



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 12, May 2016
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www.ukunitarians.org.uk/peace/

Musings from the Chair

It was a great and busy time for Unitarian Peace Fellowship at the General Assembly this year. We led the Opening Celebrations to commemorate our centennial year. Our annual meeting covered the topic of what our congregations can do to witness for peace, and of course we had our standard exhibit space and materials. On a happy note the UPF Bucket Brigade made a reappearance this year, enthusiastically headed up by our new Treasurer Celia Cartwright, where we collected around £1000 to be split between the Clara Barton Fund and MOAS, our designated charity for 2016.

Of course our big news, woo woo, is that we are celebrating our centennial year. On the evening of the 18th June 1916, Unitarian and Free Christian men and women gathered to officially organise themselves into the Unitarian and Free Christian Peace Fellowship. In reading the minutes and subsequent materials what I found interesting was that there seems to have been a need for secrecy as membership lists in those early years was shared only among the membership. One explanation for this can be found in an enlightening article which Alan Ruston wrote for the *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* journal (Vol 21:4, pp. 269-284, 1998). It was on the overall Unitarian attitudes during this time.

Throughout the years the Peace Fellowship has been involved in several important decisions made by the Unitarian General Assembly from the early objections to the treatment of Conscientious Objectors by the UK government during WWI to expressing concern regarding the development of Nuclear weaponry and recently in helping develop and give support to the Red Cross Clara Barton Fund. It has been a rich history which we have been privileged to be a part and one we hope to continue and build upon as we look forward to our next 100 years.

From our first basis / vision statement....

"believe that war and preparation for war are irreconcilable with the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ and the best interest of (Hu)mankind."

UPF HIGHLIGHTED CHARITY FOR 2016

MOAS
MIGRANT OFFSHORE AID STATION

UPF invites you to support MOAS by friending them on social media as well as with financial contributions.

Webpage: www.moas.eu

Facebook: www.facebook.com/migrantoffshoreaidstation

Twitter: @moas_eu

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCZHcDS7ePIBW66d3KvX2K0Q

Our designated charity for this year is the Migrant Offshore Aid Station. As we focus on the concerns and needs of refugees fleeing the various conflicts in their home countries, we need to be aware of the dangers they face crossing the Mediterranean Sea and to support the efforts to ensure their safety.

MOAS is dedicated to preventing loss of life by providing professional search-and-rescue assistance to refugees and migrants in distress at sea. MOAS is a smaller charity in which over 90% of the funds they receive is used to help the refugees. When we called them to ask for material and inform them of being our designated peace charity for this year they were overjoyed by our interest. As always our aim in designating a peace or justice charity is to raise their profile within the wider Unitarian community. We hope to raise some funds but mores to raise awareness. If you have a social media profile or subscription, see

box above, we would invite you to go and follow or friend MOAS to show your support for this much needed agency.

Peace,

Rev. John Philip Carter, UPF Chair

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## Peace Fellowship Matters

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

Many thanks to those of you who **have** paid your subscription for 2016/17. To those of you who **haven't**, this year's subs are as follows:

|              |        |
|--------------|--------|
| Individual:  | £9.00  |
| Small Group  | £18.00 |
| Large Group: | £27.00 |

**And there is still time to donate to our 2016 Appeal**, which was launched at the General Assembly meetings in March, and is in aid of **Migrant Offshore Aid Station**. This is a Europe-based charity which helps to save the lives of refugees, adrift in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas.

We would be very grateful if you would send your cheques, made payable to 'The Unitarian Peace Fellowship', to our Treasurer, Celia Cartwright. (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.

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General Assembly Meetings 2016

**Opening Celebrations by Bronwyn Lowe, Dukinfield
(GAZette)**

The Unitarian Peace Fellowship should be congratulated for opening our Annual Meetings with such a thought-provoking

service. The Banner Parade was carried out with its usual flair, to the wonderful words of our hymn *Each Seeking Faith*. The banners always give such a colourful start to our few days together - I think Rochdale's banner has a mind of its own though (Diane was nearly eaten by it, I think). Joking apart, the readings that followed gave a depth of history to the Peace Movement that I was shamefully unaware of. They showed the huge amount of preparation that had gone into the service as a whole. The hymns were all my favourites, and the singing was great - it's lovely to be with a group of people who are not afraid to sing up! The presentation slides were at times quite striking, and certainly helped to focus the attention on the words. The service was a celebration of the Centenary of the Peace Fellowship, and its message all too relevant for today's immediate world situation. As Liz Birtles said - peace begins with me, and might we remember that message in our meetings together. So well done to all concerned - and a special thank you to the Unitarian Peace Choir for a wonderful rendition of the Prayer for Peace, and to Catherine for her leadership (mustn't forget our fabulous pianists too!).

