



## Unitarian Peace Fellowship Newsletter

*For all within our denomination who witness to the  
belief that war and preparation for war are  
failures of humanity*

**Issue 9, November 2014**

### Contents

Words from the Chair	page 2
Peace Fellowship Matters	page 3
Unitarian Day for Peace 2014: Reports	page 4
Social Action, Future Vision by Carol Chilton	page 7
How can we best promote peace in the world? a talk by Rt.Hon. Shirley Williams by Derek McAuley	page 10
Unitarian Peace Fellowship Vision & Contacts	page 12

[www.ukunitarians.org.uk/peace/](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/peace/)

### Words from the Chair

It has been a busy year; the UPF committee had a working retreat in October, where we focused on the future of our Peace Fellowship. One issue is the disturbing trend of declining membership. It has become apparent that current members are not renewing their membership. **Why is this?** we wondered. After much conversation, we concluded that there was a need for the UPF to develop programmes and participatory events which may attract and engage our membership. One such idea, proposed and overwhelmingly supported, was the development of a UPF Associates Programme. The hope is that we would have one or two people within each District to work with us and their home Districts on peace-related programmes, from education to planning District Peace events. Please get in touch if you're interested.

We also discussed the ongoing world situation and the increasing demand for funding to meet the emergency needs within the war torn areas of the world. The pride we have in our Unitarian community in its response to these needs through the Clara Barton Red Cross funding project. In this conversation it was mentioned that the Barton Fund may be directing funding away from the UPF Annual Appeal. We questioned whether we should drop the Appeal or explore other options. We concluded that the Annual Appeal allowed us to fund programmes that are trying to build the bridges of peace outside the moment of war and violence. The committee began to realise that the other side of the Annual Appeal is that it highlights worthwhile organisations that are in the forefront of peace building. And that this information sharing may be the greater benefit of the Appeal than the raising of funds. Not to say no to any funds, all amounts are welcomed and needed. We simply want to point out and support the many organisations that are trying to do something for peace in our world.

So it is a great privilege to highlight the UPF Annual Appeal for 2015 which is the **Peace Pledge Union (PPU)**. The PPU has several initiatives, with one being the highlighting of the role of Conscientious Objectors of the First World War. To collect and share their stories as a part of the wider centenary celebrations. I hope you will give them a look, use the materials they provide and give to the Appeal to show our support.

Peace,  
John

## Peace Fellowship Matters

### PUTTING IT POLITELY, WE NEED THE MONEY, PLEASE!

Many thanks to those few of you who **have** paid your subscription for 2014/15. To those of you who **haven't**, this year's subs are as follows:

Individual:	£8.00
Small Group	£17.00
Large Group:	£25.00

If you care at all about there being a distinctive Unitarian witness for peace in the UK, please send your subs to Mike Tomlin (address on the back page). **Many thanks!**

**And there is still time to donate to our 2014 Appeal**, which was launched at the General Assembly meetings in April, and is in aid of **Warchild**. This is a UK-based charity which aims to support children affected by war. Please give generously. Warchild's website address is **[www.warchild.org.uk](http://www.warchild.org.uk)**.

We would be very grateful if you would send your cheques, made payable to 'The Unitarian Peace Fellowship', to our Treasurer, Mike Tomlin. (address on back page). Please write on the back of the cheque what the payment is for (i.e. subs / appeal / both). Thank you very much.

## Unitarian Day for Peace 2014: Reports

We are delighted to report that the idea of holding a special service to observe the Unitarian Day for Peace on the 3rd Sunday in October seems to be taking off around the country. Here are some reports and photos.

### Westgate Chapel, Wakefield by Stephen Carlile

A Bishop, a Jew and a Mormon walk into a Unitarian Church..... would be a start to a fairly tedious joke, but on Sunday 19th October the Unitarians were marking a day of peace. Westgate added their own twist by holding their second interfaith gathering, and these three were joined by the Deputy Mayor of Wakefield, the Bramah Kumaris, Methodists, Quakers, Roman Catholics, Pagans and Sikhs, with finishing words from our own Chris Pilkington. Kate Taylor worked hard, networking and bringing together the separate groups into the one service. We discussed all the work that goes into such an event at the Local Preachers part of the Yorkshire Unitarian Union. For such a group to come together they have to feel safe, able to bring what they have without fear of competition or challenge, and this worked wonderfully.

The service was led by our own Cynthia Dickinson, who is also Secretary of the Wakefield Interfaith Group. We started with the lighting of the World Peace Flame, and shared sentences, followed by words from the Deputy Mayor, Cllr June Cliffe. As the service progressed speakers representing each aspect came forward and spoke from their group's perspective in a safe and respectful space. We even had our own version of the Peace, where we went to say hello to folk we didn't know.

