

January 2022

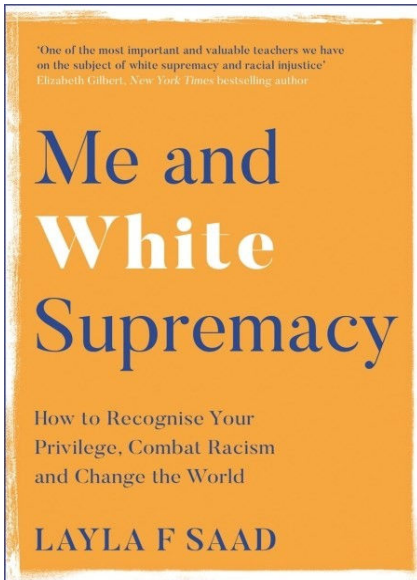
## Unitarian Women's Group

# UWG NEWSLETTER



UWG 2022 Conference  
**21st-23rd October 2022**  
at The Nightingale Centre

**Wo(me)n and White Supremacy**  
Conference Leader: Danielle Wilson



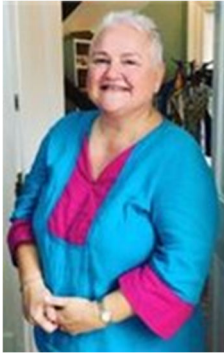
Danielle Wilson

GA Annual Meetings  
19th-21st April 2022  
at the Hilton, Birmingham

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UMS 2021 Conference photo by Hazel



Sue MacFarlane

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Dorothy's garden

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Hello Lovely UWG Friends

I'm writing this on one of those 'what day is it?' days in between Christmas and New Year. We've been fortunate enough to have visitors for Christmas (nephews, nieces, and partners) and had a lovely time with them. Our New Year visitors (again, nephews, nieces and their partners) are arriving, but our grandchildren and their parents are not coming as planned due to our youngest grandchild having a positive Covid test before setting off. Obviously, we are all disappointed, but also realise that this is quite a small price to pay to keep us all safe during these times.

It's been a jam packed, up and down, all change kind of year. We've moved from Belper to North Wales, after having been 'between homes' for four months (not recommended unless absolutely necessary) We are now living 'en famille' - so me, Mr Mac, my sister, brother, and my brother's wife. We live a short walk away from the sea, and have been in often this year – including a very bracing dip on Boxing Day (and another one planned for New Year's Day)

One of the highlights of 2021 was our UWG weekend at Great Hucklow. It was so lovely to be able to see so many of you there, and so good to be together again after a couple of years. It was a gentle, nurturing conference, and I want to thank everyone who attended for the warm and loving time we all had. Plans are in place for next year's conference, and some of us are booked already. If you haven't booked yet, look out for the emails from Margaret for details.

I wish you all a peaceful and joyful new year, and hold you all in my thoughts with love.

Until we meet again.

Sue Mac Chair UWG

**Unitarian Women's Group Conference  
Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow  
Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>–Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

Before the conference, we had been sent a short list of a) what to bring and b) what to do. Bring a basic sewing kit and scraps of fabric; bring an empty cleaning product container or a jam jar; bring something that represents what got you through Covid. You could have forgotten to bring a); you shouldn't have forgotten to do b): a Covid test 24–48 hours before setting off.

The conference proper began on Friday evening after dinner. Sue MacFarlane led the first session. It was getting to know you: who we are and who we are. That sounds like confirming an internet password, but it required two different statements: who we are in terms of our names and who we are in terms of what defines us. Sue provided the template: her name is Sue and the things that define her are singing and sewing. The second session was how we got through lockdown. For some, the circumstances were awful – separation from family just at the time they were needed; others were isolated; for a few, lockdown made little difference to the tenor of their ways. The two main getters through were outside activities (gardening, walking, mindful appreciation of nature) and inside electronics (keeping in touch via the virtual worlds of Facebook, What's App and Zoom).

The final part of the evening was the first part of the AGM. There was a spirited exchange about the election of officers. It was followed by the spiritual calm of the epilogue led by Dorothy Haughton. Each of us had a piece of paper, upon which was typed a variety of wise and thought-provoking quotations. We read out the quotation which was particularly meaningful for us.

On Saturday at 9.30, the first session was the meditative qualities of sewing. It was also the meditative qualities of knitting or colouring in. Our final half hour was working silently (and meditatively). Sue read us an article from Seamwork Magazine: the therapeutic qualities of sewing.

