



## 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 10, May 2015

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

## Words from the Chair

When I was in my final year of university, 1978 in California, our school's *ad hoc* peace fellowship was involved in several events to witness for peace, and against the continued build up of nuclear weapons. In April of that year we joined other war tax resisters in protest outside the IRS - Internal Revenue Service, the taxing arm of the US government. Then a couple of weeks later we joined thousands in San Francisco to celebrate, commemorate and highlight the work of the United Nations. In this march I carried the flag of the nations of Chad. Later in May we had a protest action outside the Military Faire, where all the recruiters and local Cadet bands were present and trying to entice 18 year olds to enlist. After these actions I had a conversation with the head of the Biblical Studies department, my mentor, friend and colleague in these activities. In this conversation we explored the various reasons, rationales and attitudes these events elicit. I was in a bit of a distressed point of view, wondering what worth it was to do these various activities, protests and witness. His response has always stayed with me.....

**"We are not asked to be successful, we are simply asked to be faithful."**

Over the past few years several of us on the UPF committee have wondered why the donations for the Annual Appeal have been dropping. We simply do not raise the amounts we used to raise. So we have had our conversations and we began to realise that while we were raising funds for an organisation (this year it is the Peace Pledge Union) we were also raising the profile of the various organisations. We hope as we do this you will take time to support these organisations and also to suggest to the committee any organisation you would like us to highlight and raise Unitarian awareness. We still hope you will make

contributions, but also that you will find ways to use their work to highlight your own witness for peace.

We had a great meeting this year during GA, and I am grateful for the honour of being able to serve a second term as your chair. I am also grateful that our committee all agreed to serve another year, as well as Rev. Celia Cartwright's agreement to be co-opted onto the committee to serve as our membership secretary. Many thanks to the current ministry students, led by Katie McKenna who provided the Peace Vespers following the Anniversary service. Also to committee member, Rev. Cody Coyne, for his leading us in the Vesper service following the Celebration service on the second night of GA. This is the first time this has occurred and we hope to turn it into a tradition.

I hope that those of you who were at GA stopped by our table and availed yourself of the new resources provided. For those that were not able to be present this year, we had new badges/buttons with our logo (see front cover), a set of five peace themed wayside pulpit posters, and a brilliant Peace Fellowship postcard. There are some of each still available for purchase.

There are many things we are working on, to highlight our concerns for peaceful and just resolutions to conflict as well as to ways that we can witness for peace in our home congregations.

Stayed tuned..... **Rev. John Philip Carter, UPF Chair**

### **POLITE SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER**

According to our records there are thirty-eight individuals or chapels who are not up to date with their subscriptions. Our new Membership Secretary, Rev. Celia Cartwright, will be in touch with you shortly. We are sorry, but if you do not re-subscribe, this will be the last issue of the newsletter that you receive.

**Rev. Sue Woolley, Secretary**

## **Witnessing for Peace at the GA Meetings**

### **How can we witness for Peace during commemorations for the First World War? Two Unitarian ministers answer**

Rev. Bill Darlison started by suggesting an alternative, rather sadder, title for this Peace Fellowship session: "How can we *ever* witness for peace?" He saw the primary motive for war as being financial - the money made by the arms trade. 20 years ago, he believed that war was a racket, and that if we could just sort out the politics and economics, war would cease.

He still believes this is partly true. The point is: war is something that is in us all, and if we are to witness for peace, we need to recognise this fact. He quoted D.H. Lawrence: "Why do people only make war when they say they want peace?" Peace campaigning shouldn't be an exercise for the ego.

Politics and economics cannot eliminate warlike propensities in humankind, because the motives for war are fear and greed. As Houston Smith put it "We can never have enough of what we don't really need." There seems to be the constant fear that what we have will be taken away from us by some nameless enemy. This is as much a spiritual fear as anything else.

And so the solution must be spiritual. We are all flawed, but we can acknowledge and fight against our instincts and learn to control them. This is what the spiritual life is about - the gradual conquest of fear of the other. We need to practice peace hourly and daily, in our personal lives, and in the world at large.

Rev. Celia Cartwright remembered watching the Remembrance Sunday ceremony on TV one year, and being overcome by the realisation that every poppy that fell represented a life lost in

conflict. Somebody's brother; somebody's husband; somebody's son.

She decried the way in which we distance ourselves from the horrors of war by calling all service personnel "heroes", whereas she believes that they are just ordinary people put in situations that are extraordinary. Naming them heroes enables us to distance our selves from the amputations, the PTSD - they happen to heroes, who can cope.

In the Kendal chapel, there is a notice board, and last year, members of the congregation were invited to bring along photos and other mementos of families and friends who had been caught up in the First World War. Over the months, the board was filled with shared memories - citations for bravery, medals, death notices, even love letters. Is this a witness for peace, or just remembering a past worthy of note?

