



Unitarian Peace Fellowship Newsletter

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

Issue 1, Spring 2010

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Words from the Chair

It is a pleasure to be writing this as it means we are in the process of producing a long awaited newsletter and I want to thank Sue for taking on the task. Of course it means that I too have the unenviable task of providing her with all your names and addresses so that you can all get a copy. We are hoping to produce two a year, in Spring and Autumn. Please send your contributions for the next one to Sue (details on p.8).

The Peace Fellowship had a very successful AGM where people actually volunteered for jobs and committee membership so hopefully this next year will be a good one. A full report on the meetings will be provided with the minutes when they are produced so I do not intend to go down that road now except to say thank you to Geoff Usher for his many years' service as treasurer.

Of course it is always good to support organisations connected with 'Peace' as our name suggests but you will have noticed that our Annual Appeal does not quite fit that bill this year, that is because the committee thought the Haiti Earthquake disaster was such a cause that will need lots of help that you as members would not object to it being on this occasion the focus of our appeal. Already you have been very generous and £1000 has been sent with more to follow, the bucket collection alone at the GA meetings raised £209.40 and donations from chapels and individuals put the total so far at around £3000 so keep it up.

If you have any ideas for Annual Appeal recipients please let committee members know (contact details on page 8) and they will be considered at our January meeting when these things are decided.

Joan Norton



Our new publication, *Pens for Peace: an Anthology of Meditations by members of the Unitarian Peace Fellowship*, is available from our Chair, Joan Norton (details on page 8) at a cost of £1 + 50p P+P

Unitarian Peace Fellowship AGM, Nottingham

The AGM was very productive this year, with two new committee members being voted on (Carol Chilton and Sue Woolley) and very welcome they are too, along with the re-election of myself as Chair, Chris Goacher as Secretary, and Joyce Ashworth and Feargus O'Connor as the other two longstanding committee members.

Geoff Usher (pictured below) retired as Treasurer; a post he has held for more years than he may care to remember, and as his swansong, he gave a talk on the work of the Fellowship and what he hopes for the future. Mike Tomlin has kindly volunteered to be his replacement.

We offer our love and best wishes to Geoff for a very long and happy retirement back home in his native Australia with his wife Ann.

Joan Norton



Geoff spoke about the various different causes which the UPF has supported over the years, including the International Action Network on Small Arms, Landmine Action, UNICEF and the Foundation for Peace. This year's Annual Appeal is in aid of Haiti Earthquake Relief, our response to a humanitarian crisis.

He commented on the different publications that the UPF has issued over the years: *Voices Speaking Peace*, which was edited by Liz Birtles, the *Peace Educator's Handbook* and the new publication *Pens for Peace* (see review elsewhere in this issue). His hopes for the future include the continuance of the Annual Appeal, occasional publications, a regular newsletter and an active membership working for peace.

The World Peace Flame

At the beginning of our Nottingham AGM, each person there was presented with a small tealight from The World Peace Flame organisation.

The World Peace Flame was created in 1999, when seven Flames of Peace were lit on five continents and flown across the oceans to The Life Foundation Centre in North Wales and united into one Flame.

There are also six World Peace Flame monuments, each containing an eternal flame. Three are situated in Holland, one in Wales, one in the United States and one in Australia. The dream is as simple as it is ambitious: to light an eternally burning peace flame in every major city or decision-making centre in the world.

Throughout the world are World Peace Flame ambassadors taking the Flame and the message of peace to schools, places of worship, hospitals, workplaces and homes.

Candles and tealights carry the Flame symbolically from place to place, to be lit and re-lit, spreading the message of hope for a peaceful future.

For more information, visit the World Peace Flame website: www.worldpeaceflame.org

The UK's World Peace Flame Monument is at the DRU Worldwide Course Centre in Snowdonia, North Wales (picture below)



Pens for Peace: a Review

This slim volume, edited by UPF member Stephanie Cage, has the subtitle *An anthology of meditations by members of the Unitarian Peace Fellowship*. It is the result of two workshops held in Sheffield and London in 2009, where members and friends of the Fellowship were invited to share their thoughts on peace.

