



UWG NEWSLETTER



2023

Unitarian Women's Group Conference

Fri 20th October to Sun 22nd October

**Exploring the Spiritual Quest
and Women's Experience**

Led by Rev Celia Midgley and Lynne Davies



**For more information contact
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Margaret Pyle

I am sorry to report the death of one of our much loved UWG members Margaret Pyle in January 2023 in Telford hospital from a massive stroke.

Margaret will be having a family only cremation at Shrewsbury Crematorium and in the afternoon of Friday 24th February 2023, at 1.00pm, they will be having a celebration of her life at Shrewsbury Unitarian Church. Bright coloured clothing to be worn.

Donations, in lieu of no flowers, to be for Send a Child to Hucklow . . . A charity very dear to Margaret's heart.

Margaret worked in so many ways for SUC, always quietly and with no wish for praise and was very dearly loved. She will be missed enormously, not least by Sonya, her devoted and cherished partner.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Sonya and Margaret's family at this sad time.



Unitarian Women's Group 2022 October Conference at The Nightingale Centre,
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, group photo

Unitarian Women's Group Conference October 21st – 23rd 2022

This year's conference was on the theme of white supremacy. Led by Danielle Wilson, the sessions were based on Layla F Saad's book *Me and White Supremacy*. The opening session was on white privilege. We responded to the 50 statements of Peggy McIntosh's checklist of white privilege: in all areas – housing, economic opportunity, employment, socialising – a white person has an unrealised advantage. It was a salutary exercise.

We were introduced to the concept of white fragility – the defensive response of a white person when questioned about their attitude to racism. This was illustrated by a You Tube clip of Jim Davidson, a comedian whose avowed racism has kept him off the mainstream TV channels. When confronted about his 'racist and proud of it' attitude, he refused to engage with the young black man who calmly and politely questioned him. Davidson blustered and stormed off the set.

Saturday evening should have been spent at the pictures (of which more anon). The film was *Hidden Figures* based on a true story of four female African American scientists working at NASA and responsible for the mathematical calculations of John Glenn's space flight. They had to overcome the twin prejudices of being women and black in order to convince their colleagues they were competent enough successfully to complete the task.

Danielle led the Sunday worship on the theme of 'othering'. The words of Terry Pratchett were voiced from the pulpit - his views on 'us' and 'them'. They relate to Saad's definition of white exceptionalism. We like to think our liberal attitudes put us in the 'us' group; we could, however, be 'them'.

It was a thought-provoking, moving and stimulating conference. But Danielle was repeatedly faced with what could be termed The Revenge of the Luddites. Technology sometimes refused to work, despite the considerable amounts of Women's Group graft and savvy in wrestling with it. To parody Thomas Hood's poem *November*, it was frequently a case of

No loop system

No mikes

No video

No film.

Danielle coped womanfully with the problems. We were able to see the power point presentations on the full screen. We were able to watch the Jim Davidson video on a lap top – rather reminiscent of the old days when half the street crowded round a 12 inch telly to watch the coronation. We couldn't access other videos, but Margaret has subsequently sent them to us via email. Danielle summarised the plot of *Hidden Figures*. It is available via streaming services and DVD. [Wikipedia informs me that there is also a book on which the film was based – Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures*.]

Danielle will run another book study group discussing *Me and White Supremacy* and she has a list of accompanying resources. She was thanked most warmly for her skill in presenting this challenging material and sending us all away with much on which to reflect.

Dorothy Haughton led Friday's epilogue, concluding with David Adam's prayer *The Edge of Glory*. Paulette Reed and Linda King devised the Saturday epilogue. It concluded in darkness, illuminated only by the battery-operated candles which we held whilst listening to *Nullarbor Night*, spiritual aboriginal music for the didgeridoo.

As is customary, the AGM sandwiched the workshops. There will be one change to the Steering Committee: Emma France will take over as Treasurer from Jo O'Sullivan. Emma, the Women's Group delegate to the GA in 2022, reported back on the motions put forward for the recognition of the rights of transgender people and against the creeping privatisation of the NHS. The new logo, subject of GA debate, came in for some sharp criticism from our attendees – partly on grounds of cost, but also on the lack of consultation. Next year's conference will be from Friday 20th October to Sunday 22nd. It will be on the theme of women's spirituality and led by Lynne Davies and Celia Midgely. The 2024 conference will centre on transgender issues.

In our social time, wine and fruit juice were available from 5 pm. As is (perhaps) also customary, the attendees drank most generously in aid of the Bursary Fund. I did spot one glass of orange juice, but rather more glasses of red, white and rosé.

