

NEWS & VIEWS

SEPTEMBER 2011

ICUU CHALICE LIGHTING

Chalice lighting words provided by Deutscher Uniterier Religionsgemeinschaft

Sometimes, the vision we share for compassion and community is bigger than our actual hearts.

Often, our hopes for a just society that is both free and responsible exceed what we actually do to create it.

But may we never let our failing and floundering keep us from seeking, again and again, to live out in concrete deeds the hopes and dreams of our collective heart.

May the light of this flame give us courage for the journey.

Dr Wuzong Zhou of St Andrews University has revealed that around 1.0 million nano-particles of diamond are created and burned in a candle flame every second.

(Story from i newspaper 18.8.11)

MEMORIAL SERVICE IN NOVEMBER

John Clifford will be conducting a special service on 6th November, commemorating the lives of members and friends of this community. In order to do this, he needs to hear from you about those people you would like to remember. Please send him your suggestions, together with a short, helpful paragraph, well before the end of October.

REMINDER

The Ministry Sub-committee will be holding a Vision Day on Sunday 30th October. Before then they hope to have a collection of your suggestions of changes we might make, or activities we might organise or take part in. These could be outings, social concerns, additional church activities, or meetings to which we could invite other people on occasion, or on a regular basis. Please send or give your suggestions to convener, Iain Brown.

DEATH OF RICHARD BLUER

Dick died on 24th July aged 81. In another month he and Sheena would have celebrated their Golden Wedding.

His family moved from Clydebank to Paisley after their home was destroyed in the Clydebank blitz. There he contracted TB, and left school at 16. Nevertheless he found work as a clerk with the Clyde Navigation Trust and later with British Road Services, joining the Paisley Co-operative and Manufacturing Society in 1956. During this time he studied at evening classes for Higher grades, and went on to take a business degree, becoming a Chartered Secretary in 1960. Later he became Director of the PCMS. In 1975 he joined the Labour Party.

His work with the Co-op took him to Manchester for a number of years, and it was there that he helped to revive the 'Church' branch of the Labour party, in the Bury area. While down there he was shocked at the way some people treated Asian immigrants, and became involved in the anti-Nazi movement.

The Bluers returned to Paisley in the 1980s, and Dick continued to work for the Co-op and to support the Labour Party. Dick was a church-goer, and a keen supporter of the YMCA. In later life he joined the Unitarians.

Dick had many enthusiasms. He loved jazz and has been a keen member of the Jazz Club founded by Peter Roberts, which meets at our church. He loved to paint pictures of buildings and ships, and in retirement, he and Sheena went on many cruises. He had strong opinions, a great sense of fun and a wide circle of friends. A loving husband and father, he will be much missed by Sheena and Marjory, Phillip and Andrew.

His funeral was conducted by Rev. John Clifford, and the Bluer family felt that it was exactly as Dick would have wanted – a celebration of his life. John read this extract from Robert Owen's 'Address to the Inhabitants of New Lanark', First January 1816:

"What ideas individuals may attach to the term 'Millennium' I know not but I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any, misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundredfold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment except ignorance to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal."

Proceedings closed with an organ rendering of "The Red Flag", which brought a smile to every face.

Information taken from an article by Kenneth Speirs in the Paisley Daily Express, Friday August 5th.

TOD

Betty McKellar

Tod bides hunkert in the daurkness o' his lair, lauchin,
his een fixed on ye, glintin in their kenning,
his gab pu'ed back, teeth cauld an bare.
He's seen ye aff
you keeper wi' yer snare,
you lood-mou scairlet jaicket
wi' yer horse an hound hallooin
an yer chirry-brandy boozin.
On the moor its Tod that's a Maister, an its Tod that's been a'where.
He kens whaur whaup an peesweep were hame-airted
an whaur the laverock biggit in the seg.
He kens whaur the rare white gled swoopt doon,
an whaur the blackcock's hen got settled on the groon.
An slavers are sweet in his thrapple
at the thocht o' a scrunched egg
an tender nestling banes an skin
an het bluid on his chin.

Nests on the moor are tuim
so Tod's moved tae yer back-yaird in Glesga,
steals an easy bite frae yer bin.
He's in his daurk lair, hunkert,
een on ye, glintin wi kenning.
Haud yer babby in !

uture ministry Scotland

Iain Brown

The co-ordinating group of representatives appointed from the four churches met in Edinburgh with Alison Thursfield from the GA Executive Committee on August 10th 2011. It was stressed that this project was about ministry with a small 'm' and not about finding funding for full time professional ministry. After some discussion it was agreed by all parties that the revised project should be taken forward.