Thoughts on the Unitarian Peace Fellowship by Chris Thompson (GAZette)

I chose to attend the Peace Fellowship session because I wanted to try something new and from the summary of the session in the guidebook it sparked my interest and looked like it would give me another interesting subject that I could take back to the Great Yarmouth congregation.

In the Peace Fellowship AGM, I learnt that the Peace Fellowship's Facebook page had been 'Liked' by 210 persons. It was further added that many of those who had Liked the page were from outside the Unitarian denomination. Also on a great note, it was commented that this number of 210 was eighty more than in 2015. I thought this was encouraging, that the use of

social media had been a success in raising awareness of the society.

Furthermore, I found it encouraging when it was confidently indicated that the Peace Fellowship possesses significant funds so it could sustain for years to come. [this is a slight exaggeration, but we are no longer in danger of folding, Ed.] I found out that the Peace Fellowship is about peace and peace-making in Unitarian communities as well as the wider community.

The main element of the session as well as the Peace Fellowship's AGM was a discussion entitled "Creative Paths to Peace". The purpose of the discussion was to share ideas of peace in different congregations that could be expressed to the wider movement.

It was mentioned by John Carter that there is a specific day in September [21st, Ed.] that is the United Nations International Day of Peace, and that the 3rd Sunday in October had been chosen, for the Unitarian movement as a whole to reflect on peace and pray for peace.

One idea expressed was mindfulness; it was mentioned that mindfulness can help people fill their mind with space. I agreed with this idea and will endeavour to research the subject of mindfulness, because it sparked my interests. Another expressed was the use of a labyrinth mat, that could be walked slowly and peacefully. This event happens on a weekly basis at the Unitarian Meeting House in Northampton.

One purpose of the Peace Fellowship is to express and encourage peace-orientated activities in worship, and within other activities and environments with the wider community and connect to other faiths and faith groups. In conclusion, I found the Peace Fellowship session very insightful, interesting, and encouraging.

The Unitarian Peace Fellowship "Pseudo-bucket" Collection by Celia Cartwright (GAZette)

"Why aren't we having a bucket collection like Geoff Usher used to?" asked Martin West. "We are!" I replied, waving two hessian bags I'd borrowed to use as pseudo-buckets. As the assembled Unitarians left the plenary session, the Peace Fellowship Chair, Treasurer, and another committee member shook the "buckets", and offered leaflets.

All I can say is "THANK YOU", I am thrilled by your generosity! When we counted the cash, we found there was £31-£21 short of £1,000. So the Peace Fellowship will top the shortfall up, and £500 will be sent to The Clara Barton (Syria) Fund and £500 to the Unitarian Peace Fellowship's 2016 Appeal MOAS - Migrant Offshore Aid Station.

The Peace Fellowship Slot at the GA Meetings

Following a brief AGM, we spent the rest of our time together talking about Creative Paths for Peace - sharing ways that individual congregations could witness for peace where they are. Several specific dates in the year were mentioned as times when this could happen:

- The end of January, Holocaust Memorial Day.
- 1st week in August, to commemorate the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II.
- 21st September - the United Nations International Day of Peace.
- 3rd Sunday in October - the Unitarian Day for Peace.
- 2nd Sunday in November - Remembrance Sunday

A variety of poppies are worn by committee members. Some do not wear any; some wear both red (British Legion) and white

(Peace) and some wear purple (to commemorate all the animals who lost their lives in war). [see issue 11 of *Newsletter*]

Then Cody Coyne explained his Stations for Peace, which had been held during Peace Vespers at GA last year, and also at Summer School. The idea is to delve deeply in a series of peaceful activities, at regular intervals, spaced around a room [see separate article below]

The Rochdale congregation join in multi-faith partnership meetings, one of which commemorates the Holocaust at the end of January. Some congregations have formed links with their nearest Quaker Meeting House.

At Stockton Unitarians, once you have entered the worship space, there is a tradition of silent contemplation before the worship service begins.

Another idea mentioned was that of the Peace Feast, a tradition which started in Cardiff in which people from different backgrounds share a meal together, which is a moving way of getting to know people from different cultures and faith traditions.