The second session of the morning was ecologically sound cleaning materials. Sue told us that she is often asked to give talks about sustainable living. Her audiences are always eager to learn, but many are daunted by the new practices they would have to

adopt. For the sake of the planet, it is better to forgo unguents and toiletries - shampoo, deodorant and perfume. Food for thought: pescatarians might think 'responsibly sourced' or 'line caught' makes it all right to eat fish. However, most of the plastic in the sea is fishing related; there is no such thing as sustainably caught fish; all fish species are under threat from ingesting plastic. The only sustainable option is to give up fish and adopt a Vegan diet.

With household cleaning materials, we ought to consider giving up the brands and bid farewell to Flash and Fairy. Washing powder can be replaced with Eco-egg, available on line and in some supermarkets. White vinegar, bicarbonate of soda and citric acid will provide the raw materials for home-made cleaning products. Citric acid to clean lavatory bowls is very effective. Adding rosemary or the peel of an unwaxed lemon to vinegar reduces its pervasive smell. Sue was asked if she would give us the 'recipes' for some cleaning products.

Saturday afternoon from 2–5 was free time. After an amply fortifying dinner, we were ready for the evening's entertainment which, perhaps, could be summarised as Rhyme, Women and Song. First was a guessing game. An object was placed in a tin, rattled and we were asked to guess what it was.

Rhyme: Nursery rhymes were re-written with a feminist slant, an example being Little Miss Muffet on her tuffet and dreaming of equal pay. We heard the Cinderella story, as reworked by Roald Dahl. Two illustrious males were subjected to poetic fun: Carol Ann Duffy's evocation of the disagreeable life endured by Mrs Aesop and Wendy Cope's Shakespeare at school. In Robert Graves' Welsh Incident we learned of mysterious emanations from the sea caves of Criccieth. Two poems were home-made, so to speak. A delegate's neighbour wrote of outdoor Sunday coffee mornings. The six East Anglian delegates recited a poem about their October meeting, reflections on Autumn.

Women: Prose selections were written by women. They included two examples of what one hopes is outmoded etiquette: the proper way to eat peas and advice from The Singer Sewing Manual of 1949 about dressing up before settling down to sew. An article about preparing for a school reunion was of particular pertinence to those of us whose clothes have unaccountably shrunk during lockdown. Words and mimed actions accompanied

trying to fit into a dress, bra and girdle when all are smaller than was anticipated. We heard Rose Macaulay's views about visiting a Unitarian chapel. We also heard an extract from Barbara Brown Taylor about the value of silence in an overwhelmingly noisy world.

Song: There were three individual songs – The Ash Grove, Let the Land Lay Fallow and a song in Old French. The group sing-song at the end involved us in a surprising duet: Swing Low, Sweet Chariot sung by half the group, while the other half sang When the Saints Go Marching In. Then we had action songs, the most strenuous of which was standing up / sitting down for every word that began with letter B in My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean. The final song saw us back in reflective mood with 'The Streets of London'.

Margaret Robinson led the epilogue, a short service, with singing. It was a quiet, spiritual end to the day.

On Sunday morning, we held the second part of the AGM. Topics discussed included a delegate for the April 2022 GA, and the themes for future Women's Group conferences: white supremacy in 2022 and women's spirituality in 2023.

Next year, there will be different arrangements: for the election of officers; to the booking form, whereby needs will take precedence over preferences when booking the room at the Nightingale Centre. Giving surplus funds to a charity will be on the agenda for 2022.

The final Nightingale Centre session was each of us saying how we felt at the beginning of the weekend and how we feel now. Everyone was positive and appreciative.

The chapel service included something that has become a rarity in what passes for the new normal: four sung hymns. There were prayers and readings, and a collection on leaving, for Hucklow Chapel Funds.

Angela Cowling  
East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group

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Small bag (outside and open,  
item sewn during session on  
Saturday morning



Thank you for the greetings card sent from the annual conference. It was really good to feel remembered by you all, and I missed the fun and solidarity. Ann (Peart)

Before Christmas my son Phill and I had a Christmas tree walk, starting at Trafalgar Square which has the tree from Norway. Then we walked along Whitehall to number 10 Downing Street, but there is a strong gate and security guards there, which makes the tree un-photographable. Finally to the Houses of Parliament which had a very attractive tree this year. Then a tube train back to Ealing where we have a cup of coffee before going to our separate homes. Juliet (Edwards)



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Shrewsbury Church has a poetry group which collects poems on a theme every month. One month the theme was freedom and I wrote these:

## Freedom One

Ah, they cried, we shall free you from your bonds,  
From the chains of tyranny  
Sign here, and here, and here.  
Now, remember you must pay your dues on the due date  
And wear the correct clothing  
And say the right things.

