



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 14, May 2017 Contents

Musings from the Chair	page 2
Peace Fellowship Matters	page 3
Peace Fellowship 2017/18 Appeal	page 4
Patricia Earle's Journey in Faith	page 5
Joint Gathering planned for October 2018	page 7
Unitarian Peace Fellowship Vision & Contacts	page 8

www.ukunitarians.org.uk/peace/

Musings from the Chair

This past week we once again saw the atrocities of political violence. At home with the suicide bombing at a concert, attended mainly by pre-teens and teens, in Manchester. Yet in other places other bombs have gone off, Syria where a bus load of children were the target and victims. These are just two examples of bombings. There are incidents of violence against minorities: in the US, a veteran, university student was “lynched” due to his colour of skin. In Jakarta, a gay men were caned in public. In Chechnya, the LGBTQI community is a target of governmental purges, being round up and moved into concentration camps. While there are investigations taking place on the news that many gay men have been taken out and assassinated.

We know each year we reflect upon the necessity and need of the peace witness. As a people of faith, we recognise this necessity as a part of a wholistic spirituality. But after this week, I need to hear the peace message. I need to hear the stories of love and friendships across the various divides of our human family. I need to hear how people of different faiths can come together and share common cause. A love that transcends dogma and creed.

This is where groups like our focused charity this year, Women's Federation for World Peace, are important. Who could not but be stirred as we heard the stories of the work in Birmingham, the opening of doors to welcome women to come and talk? We also still need to hear the work of those who put themselves at risk serving others, by entering into dangerous places, to help and rescue. We need these stories to counter the myopic distrust of the other so often expressed by our government and media.

We also need to find times to be together to discuss the ways of peace, peace-making and yes, nonviolent resistance when necessary. All to focus on how we as humans can learn from each

other, learn to work together, learn that our personal tribe is part of a larger tribe, humanity, and yes, even beyond our species we are interconnected.

To this end, we have events being planned for 2018. A focus on the Charter for Compassion, a weekend retreat, last weekend of October, at Great Hucklow. Co-hosted with other Unitarian groups. As well as the various meetings and one day events to make connections with other Religious Peace Groups.

Even as we experience the horrors of the bombs, the camps, the political hatred. We need to hear and to become and be the voice for peace. For compassion. For a love that transcends our narrow tribal warfare. To this I commit myself anew....

Will you join me?

Rev. John 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 2017/18. To the many 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 2017 Appeal**, which was launched at the General Assembly meetings in April, and is in aid of **Women's Federation for World Peace**. This is a world-wide organisation which empowers women to work where they are, for peace and reconciliation. (see below).

**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.

**GA President's message for 2017 Peace Fellowship Appeal**

"I wish to congratulate the Peace Fellowship on its choice of the Women's Federation for World Peace UK to be the choice of this year's Peace Fellowship Appeal. As registered pacifist for nearly fifty years, I have always felt that demonstrations and placard waving are not enough to bring about a lasting peace in our world. To paraphrase the "gun lobby" in America, it is not weapons that kill it is the people who use them that kill. The WFWP UK and others like them realise it is society that needs to change in order for world peace to come about.

The WFWP works at all levels to empower women and girls, everything from education to service projects to improve their day today lives. It also has advocacy projects at the U.N. and other regional and local institutions. A good example of how empowered women can make a difference and bring peace is former president of Liberia Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. After years of civil war, she was the one who finally brought peace to her country.

Yes, it is important to ban nuclear weapons and protest against war profiteers but these will not bring about lasting peace. Only the work of organisations such as the WFWP can bring this about so I urge you all to give generously to this year's Peace Fellowship Appeal."

**Rev. Charles VanDenBroeder**

UPF HIGHLIGHTED CHARITY FOR 2017/18



UPF invites you to support Women's Federation for World Peace by friending them on social media as well as with financial contributions.

Webpage: [www.wfwp.org.uk](http://www.wfwp.org.uk)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WFWPIEurope/>

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Patricia Earle's Journey in Faith

At our Annual General Meeting at the General Assembly Meetings in April, we were privileged to hear Patricia Earle tell the story of her journey in faith. Patricia is the Midlands representative of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), and her story is inspirational.

This small, softly-spoken woman came to England from Belgium over forty years ago. She has been involved in peace-related activities in Birmingham since 1993. It all started when the WFWP organised a chain of prayer all over Europe for people affected by or involved in the conflict in Bosnia. Patricia opened her house to anyone who wanted to get involved, and they met twice during the 40 days of the chain of prayer.

Since then, she has hosted regular meetings in her home, which has been extended twice to accommodate the increasing numbers, and can now "seat" between 100 and 150 women at a time. At

first, her work was broadly ecumenical, but over the years it has grown more into inter-faith. Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Bah'ai and Unitarian women come along to listen to the invited speakers share what is in their hearts, in what has become a safe and sacred space for all.

In the early years, meetings were mainly about the various conflicts going on around the world - speakers directly involved would come along to share their stories. This has expanded over time into issues of concern to women from domestic violence and family breakdown, through sex trafficking to hot issues such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation. As well as the healing topics of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

The usual format for an evening meeting is that the guest speaker talks first, which is followed by open sharing. Then there is a time of stillness and reflection - devotions are offered by women from different religious groups. They pray for the world and for each other. It is about women coming together with idealism and sincerity, and finding out how much they have in common. God works through all religions. The space Patricia offers enables women to learn to love God and their neighbours, and to overcome prejudice.

She commented that they can feel God's presence during the time of prayer. The meetings are not just about talking and raising awareness, but also about doing things which make a difference. She shared a couple of examples: one meeting resulted in the formation of a group of women from different faiths doing hospital visiting; another inspired the formation of the Inter-Faith Tapestry Group. The resultant beautiful tapestry now hangs in the Inter-Faith Centre of Birmingham's new Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and the group, who have now spent several years meeting together, chatting and sewing together, are now concentrating on making blankets for those in need.

She explained that from a small beginning at a WFWP meeting, large impacts have often occurred. The power of women coming together to work for peace, and a better world. In July 2008, they participated with 350 women in a Bridge of Peace event, which was about building friendship on a one-to-one basis, across religious, racial, and cultural divides. She has organised inter-faith visits to the Holy Land, looking at both sides of the conflict, and the group has spoken to the United Nations, and the UK and European Parliaments.

One of the things of which she is most proud is the foundation of an Inter-Faith Orphanage for *dalit* (untouchable) children in Hyderabad in India, which is now thriving. Many of the children go on to lead successful lives, which would not have happened otherwise.

She believes that it is possible to break down barriers, change concepts, remove prejudice, and build genuine friendship through discovering our common humanity, our share feelings and life experiences. Which bring us to that place where our hearts can join as one. She concluded with a beautiful quotation from Longfellow: "If we can read the secret histories of our enemies, we should find in each person's life sorrow and suffering - enough to disarm all hostilities." The Peace Fellowship is proud to support the work of the Women's Federation for World Peace in 2017/18.

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**Joint Gathering planned for October 2018**

The Unitarian Peace Fellowship is pleased to be joining the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network, the National Unitarian Fellowship and the Unitarian Renewal Group for a joint Gathering in October 2018. The theme for the Gathering is to be "**Endings and Beginnings**", and it will be taking place at the Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow, during the weekend of 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2018. Please put the date in your diaries now!



## 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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