New Zealand and Burundi, where they agreed to have a fundraising effort to assist. They continue to be heavily involved with the local Interfaith movement and hope to bring Chris Stedman, author of *Faithist* and a graduate of the Meadville-Lombard seminary, to Christchurch for what might become a speaking tour of the region.

Melbourne UC report that all is going well with Service attendance and the internal group activities continue to be very popular (Social Justice Action, Poetry and Music, Philosophy Forum and Community Radio 3CR). On 19 March, Peter Abrehart has been invited to attend the Multifaith Advisory Group, a state government body, to present an overview of Unitarianism to the various faith representatives. The invitation was extended to them after lobbying by the ANZUUA president, Peter Ferguson.

Perth Unitarians have had two meetings this year with many new people attending. They also plan to have a monthly meet-up along the lines of Rob MacPherson's 'Twelve Steps' course.

Spirit of Life UF are progressing well with many interesting speakers lined up.

Sydney UC have donated \$1000 to the UU Church of the Philippines to assist with their many reconstruction projects. They have also commissioned a powerful custom-built computer, a colour photocopier/printer and an Internet connection for their audiovisual theatre system.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This issue had its challenges but I still enjoyed producing it. With reference to the SUC news above, I look forward to the day when I can produce hard copies of *Quest* with colour pictures in it. Further, the new computer has MS Publisher in its Office suite and I can't wait to see what prospects that will offer in the way of layout. You may be in for some real surprises in the near future.

Just a footnote to the article about Jane Lambert: when she is stationed in Australia, she attends meetings of the Canberra UUF, which is led by its founder and former ANZUUA president, Dr. John Maindonald. John is originally from Auckland and worked for the Institute of Mathematical Science at the Australian National University, where he still has a room. The group meets fortnightly at the ANU Chaplaincy and recently had another visit from Pastor Rob McPherson of Adelaide. Anyone interested in a trip to Canberra should check their website (<http://cuuf.wordpress.com>) and spend a Sunday morning with them.

The Winter issue will come out at the beginning of June and I already have a fair amount of material for it. However, I always need more, so please send any input you have to: [michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au](mailto:michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au).