Ah, they cried, we shall free you from your bonds,  
From the chains of tyranny  
Sign here, and here, and here.  
Now remember to be grateful for your freedom was not easily won  
There are many without it  
Who still long to be free.

Ah, they cried, we shall free you from your bonds,  
From the chains of tyranny  
Sign here, and here, and here.  
Now remember that this freedom is yours alone  
So join us at the barricades  
To keep out all intruders.

Ah, they cried, we shall free you from your bonds,  
From the chains of tyranny  
Sign here, and here, and here.  
Now remember that this freedom had a high cost indeed  
So whatever we ask as payment  
Is not to be denied. Dorothy Haug

Dorothy Haughton





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## Freedom Two

Oh you talk about freedom  
Do you think I am free?  
With the mortgage, the kids and the job.  
I can't just skip off and go down to the sea  
What with the mortgage, the kids and the job.

Oh, you talk about freedom  
And yes I've the vote  
But all politicians are corrupt or insane.  
I can't just skip off and go out in a boat  
What with all politicians corrupt or insane.

Oh, you talk about freedom,  
Yes, freedom to care  
About famines and droughts and tsunamis and such.  
What money I have I feel bounden to share  
What with famines and droughts and tsunamis and such.

Let me live in a country where everyone's free  
From hunger and poverty , sickness or war.  
And I'll write you poems as big as your head  
About happiness, plenty and a comfortable bed.

Dorothy Haughton



A few thoughts from a Unitarian crone ( a good feminist word) Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 2021

Margaret has asked me to contribute so here goes! I am very proud to be a founder member of The UWG and although I can no longer get to Hucklow in October your laughter wafts down to me here in Stroud and gives me a buzz!

I have just had my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, a lovely family event, but I hope I do not live much longer as my body is falling apart and I do hate being unable to do much. My first concern has been to support "Dignity in Dying". As you will know bills are going through Parliament to change the law on assisted dying for those with terminal illness. The safe-guards are now very good and attitudes are changing even among doctors and palliative carers. More and more countries are changing their laws. Our CO Liz Slade is in contact with D in D, but my desire is for Unitarians everywhere to support this movement. There is now a Jewish organisation doing just that.

Of course the Environment is largely in my thoughts. I am a Geographer so I have been tuned in to COP26 and like Greta I tend to think bla,bla,bla but I have a little hope and am taking shares out in "Tidal energy "and "Collecting CO2 out of the air". I have helped to form a climate-change group in my village and been involved with "Stop Ecocide". This was started by an international lawyer in Stroud, Polly Higgins (sadly now dead) and its aim is to have an international law to stop us destroying the earth, like stopping Genocide. New Zealand and the Pacific Islands and Canada are all joining in.

I found feminism in 1970 and it just felt right. Like Baroness Hale (see her excellent autobiography) I never have had any doubts. I have three daughters who are feminists and three granddaughters who are in their teens, so I listen to them and to Woman's Hour.

My view on "Trans" at the moment is like that of Prof Kathleen Stock who has just left Sussex University. What a shame. But this is a can of worms, I know! The WI is also a very feminist organisation (strap line "Inspiring Women") and I support their resolutions with a passion. This year it is "Spotting the signs of Ovarian cancer" and "Black women's rights".

Attitudes have changed since the 70s (now the 4<sup>th</sup> wave?) but

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there is still so much inequality. Black women are still having such a hard time, as are women in poverty, battered women and raped women. The “Me too” movement is a start. Wish I was god!

So that is me. I can no longer march but I have some money and I can still shout! Do enjoy Jenny Joseph’s poem “Warning”.... “When I am an old woman I shall wear purple with a red hat which doesn’t go etc” That’s me!

Love to you all Helen (Parsons)



Christmas Tree in Trafalgar Square, London by Juliet



Activities at the UWG 2021 Conference - photo by Hazel W

**Using conkers for laundry** — the recipe I use is as follows:  
Collect as many conkers as you can. You take the green prickly shells off. Not the brown seed shells.