As may be expected from Unitarians, the contributions are varied, both in length and content. All are thoughtful and insightful. My personal favourite is by our outgoing Treasurer Geoff Usher. Part of it is reprinted below:

“The word ‘peace’ encompasses a wide range of meanings and concepts.

At the international level, it includes:

- the cessation of hostilities and military conflict
- the establishment of treaties and international covenants
- agreements on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons
- equitable distribution of resources

At the national or community level, it includes:

- economic justice, environmental and ecological protection, legal protection for minority groups
- fairness and compassion in the provision of services, welfare systems which enable people to live free from hunger, fear and deprivation

At the personal level, it includes:

- sitting quietly at home in the evening, warm, comfortable and relaxed, perhaps with a hot drink and a book
- walking through a wood in autumn, enjoying the vibrant colours of the leaves preparing to fall, and the blanket of those which have already fallen

- listening to favourite pieces of music
- watching young children at innocent, laughing play
- enjoying a good meal with family or friends
- boats on a quiet lake
- spending time on one's hobby, free of constraints of time or extraneous duties"

Readings from *Pens for Peace* were also used for this year's **Peace Vespers**, which took place at the GA Annual Meetings on the first evening. In his review in *GA Zette*, Cambridge Unitarian Nathan Bowler commented: "The hubbub following the rich creativity of the opening celebrations was gently, firmly dissolved into the opening music of the Peace Vespers. We were carried, from there onward, on the tide of the simple, cyclic structure of the service. Fragments of serene violin and piano music alternated with a selection of thoughtful meditations, each revealing a new facet of the vision of peace. ... There were the voices of the authors of the meditations, and the voices of the members of the Peace Fellowship who read them. The bringing together of these visions, and of thought with music, provided a living demonstration of the possibility of peaceful interdependence despite diversity."

UPF Annual Appeal 2010: Haiti Earthquake Relief

As Chair Joan Norton mentioned in her piece on page 2, our Annual Appeal this year is in aid of Haiti Earthquake Relief, which isn't directly concerned with peace, but is concerned with alleviating human suffering, which is just as important.

We are donating money through UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. It was created in 1946 by the United Nations in order to alleviate famine and disease among children, following World War II. It became a permanent part of the United Nations in 1953, and adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which defines children's rights to protection, education, health care, shelter and good nutrition, in 1959. The organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace

Prize in 1965 “for the promotion of brotherhood among nations.” To quote from its website (www.unicef.org):

“UNICEF is the driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized. We have the global authority to influence decision-makers, and the variety of partners at grassroots level to turn the most innovative ideas into reality. We believe that nurturing and caring for children are the cornerstones of human progress. UNICEF was created with this purpose in mind – to work with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child’s path. We believe that we can, together, advance the cause of humanity.”

There is a special section on the UNICEF website about Haiti at the moment. Here are some extracts from it:

“As Haiti slowly moves forward after the 12 January earthquake, UNICEF is set to release a comprehensive report taking stock of humanitarian efforts on behalf of the children of Haiti. The report, to be released in mid-April, provides an overview of the progress made so far, as well as a critical look at the challenges ahead – all with an eye to the future, in the hope of transforming Haiti, with children at the centre of the plan.

Education is one of three key areas UNICEF has identified as being crucial for the future of Haiti's children. ... It's about ensuring education for every child – an inclusive education, an education that presents no barriers or obstacles to children to come back to school," said Mr. Carwardine. "It's about ensuring that we focus on the nutrition of children. Under-nutrition has been a major problem here in Haiti, even before the earthquake, and so we want to make sure that as children move out of this current emergency, that they don't fall victim to yet another emergency, which is one of malnutrition. The third area is protection," he added. "It's not just about protecting children in these difficult times; it's also making sure there are systems and structures in place that provide a long-term safety net for children, that their rights are protected, and that their welfare is very much at the heart of everything we do here – whether it's about policy or projects or services,

that children have this protective environment in which they can grow up out of this disaster."

A worthy cause for the UPF to support! Keep the donations coming.

Unitarian Peace Fellowship Vision

Founded in 1916, the Unitarian Peace Fellowship is for all those within our denomination who witness to the belief that war and preparation for war are sins against God and failures of Humanity. We believe that right relationships can only be established through understanding and love. We therefore pledge ourselves to the promotion of goodwill, justice and peace between people and nations.



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