



## 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 5, Spring 2012**

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(photo on page 3 is by Carol Chilton)

### Words from the Chair

Before another I is dotted and another t is crossed I feel I must pay tribute to the work of Chris Goacher, who has handed the mantle of UPF Secretary to Sue Woolley after many, many years' loyal service. Chris was Secretary long before I became Chair and he has been a great source of inspiration and a fount of knowledge over the years. Thank you Chris for all your hard work; it is very much appreciated by all of us connected with the Unitarian Peace Fellowship.

Now, down to the nitty gritty.

At the General Assembly meetings this year at Keele we had as usual our publicity stand, but as a rule we have just had on display various leaflets and a bucket for people to throw money into, usually for the Annual Appeal

This year, following a great idea from Carol Chilton, we held a raffle, sold hand made greetings cards and still put out a bucket for appeal donations. Unfortunately for us it's anniversary time for Send A Child to Hucklow, and many people were divided on where to put their hard earned cash, so our Annual Appeal did suffer somewhat, but SACH did very well I understand, and much deserved too.

We succeeded with our raffle and the card sales which gave our depleted Fellowship accounts a small but much needed boost.

So this is an appeal to you all to support the Fellowship of which you are all members, or as our Treasurer pointed out to us at the G A, we are in danger of becoming extinct!, Encourage your chapels / fellowships to become members, make sure your subscriptions are up to date and wherever possible support this year's appeal.

OK, rant over!

In Fellowship

**Joan Norton**

## The Unitarian Peace Fellowship Banner

Regulars at General Assembly Annual Meetings will be familiar with our lovely purple Unitarian Peace Fellowship banner. However, it was starting to look a bit tatty, and the Committee is extremely grateful to two members of the Octagon Chapel, Norwich, **Helen Bluckert** and **Iris Voegeli**, who have restored it to more than its' former glory, incorporating a fine new logo in the centre. It was much admired at this year's meetings, and is pictured below.



## The Peace Fellowship at the GA

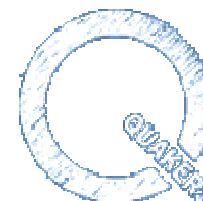
A gratifying 63 people came along to the Peace Fellowship slot at this year's General Assembly Annual Meetings. A brief Annual General Meeting was held, during which the following matters were highlighted:

- the passing of our resolution in support of Amnesty International's 50th anniversary, at last year's GA
- the results of last year's Annual Appeal (in aid of Womankind Worldwide) - we raised £1,914. Thank you to everyone who donated to the Appeal.
- the October event at the Octagon Chapel, Norwich (see the last edition of the newsletter)
- the resignation of Rev. Chris Goacher as Secretary, and the election of Sue Woolley to replace him.
- the dire state of the Fellowship's finances. As Treasurer Mike Tomlin remarked, "if the financial situation doesn't improve, there won't BE a Unitarian Peace Fellowship this time next year."

[So please would everyone send their subscriptions to Mike Tomlin (address on back page) AS SOON AS POSSIBLE - thank you!]

The meeting then welcomed **Peter Holland** our Guest Speaker, who had come to talk to us about the Quaker Peace Testimony.

## The Quaker Peace Testimony



Peter started his talk by giving us all a bit of background about the Society of Friends (Quakers). He explained that they have no priests, no creed and no set form of worship, except to meet in silence. If through

listening in the silence, you are moved to share, this is ministry. They believe in the priesthood of all believers; that of God / the Spirit / Light / Truth / Love in everyone; and that all occasions are potentially sacramental. They have been called 'Zen Christians'. They believe that there are myriad faiths but one divine Being, and that there is a universal revelation of the Spirit of Love.

Quakers are well known for their Peace Testimony. What is less well-known is that they have other testimonies, which are all linked together: as well as to Peace, they testify to Simplicity, Truth & Integrity, and Equality & Community.

2011 was the 350th Anniversary of the Quaker Peace Testimony. This is what it says:

"Our principle is, and our practices have always been, to seek peace, and ensue it, and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all. All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world. That spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ which leads us into all Truth will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.

And as for the kingdoms of this world, we cannot covet them, much less can we fight for them, but we do earnestly desire and wait, that by the word of God's power and its effectual operation in the hearts of men the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, that he might rule and reign in men by his spirit and truth, that thereby all people, out of all different judgments and professions might be brought into love and unity with God and one with another, and that they might all come to witness the prophet's words, who said, 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more'. (Is 2:4; Mic 4:3)"

It is a central tenet of the Society of Friends - it is a Peace Church, along with the Mennonites. The 1661 Testimony was issued partly in response to the political situation (the restoration of Charles II) but there was a spiritual leading behind the practical act.

And it has continued through the centuries - Quakers were prominent in the anti-slavery movement; Elizabeth Fry spearheaded the campaign for prisoners' rights to education and rehabilitation. In the 19th century, many Quaker bankers and industrialists played a prominent role in the Industrial Revolution. This stemmed from their reputation for honesty and plain dealing, and their care of the workforce. Today, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is a very large charitable trust.

The Society of Friends has officers at the United Nations in New York and Geneva, and at the European Union in Brussels. They work for peace, being involved with, for example, an agreement to ban landmines, reduction in small arms, helping the children of prisoners and the statutory right of discharge for children under 18 from the armed services. They are also involved in an ecumenical accompaniment programme in Israel, walking children to school in safety, and work with women in Burundi, helping to heal their trauma. They work on reconciliation and mediation following conflict.

In the UK, they have recently been working with ourselves and the Liberal Jews towards marriage equality. Other recent initiatives include a minute passed at the last Yearly Meetings to move towards more sustainable living. There is a Peace Education Project in the West Midlands, which works in primary schools to help children with conflict resolution.

The Quakers were instrumental in setting up the Peace Department at the University of Bradford - the first Professor of the Department was a Quaker. And they have just sent an address to the Queen about the value of faith and support for peace.

Peter then told us a little about the Quaker business method - their way of conducting meetings. Unlike most business meetings, there is no voting. When a matter is raised, the meeting will hold a period of reflection, and then the Clerk will draft a minute, and ask the whole meeting whether it is acceptable. The idea is that the process will lead to

consensus. It can be long-winded, but is much more democratic and inclusive.

He concluded by reminding us of the work of the Friends' Ambulance Units in the two World Wars. In 1947, they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for "silent help - leading to the promotion of brotherhood among nations."

When an action is agreed among Friends, it will have gone through a long process: from listening, to leading, to concern, to discussion in a meeting for worship, to action, and then to checking in worship that the right path has been taken. Peace is a process, not a destination. It can influence all we do.

## Peace Fellowship Appeal 2012

Enclosed with this copy of the Newsletter you will find two documents - one from the Committee, asking you to support our Appeal, and one from Peace Child International, explaining what they do. As Joan Norton, our Chair, commented in her letter on page 2, our usual fund-raising activities at this year's GA meetings were very much overshadowed by the 50th Anniversary of Send A Child to Hucklow. So we urgently need all members to send what they can, so that we in our turn can send a goodly sum to Peace Child International at the end of the year.



## 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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