- ◆ Chop the conkers from the Horse chestnut tree in food processor until they are in small pieces. Dry them in the oven on a low heat.
- ◆ Once totally dry they will keep until you need them.
- ◆ Put 40grms of dried conkers in a 500ml jug.
- ◆ Fill jug to 500mls with boiling water and soak for at least 10 mins but 30 minutes is better.
- ◆ You get a lovely creamy feeling liquid. Sometimes it is thicker than others.
- ◆ Sieve liquid into another jar.
- ◆ Re-soak the conkers with more hot water - this time for at least an hour.
- ◆ Sieve the liquid from the conkers again and re-soak for a 3rd time (this time for at least 2 hours or over night if you can).
- ◆ Each soak the liquid gets "thinner". You can see when your conkers are "spent" they change from a yellow colour to white. The liquid will have a lovely tree/soapy/woodland smell. This disappears by the 3rd soak.
- ◆ Use the liquid from the first wash for your dirtiest washing. For very dirty clothes I would use the whole lot, for normal washing half the liquid per wash.

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- ◆ The liquid from the second wash I don't divide and use the whole lot for one wash.
  - ◆ The 3rd lot of liquid I use for towels and things that need a light wash.
  - ◆ I got the recipe instructions from a Facebook post but I can't remember who it was.
- Karen Hicks



Tea Tree

Thought I would send you this recipe for home made disinfectant cleaner. I use it on counter worktops.

### **How to make a disinfectant spray**

- ◆ 1/2 Cup Witch Hazel
- ◆ 1/2 Cup Water
- ◆ 15-20 Drops Lemon essential oil
- ◆ 10 Drops Eucalyptus Oil
- ◆ 10 Drops Tea Tree Oil

In place of the witch hazel, you can use white vinegar. I like witch hazel because I think it smells nice. Combine all the ingredients in a spray bottle, shake it up and you are ready to disinfect.

Karen Hicks

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Christmas Tree outside of Houses of Parliament, London by Juliet



Sea at Aberystwyth

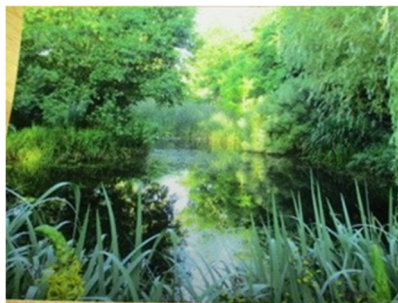


Photo from Dorothy



As I have undoubtedly made it clear, many times, many, many times, we live out in the middle of nowhere with only sheep for company and the odd red kite flying over head - too high for a decent photo. The sheep are most interesting in the spring when we have lovely little lambs but by July they are full grown sheep and in desperate need of shearing. Because of Covid there have been no local shows with a chance to inspect some different sheep and possibly a cow or two. So I have no news at all. We managed a day out to Aberystwyth - our nearest 'beach' and spotted some brave women swimming. We learnt that they belong to an international group of brave women who call themselves the Blue Tits, which seems appropriate. We visited two gardens, one at Hergest Croft and the other at Westonbury Mill and, because I am a great admirer of Thomas Telford, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. You can cross it by barge or kayak or on foot. It stands 38m above the valley and was built between 1795 and 1805 with just picks and shovels and the odd chisel which seems impossible.



Sheep from Dorothy



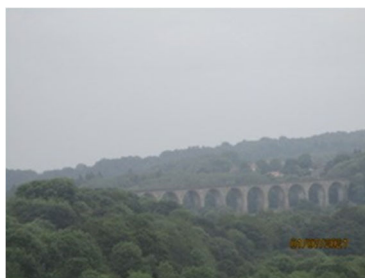
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There was a tractor run in June which gave us some people to wave at.

We feed the birds which gives us something to watch every morning and, of course, attracts the local squirrel.

In January we had snow but not enough to cut us off from civilisation. In the summer I can get out in the garden. We look down on our neighbours, Pen Bwlch, Stone's Throw and the ex-Bwlch primary School, now community hub and occasional café, you can just see the roof in the picture. You will have noticed that I encourage wild flowers which are a) free and b) do not require planting out. One day Chelsea will admit dandelions as a useful and welcome garden flower. I can wait.

All the best Dorothy



Thomas Telford's Pontcysyllte Aqueduct



Squirrel by Dorothy



Tractors by Dorothy



Snow in Wales by Dorothy



Dorothy's garden



Debra Burbery



Jo O'Sullivan

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From all UWG members to all UWG members  
May 2022 be happy and healthy

### **The New Year Greet Us**

Standing with folded wings of mystery,  
The New Year greets us, you and me.  
She smiles a little 'ere she turns away,  
Breathing a promise for each coming day;  
And we, we pause a little while to pray.  
Lillian Gard

May the road wise with you,  
May the wind be always at your back,  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
May the rain fall soft upon your fields,  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you  
In the hollow of her hand.