Iain Brown (Glasgow) agreed to convene meetings and drive it forward and Sue Good (Aberdeen) agreed to write minutes and act in a general secretarial role. No Treasurer was available and arrangements for budgeting and the management of money remain to be agreed

upon. It was recognised that there was no expectation that the Treasurer of the SUA would take on that role.

Following these agreements, Alison Thursfield concluded that she would be able to give a favourable report to the Executive of the GA and was thanked for her, and Dot Hewerdine's, enduring persistence in seeing the project through to a starting point.

Immediately, a date was set for the next meeting as October 5th in Dundee for 10.30. In the interim all representatives agreed to explore the extent to which members of each of their own congregations would take up offers of a variety of possible training opportunities and support for attending training.

Advance notice of this will be intimated to the Glasgow congregation present on Sunday 14th August and short meetings open to all will be held by Lesley Hart and Iain Brown after the services of worship on both Sundays 21st and 28th August to explain what opportunities might be available, explore how many members might take up each and what additional opportunities members might be interested in. This information will be fed into the next meeting of the Co-ordinating Group in early October.

It is hoped that, by early October, we will have established liaison and agreement on boundaries and sharing of responsibilities with the Executive of the SUA and, on that basis, we hope to establish a more formal description of the structure, aims, values, funding and operations of future ministry in Scotland. We will then carry these forward if, and when, we can. We plan to meet roughly every six weeks.

Funding and Time Limits.

A little over £1000.00 remains in the pump-priming fund supplied by the GA. The SUA has agreed to donate £2000.00. This total of £3,000.00 will be doubled by the Bowland Trust, making £6,000.00 in all. If more is advanced by the churches in Scotland, more may be forthcoming from the Bowland Trust up to a maximum of £5,000.00. The project is scheduled to last three years.

Current Suggested Initiatives

Money may be forthcoming, depending on take up, for:

- Video equipment and training in using it to allow video recording of some services of worship and their transference onto the web
- A Worship Studies Course located in Scotland in three one-day sessions
- One, possibly more, one-day sessions on Pastoral Care – also located in Scotland
- Small group ministry/engagement group training located in Scotland

All courses will be free with travel expenses covered. Courses will be open (at modest cost) to participants from adjoining districts in the North of England.

Other needs and suggestions will be openly received.

Valedictory Service at Oxford

Two short years after starting my ministry training at Harris Manchester College Oxford, I was awarded my Ministry Certificate at a special Valedictory Service during the 2011 Ministerial Old Students' Association (MOSA) Conference at the end of June.

It was a very grand occasion. More than fifty people attended: the ministers attending the MOSA conference, several members of the Oxford congregation, Rev. Dr. Ann Peart (President of the General Assembly), Rev. Alex Bradley (Principal of Unitarian College Manchester), Rev. Linda Phillips (Director of Ministry, representing the General Assembly), Rev. Dr. Ralph Waller, Principal of Harris Manchester College, and my tutor, Rev. Dr. Arthur Stewart, who led the service. I was very thrilled that four members of my family were also able to attend: my parents, Sandy and Jean Ellis, and my husband Maz and daughter Becky.



The service itself was lovely, and included contributions from my two fellow students at HMCO, Sheena Gabriel and Jim Corrigan, both of whom will be continuing their studies next year. At the end of the proceedings I walked back down the aisle with a huge smile on my face, feeling just like a bride!

It has become a tradition at the MOSA conference that the outgoing ministry student(s) do the morning devotions on the Tuesday. This year it was my turn, and I would like to share some of what I said with you all:

“I see ministry training as a stretching kind of process; I was only 4’6” when I started two years ago, and look at me now!

Seriously though, the one thing I have learned is the importance of being open to growth and evolution and change, in my beliefs and in my soul. It has been a testing time and a learning time, being “open to new light from whatever source it comes”, as the Quakers have it, so that I can serve the denomination to the best of my abilities.

A long time ago, I came across a wonderful little book called “*Mister God, This Is Anna*” by Fynn, which opened many doors for me. In the Foreword, Congregationalist author Vernon Sproxton wrote:

“There are good books, indifferent books, and bad books. Amongst the good books some are honest, inspiring, moving, prophetic, and improving. But in my language there is another category: there are *Ah! Books*. This is one of them. *Ah! Books* are those which induce a fundamental change in the reader’s consciousness. They widen his sensibility in such a way that he is able to look upon familiar things as though he is seeing and understanding them for the first time. *Ah! Books* are galvanic. They touch the nerve-centre of the whole being so that the reader receives an almost palpable physical shock. A tremor of excited perception ripples through the person. ... *Ah! Books* give you sentences which you can roll around in the mind, throw in the air, catch, tease out, analyse. But in whatever way you handle them, they widen your vision. For they are essentially Idea-creating, in the sense that Coleridge meant when he described the Idea as containing future thought – as opposed to the Epigram which encapsulates past thought. *Ah! Books* give the impression that you are opening a new account, not closing an old one down.”