She believes that the key word is "humility" - acknowledging that we are all flawed human beings, working to try to build a world in which we can all live together. We have to be really honest in our humility, admitting our human potential for violence and judgmentalism, and take a stand against it in ourselves. We have to open our eyes to the abject terror and horror of war, which asks men and women to become killers. There is no codicil "except for your country" in the Hebrew Bible's commandment. We need to recognise all the pain that war inflicts; it is not glorious, not about heroes.

And then we need to witness for, and work for, peace. **SW**

**(from GAZette 3, 31st March 2015)**

Bill Darlison began by wondering if war is a racket devised by armament manufacturers, and fomented by co-operative politicians.

On mature reflection, he sees that the urge for confrontation and violence is in us all, as we can all see too clearly downtown any Saturday night. He quoted Thomas Hardy on events in the First World War "2000 years of prayers and mass, we've come as far as poison gas." A traditional Christian view is that belligerence is the original sin; motivated by fear and greed. As Houston Smith put it: "we can never have enough of what we don't really need." The quest for peace is an hourly and daily task for all of us. To quote Thich Nhat Hanh: "Peace is every step we take."

Celia Cartwright spoke as an ex-military nurse, who cannot bear to watch Remembrance parades knowing that they commemorate the deaths, not of heroes, but of ordinary men and women thrust into the horror and pain of battlefield confrontation. She feels that calling them heroes sanitises their suffering and distances us from their agony. "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" is a lie. War is not glorious. We can best honour those who died by sending no more soldiers into the same danger.

**Janet Briggs, Glasgow**

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## **Witnessing for Peace by Celia Cartwright**

I believe it is both honourable and honouring to hold 'Visions of Peace' and 'Remembrance of our Fallen in battle' simultaneously. That to fly the flag of peace beside the fields of poppies is wholly compatible. I believe it honours those who chose or were conscripted to fight in the wars. There may be those who think that if we try to embrace these two ideals simultaneously, we are saying that the sacrifice of the men, and women, who died or were injured, meant nothing, that we do not honour their bravery, their stoicism, their courage, but rather say that what they did was wrong. But I do not believe this. Those who went to war, go to war, do so to bring peace. Surely it was, is, the hope for peace that makes the possible and terrible sacrifice worth while. Thoughts of peace in war time are not inextricably linked with conscientiously

objecting to fighting – which some still see as cowardice, even in the face of great bravery on the part of those who did not carry a weapon into battle.

Is this what striving for peace means, to render the sacrifice of so many as meaningless? It's not what it means to me. To me it means striving to achieve what men like my grandfathers hoped to bring about. It seems to me that **not** to strive for peace, but to simply go on fighting is to dishonour these men and the women who fought on another front back in Blighty through those terrible years.

How then do we 'Witness for Peace' as we commemorate the loss of so many? Peace, not in the abstract, not as some indirect ideal we my only find in a Utopian world, but as a reality, in our lives, in our own world? It's a question that has been asked and given answer for millennia, yet we still don't really grasp it. Perhaps the idea of peace is so enormous we find it impossible to hold, grasp, look at in its entirety.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese philosopher Lao-Tse's words, from *The Wisdom of Peace* have echoed through the ages, reminding generation after generation of both the need for peace and the road to peace:

If there is to be peace in the world  
There must be peace in the nations.  
If there is to be peace in the nations  
There must be peace in the cities.  
If there is to be peace in the cities,  
There must be peace between neighbours,  
If there is to be peace among neighbours,  
There must be peace in the home.  
If there is to be peace in the home  
There must be peace in the heart.

Perhaps this is where we go wrong; we think of peace in global terms, its too huge, there is too much to overcome, too much hatred, cruelty; the mountain on which peak Peace rests is just too big, too steep, and we cannot find the foot holds the hand holds – so we sigh, put the idea of peace away tidily in a quiet corner of our soul and hold on to hope instead. How can we ever hope to scale the mountain when we rarely see the path, nor even the signpost to the path, and Peace remains like nirvana or heaven, somewhere beyond our human reach.

Maybe we set our sights too high, maybe our view is too wide – or maybe, just maybe we simply fail to see the wood for the trees, we are so busy looking for world peace we forget to strive for inner peace, individual peace, our own peace. I'm not talking here about the peace that means retreating from the world, but the peace that must grow and thrive in the world, that starts inside each one of us.

Lao Tse tells us that peace begins inside each individual heart, inside my heart, inside your heart. If peace is the goal towards so many of us strive, I wonder why humanity fairly consistently fails to trust the ideal of peace sufficiently enough to allow their hearts full reign with the urge to gain peace? Perhaps because life has made it very difficult for us to trust, to recognise our prejudices, to admit to our fears, our expectations are for violence and upheaval, and its difficult, in the midst of the world's turmoil where violence seems to have the upper hand, to be peace. But unless we do there will be no peace.