One break in the service gave an opportunity for two home grown stars to shine. Lauren and Josh were given *carte blanche* when it came to music provision and a number of choices were gone

through!!!! In the end they chose a piece that allowed them to use all their strengths, playing music and singing. Though they didn't have a microphone, they managed to fill the huge chapel! We also relied on Paul's playing at other parts of the service.

Finally people wrote messages on peace doves and these were hung from the tree at the front of church. White poppies and peace candles were available for people to take afterwards.

Following the service refreshments were available and everyone freely mixed and chatted. A really successful event where people of all faiths and none could come together in peace.

### **York Unitarians by Margaret Hill**

On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October a "Serendipity for Peace" service was held at the York Chapel. Members were invited to bring a prayer for peace, preferably one that they have written themselves, or one they knew and loved, or a poem that meant more to them than any prayer could.

The service was held in a circle and started with lighting the Chalice and then lighting a special Peace candle.



Five people wrote and read their own prayers, and in addition the Chapel's Healing and Spirituality group had written prayers for the occasion, and two were used in the service and spoken in unison. Ten people brought other prayers, poems or readings.

### **Rochdale Unitarian Church by Joyce Ashworth**

This faith inclusive service, led by Rochdale's minister, Rev. Shammy Webster, had been well advertised within Rochdale Multi-faith Partnership and through Rochdale Online, but despite that only members of the Unitarian congregation were in attendance, albeit a good attendance. In retrospect, perhaps such a service needs to take place at a time other than normal Sunday worship time to allow space for those who attend church elsewhere to participate. Some of the notable points made within the addresses were:

Back in the 1930s Amelia Earhart described courage as *"the price that life exacts for granting peace."*

It was suggested that a good replacement for the word 'peace' might be the alternative 'shalom'. "To wish someone 'shalom' is to wish them a life of total balance, not just in their frame of mind, but in their food, their waking and sleeping, their joy and pain, their wealth, their health, their life. It means a life free of worry or concern. It means acceptance. It means to have enough and never too much or too little. To wish someone 'shalom' is to wish them a life filled with a true and natural value. The value intended for us by God, our creator, or the natural pulses of the universe, whichever describes it better for you. Shalom is complete and total harmony."

Positive words and actions are contagious: "Today, Unitarianism in Great Britain offers a Prayer for Peace. It's a prayer that we wish to share with everyone across religious, national and international boundaries. Our prayer for peace, here today, is

deep-seated. It comes not from individual ideas or dreams, it is not focused on war or political entanglements. Today, we pray for a better world, a better 'us'. Let our hearts and minds send blessings of 'peace' and 'shalom' out into the world."

The Service finished with Rev. Bill Darlison's story from *Concentration & Compassion* about the colours of the rainbow each arguing their supreme importance which Shammy summed up as follows: "And so, whenever a good rain washes the world and a rainbow appears in the sky, let us remember that peace comes not in power-trips and bulging egos but in togetherness."



*Social Action Future Vision*  
**conference at SimpleGifts Mansford Street  
Chapel, Bethnal Green on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

SimpleGifts expected ten people. Twenty-eight people arrived from all corners of the country – from Edinburgh, York, Birmingham, Cardiff, Norwich, Framlingham, London, Lewes and Brighton and many other places. There were ministers, retired ministers, training ministers, a member of the EC, trustees and chapel officers, chapel social responsibility workers and interested Unitarians.

It was a much needed rallying call for Unitarians who care about Social Justice and who care that the great legacy of Unitarian social action has been very much diminished over the last twenty years. There has been no General Assembly Social Responsibility Committee or Panel nor Social Responsibility Officer at Essex Hall for years. Unitarian Social Responsibility has become a low priority within the Unitarian Movement. This was an opportunity for those who care to meet up and share ideas.

Rev. Rob Gregson and Ann Howell of SimpleGifts made everyone very welcome with coffee, tea and cinnamon buns plus blueberries. A great start for the people who had travelled far. We were in a small room; it felt cosy, warm and friendly. We made a good start with the first exercise. Each person was given four stickers and asked to place them around the room on any of the large labels they felt concern about. The labels read **Penal Reform, Racial Justice, Labour Rights, Concern for the Poor / Economic Justice, Women/Gender Rights, Education / Children Welfare, Jesus' Teaching and Leadership, Compassion for All Beings and LGBT Rights**. The next hour was very humbling. Every person introduced themselves and shared why their choices meant so much to them.

Before lunch we contributed to a large and long time-chart starting from 1640 with our knowledge of the history of Unitarian Social Action. Each of the people present knew a part of the local and national history. It was inspiring to see all the social justice and human rights issues that Unitarians have become involved with and fought for in the past.

Lunch was a splendid meal of the local foods in cosmopolitan Bethnal Green. We feasted on chicken and vegetable curries, dhal, rice and nan bread, followed by cake and more blueberries. We all sat together at a long table which had a lovely cloth and four vases of fresh flowers spaced down the table by Ann Howell.