I have been truly blessed during my ministry training, in that I have experienced not only Ah! Books (quite a few of them) but also Ah! Moments, when I have received precious insights from many and diverse teachers:

- From my tutor, Arthur Stewart, who has filled some of the many gaps in my knowledge of Unitarian theology and thought, and who has taught me so much about the practical nuts & bolts of ministry
- From my fellow students, Daniel Costley, Sheena Gabriel and Jim Corrigan, whose contributions to our tutorials have helped to change and grow and mould my thinking
- From the Baptist ministry students at Regent’s Park College, who have taught me so much about mainstream Christianity, and whose interested and perceptive questions have forced me to really think about what I believe as a Unitarian, and why I believe it
- And from being in dialogue and conversation with fellow Unitarians, whether at conferences, after services, during meetings or on Facebook.

But I think that I have got my deepest and most profound Ah! Moments at the two Summer Schools I have attended: in 2009, just before I started my ministry training, and in 2010, half way through. Both weeks enriched my soul, and stretched me mentally and spiritually.

Over the two years of the training process, my perceptions of what it means to be a minister have changed. Just before I started, before I attended my first Summer School, I had serious doubts about my fitness for the role. That first Summer School was a soul-stretching experience for me, the like of which I have never experienced before or since. It turned my life upside down, or more accurately, inside out, exposing parts of me that hadn't seen the light of day since I was a love-lorn teenager writing heartfelt poetry about love and loss. I am naturally a bit of a left-brain person, rational, organised, with a to-do list always on the go. That first Summer School taught me that there was another part of me, more creative and intuitive, that had been trapped in a corner for years, which needed to come out for air. I discovered that it was safe to be vulnerable, to get in touch with my other self. I spent more time on the edge of tears than I have for years, but they were good tears, healing ones. It had the effect of reassuring me that I had made the right decision, that I was worthy to be trained, and that I was capable of the mental and spiritual growth required to become a minister. It also showed me models of good ministry that I have looked to ever since.

I have learned that to be a minister, you have to be a mixture of many things – leader, servant, preacher, prophet, teacher, guide and listener – and that it is also vital to nurture yourself and to find a balance in your own life, so that you have somewhere solid to stand while you are trying to nurture others. And the enormous importance of spiritual support – from family, from friends, from fellow Unitarians, particularly fellow ministers. I am so blessed to have this support – thank you all.”

I owe a particular debt to the congregation of Northampton Unitarians, and to other Midlands congregations, for giving me the chance to discover the joy of leading worship, and to the Midland Unitarian Association Executive Committee for supporting me along my path into ministry. Thank *you* all, very much.

Sue Woolley

Sue has been a Unitarian since she was 18, and active within the movement for the last 10 years, starting with leading worship at her home congregation of Northampton in 2001. She is currently:

- District Facilitator of the Midland Unitarian Union (20 hours per week, ‘day job’) (Midland UA has about 20 congregations)
- Secretary of the Midland Unitarian Association
- Secretary of the Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry
- Newsletter Editor for the Unitarian Peace Fellowship
- Link person with the Charter for Compassion
- (until September) Secretary of the District Associations Project

Sue is also interested in raising the visibility of our movement, and attends Unitarian Communication Co-ordinators Network meetings.

September Diary

SERVICES AT 11am

Sept. 4th Barry Bell

“Unitarian Community and Worship – A personal View”

11th Barbara Clifford

“Ten Years On...What have we learned?”

18th Jenny Hickey (Tibetan Buddhist) SINGERS 10.0

25th Ralph Catts

MUSIC

Tom Gibbs

Calum Low

Lynne Mitchell

Calum Low

OTHER EVENTS

Sept. 4th Meeting to assess interest in fm training programme 12.45

15th Ministry Sub-committee 6.30

18th Singers' Group 10.0

22nd Management Committee 7.0

Oct. 5th future ministry steering group 10.30 in Dundee

29th SUA Executive 11.0 for 11.30 in Dundee

30th Vision Day (short service)

FLOWERS

Sept 4th Ruth

11th Wilma

18th June & Chuck

25th Dorothy & Alastair

COFFEE

Ruth

Lesley

June & Chuck

Dorothy & Alastair

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