Peace begins inside our own hearts. It's an easy thing to say, but not easy to do, to be and our culture is not geared towards helping us to achieve it, for it does not thrive well in a world of power struggles, judgmentalism, and selfishness. Jesus, Ghandi, Martin Luther King are all honoured for their peaceful stance amidst turmoil, but there were many who wanted to use violence to achieve the goals these men achieved. Nelson Mandela is known as a peacemaker, but there are many who thought violence was

the better option. Jesus said 'blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'; which is an interesting idea considering how 'vengeful' God is depicted in the Old Testament, the only testament for Jesus – yet here we see him linking the ideals of peace and Godliness.

Peace is not an easy concept to grasp. We are often unsure what we mean by 'peace' and the peace we seek is often personal rather than universal and we are all too quick to turn blind eyes to those suffering the absence of peace. Perhaps the kind of peace we often talk about, global, universal peace is not actually something we understand, not something we can actually visualize, or if we do there are too many potent arguments stacked up in our minds to batter that vision into submission. Yet we do continue to speak of peace as something worth striving for, even if we are apt to settle for less because we cannot envision a time when the seven deadly sins will be overtaken by the one heavenly blessing. Perhaps the often still potent notion that we are somehow intrinsically sinful keeps us from the belief that we could, as many of our school reports may well have said, 'do better if we tried'!

I don't think we are intrinsically sinful. Even in the face of humanity's consistent inhumanity to its own kind, even in the face of humanities scant care for the world which supports its very being. I do think we are extremely complex beings who have developed emotions and have yet to fully realise how to cope with the turmoil emotions are capable of causing. I do think we have a huge capacity for love, the love Jesus asked of Simon Peter, the love that is divine and unconditional which leads us to know happiness, compassion, humility, bravery, generosity, joy. I do also think we have a huge capacity for self delusion, fear, anxiety, bravado, anger, cruelty and a blindness to the result of our actions – even when we mean well! I think humans are like the symbol of Yin and Yang, dark and light, good and bad, kind and selfish, but within each of these negatives is a little positive, just as there is just a little negative in all our positive to keep us grounded. Peace emerges from the positive, and calls the negative to answer for

itself.

If we become Peace-makers, we allow that part of us which is divine to shine. Witnessing for Peace, honouring all humanity, all life, all who strive for peace. We cannot witness for peace if we are not peace, we cannot witness for peace if we do not honour those who strove for peace even in times of war – but we will not honour them by living without peace in our hearts and lives, too many laid down theirs so that we might have peace.

Let us open our hearts to peace, the peace of God which knows no bounds, and let us find ways, together, to witness to that peace, in humility and joy.

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### **War Child thanks the Peace Fellowship**

Dear Unitarian Peace Fellowship,  
Thank you so much for your donation of £550.00 towards War Child's work. It's amazing and we can't thank you enough.

As a friend of War Child, we know that you'll want to help as many children as possible who live in dangerous places around the world. You're helping to keep children safe by providing safe centres for them to play and learn with their friends, when war means that it's no longer safe for them to go home.

You're also helping to keep children in school by helping us to provide safe transport, training for teachers, books and equipment.

The money that you have raised will go towards our projects that help children in countries such as Uganda, and many other war-torn countries around the world.

Best wishes,

**Daniel Robinson**  
**Fundraising and New Business Assistant, War Child**

## Manchester remembers Conscientious Objectors with special ceremony

There used to be a Peace Garden outside Manchester's Central Library and Town Hall, which has sadly been torn down and paved over to make way for the new tram line. From this act has arisen the "Friends of Manchester Peace Gardens" a group lobbying Manchester City Council to reinstate the park elsewhere in the city centre. Locked away is the beautiful statue, The Messenger of Peace.

The 15<sup>th</sup> May was marked with services across the country remembering Conscientious Objectors. Despite the previous location now being under tarmac, Manchester's memorial went ahead in a "Pop-up Garden" outside the library. The service was marked with silence, music, prayers, and poetry. A symbolic flower with forty petals was set up, each one drawn out to represent a conscientious objector or pacifist – some of whom had been Unitarians. Steve Waling read his own poem, *The Word No Is a Long Sentence*, and Peter Sampson read *Conscientious Objector* by Edna St Vincent Millay. Catherine Coyne played Elgar's *Chanson De Matin*, prefaced by an explanation that, for all the pomp and circumstance, Elgar was disheartened by the First World War, and had he lived long enough, may not have emotionally survived the Second. The service concluded with Arundhati Roy's *Never Forget*.

The service, which brought the cause of peace into the streets of Manchester, was both sombre and celebratory, expressive and educational. I felt honoured to be a witness and participant.

**Cody Coyne, minister, Cross Street Chapel, Manchester**



## 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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