The first part of the afternoon was taken up with a game. Each person was given a character from your local Unitarian chapel to act out. I was a long-serving treasurer known to be curmudgeonly at times. People then responded within their character to the question "Where do we want to be in two to three years?" Using the positive points we discussed "What do we do next?"

Quite early on in this discussion came the need for a Unitarian Social Responsibility Network on the web. This will enable those

people present at the discussion and other Unitarians to share details of what social action goes on in their chapels. What a source of wealth! What a fund of ideas!

Each Unitarian chapel, church, fellowship and meeting is different. Social responsibility and action will differ with the abilities, skills and resources of the Unitarian community and the concerns within and beyond their surrounding local community. So what you can do will be different. There may not be one single path to an effective and fulfilling social responsibility programme. It does not matter how few your numbers are; you and your chapel can do something.

The sharing of information about what Unitarian individuals, churches, chapels and meetings do now will be a great start to the re-growth of social responsibility and action within the Unitarian Movement.

How can the Unitarian Peace Fellowship respond to this call for greater social responsibility and action? It seems to me that British history demonstrates how the movements of peoples for whatever reasons, religious, political, hunger or better economic opportunity, have repeatedly led to the loss of peace. We, in Britain today, face similar problems. Are we not responding to migration in the same ineffective, peace-threatening ways? Surely the Unitarian Peace Fellowship can respond to migration by helping asylum-seekers and migrants with local and national social action?

In the past Britons spread across the world. Today many people are coming or trying to come to Britain. Can we Unitarians help to show the future world that the problems of migration can be overcome by peaceful means, by cooperation and agreement?

**Carol Chilton**

## **How can we best promote peace in the world? a talk by Shirley Williams**

Being based in London means that there are lots of opportunities to hear great speakers on issues of public interest, so I was pleased to be invited to the Gladstone Lecture for 2014, given by the Rt Hon Shirley Williams on 21 October 2014.

Held at St James the Less C of E Church in Pimlico in Central London, in what the Vicar welcoming us to the gathering described as a "Victorian extravaganza," it was the annual showcase lecture of the Liberal Democrat Christian Fellowship although was widely promoted by Christians in other political parties.

Shirley Williams has extensive knowledge and experience in international affairs from a life-time of politics and is a Catholic. Growing up during the Second World War with parents who were prominent pacifists, her career has involved deep engagement with international affairs, including being Gordon Brown's Adviser on nuclear proliferation while he was Prime Minister. She currently serves as an active Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords and Professor Emerita of Electoral Politics at Harvard University. She is author of *God and Caesar: Personal Reflections on Politics and Religion*.

In that book she wrote "While the challenge of evil is very great [...] there is also great potential force for good. The good among us often distrust power, and power in turn underestimates moral and spiritual force. But I have seen that force, in the hands of men and women without material or political power, move nations."

In my view the lecture highlighted the move from peace being threatened by wars between states to one in which small groups, such as Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, can create havoc. This



means that traditional means of sustaining peace between the nations, such as the United Nations (positive) and doctrine of mutual assured destruction when in possession of nuclear weapons (negative), will no longer work. The origins of the European Union as a means by which peace within Western Europe has been maintained since World War Two, making a war impossible to imagine, was highlighted. Central and Eastern European countries have been drawn to join for this very reason. This, however, does not seem to be recognised in the current debate about the future of the EU.

The most significant part of the lecture was Baroness Williams's reflection on her parents. Her mother, Vera Brittain, famous for her book *Testament of Youth*, was a nurse in World War One and became a convinced pacifist, having had to care for German as well as British casualties, whose experience of war was identical. We learned that Baroness Williams's parents were both regarded as so dangerous that they were on the Gestapo arrest list.

I was surprised that the persecution of minorities in the Middle East was only referred to in passing. Much was made in the lecture of the consequences of the break-up on the old Empires following World Wars One and Two, and of the stability they had brought, and the rise of nation state and what I would call micro-states. Reflecting on the title I recalled Gladstone's famous Midlothian Campaign in 1879-80 against the atrocities against Christians of the Ottoman Empire in Bulgaria. Whilst concerns have been highlighted today for the Christian minority in the Middle East we are in a very different world and there seems no appetite for politicising the issue of religion. We need to challenge the extreme violations of human rights, including to religious freedom.

Derek McAuley  
Unitarian Chief Officer  
23 October 2014



## Unitarian Peace Fellowship Vision



The Unitarian Peace Fellowship was founded in 1916 in the darkest days of the First World War to witness for peace and against the futility of war. Today we maintain that witness. Our vision includes the ethos and values of the Charter for Compassion. The surest route to peace is through the compassion of human beings for each other and for all living things. We support and encourage Unitarians in their witness for Peace and Compassion locally, nationally, and internationally.

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