Southampton's Interfaith Group offers an annual Peace Walk which visits various places of worship in the city. In each place, refreshments are offered, and there is an opportunity to talk about their various faith perspectives. It is about making connections, building bridges.

Social justice work and compassion are also related to peace. For example, the Golders Green congregation does much work with an animal welfare trust.

At Northampton Unitarians Meeting House, there is a weekly opportunity to walk a labyrinth, to "walk away the cares of the

week" slowly and mindfully, every Friday evening from 5.00 to 7.00 pm.

Stations of Peace by Cody Coyne

At the General Assembly in 2015, I presented a "service" called Stations of Peace. A number of people have requested a write-up, so that the service may be produced elsewhere.

The worship space should be divided into distinct areas – we used chairs as boundaries – with a single purpose or action performed in each area. This can be anything from

1. Counting rice.
2. Sitting in silence.
3. Reading / writing.
4. Drinking water as slowly as possible (an exercise from the performance artist Marina Abramovic)
5. Free body movement.
6. Any other meditative practice that helps foster inner peace.

At the start of the service, the worship leader explains that people can move from station to station, becoming as involved or distanced, as their personal comfort allows. Some signal – such as a singing bowl being struck – will mark time so people may shift in a timely fashion. No one is required to attend all stations; in fact, if someone wishes to sit on the sidelines in silence, there will be no judgement.

This is the "bare bones" of the service. Additionally, I was blessed to have a projector and vase filled with water. Images were flashed through the vase onto the wall, distorted, but over the course of the evening the vase was emptied (to provide water for station no. 4) such that the images became clear. Music by Philip Glass accompanied the final five minutes, with a soliloquy on love and its manifestation.

This service is extremely modular: it can be done with many stations, or just a few; it could be short or long, depending on the needs of the community. The key elements are clarity and support; to feel free, people should feel safe.

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### **The Big Ben Silent Minute Prayer for Peace**

This is an idea which Unitarian peace lovers could get behind:

"The original Big Ben Silent Minute was a peace prayer initiated by Wellesley Tudor Pole, a major in the British Army, and the founder of the Chalice Well Trust, Glastonbury. During World War II, all over Britain and the Commonwealth, millions of people joined together every evening at 9.00 pm, just before the news, to the chimes of Big Ben, to pray for peace.

Dorothy Forster revived the Silent Minute in 1994, and registered it as the **Big Ben Silent Minute Charity**. With the help of the trustees, Dorothy organised millions of people to pray at a given time worldwide, creating a powerful thought for world peace.

We invite all of you everywhere, young and old, of any religion or non-believer, of all nations and all racial groups, to enter into silence at least once a day, preferably at 9.00 pm local time or when convenient. It is as simple as that. There is no need for special prayer or words. Going into the inner silence has its own effects by raising consciousness and bringing inner peace. But for those who would like to start with a prayer, we suggest the Silent Minute Prayer:

**"Source of my Being,  
Help me to live in Peace,  
And save my home,  
The Planet Earth."**

The Silent Minute Prayer belongs to the universe. It belongs to you. We invite you to use it as often as you can. All we ask is that you give recognition to the **Big Ben Silent Minute Charity.**"

website: [www.thesilentminute.org.uk](http://www.thesilentminute.org.uk)  
e-mail: [enquiries@thesilentminute.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thesilentminute.org.uk)

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Conscientious Objectors' Day

In 1916 the Military Services Act made it compulsory for every man aged between 18 and 41 to join one of the services, but also gave the right to refuse conscription to anyone on the grounds of conscience. The lives of those who took up this option were not spared, as many died driving ambulances to pick up the wounded or working to save lives in the medical corp. Many others died in army detention, prison or work camps, whilst yet others were shot for refusing to fight.

I was pleased to be able to attend a short Service of Witness at 2 pm on Sunday, 15 May 2016 organised by Friends of Manchester Peace Garden. This open-air ceremony was held on the site of the old "Apple Market" between Manchester Cathedral and Chetham's School of Music. It is hoped that this site will become the area for a new Peace Garden following the re-vamping of St Peter's Square. The ceremony, which marked the quiet heroism of those who followed their own consciences rather than the drumbeat of war, was led by Rev. Dr. Ann Peart. Singing, led by Open Voices Choir, was interspersed with the reading of conscientious objectors' names and accounts of how they died, eloquently raising awareness of the reality this kind of sacrifice meant to those men and their families. A poignant two minute silence was held before the final song.

I was pleased to greet at least four Unitarians in attendance amongst many Quaker friends. **Joyce Ashworth**



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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