Generosity continued with the Sunday collection for the chapel. £134.61 was raised.

And finally. I'm not really one to boast about my accomplishments, but I have long possessed the ability to lower the tone of any gathering of which I am a part. I'm sure you remember the song *Oh dear, what can the matter be?* I hope you remember the 'three old ladies' version of it. Well, here's a new second line overheard in conversation:

Oh dear, what can the matter be?

A bag of Brazil nuts was left in the lavatory

Angela Cowling
East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group



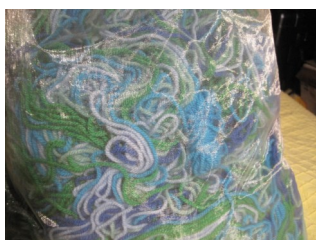
Hazel with Angela



Linda and Pauline's Epilogue

Two photos of before and after of the end of session at the UWG, Conference, in October 2022. They took the briefest of time to unravel until I got to the last ball which I completed over six days!!

'O, what a tangled web we wove', to misquote Sir Walter Scott. Paulette Reed



Tangled wool
converted to balls of
wool



Final activity of the Conference

'Making Connections'

From three angles



Sue
MacFarlane
UWG Chair



untangling

2022 UWG Conference - Women's Group considers privilege

In 2022, under the able direction of Interfaith minister and Unitarian, Danielle Wilson, we examined the difficult question of white supremacy. You may have read *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F Saad. (and if not, why not?). The whole push of the Black Lives Matter campaign was to make people aware of the reality of living as a black person in a predominantly white society.

It is all very well to say 'But all lives matter' which is true but you only have to talk to one black person to find out that in our society black lives don't matter as much. And it is both stupid and offensive to expect black people always to take the initiative - as it is not black people who are behaving badly. Which is why more books are appearing on white privilege. And the first thing we in the majority have to get into our heads is that we may well have problems - but skin colour isn't one of them. Being black makes life harder. You have to say, 'All lives can't matter until Black Lives Matter.'

One of the many things 'white privilege' means is that there are issues and topics that white people often don't have to think about, including the realities of racism. We can't control our ethnicity - but being more conscious of how racism does and doesn't affect other people helps us to make things fairer for everyone in society.

Talking about white privilege means looking at how our own actions maintain and support racist systems and structures - regardless of intent. And that's going to be uncomfortable. Sit with that discomfort. Expect hard work - white privilege is reinforced in all aspects of everyday life, and understanding and unravelling it is a constant process of learning and changing your behaviours. You'll likely make mistakes - and that's okay. But it's important to do this - it's the right thing to do ' Robin DiAngelo.

And read this from Barnardo's

Black children are more likely to experience poverty, have poorer educational outcomes, be excluded from school, be unemployed, and be stopped and searched in an institutional response to knife crime that discriminates against young Black men. Black children are also more likely to act as carer's for ill or disabled family members too. And where a White child might be seen as having special educational needs or experiencing challenges at home, a Black child with the same behaviour might be labelled as 'naughty' or 'aggressive'. You might also like to put 'White Privilege' into www.barnardos.org.uk 'What's all this?' you cry. You are just supposed to be reporting. Sorry. No. If I just write it and you just read it nothing will happen. You have to make a commitment. And therefore I want you to do your own research. I want you to talk about this. I want you to consider asking someone to take a service on this.

There is no point whittering on about how lovely and open-minded and caring we are if in fact a part of our brain that we are not all aware of automatically excludes black people, black art, black literature, black experience. Winnie Gordon challenged us to use more black literature in our services. Black hymns (hymns written by black people) are in short supply, unless you are still using Songs for Living which I think has about four. So, have you done that yet? Well, don't just sit there.

Questions Dorothy asked in this article in The Inquirer of 26th November 2022

Question One: Are you a Unitarian? Or related to one, or thinking about becoming one. **Question Two:** Are you a women? **Question Three:** Were you at the Unitarian Women's Conference at the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow in October 2022? And if not, why not? If you can't afford it, we have a bursary to help with all or part of the expenses. If you can't drive, then we can usually arrange for someone to pick you up from your home or a convenient station or bus stop.

Dorothy Haughton a member of the Unitarian Women's Group

We'd love to see you at the 2023 UWG Conference in October.



Danielle Wilson leading the UWG service October 2022



Danielle explaining the final activity at the 2022 UWG Conference



Enjoying Social Hour UWG October 2022 with Margaret Pyle, Paulette Reed and Sue Catts, with other UWG members in the background



A friendly wintery walk during free time at the 2022 UWG Conference



Sheila's rose still blooming in October 2022. This rose bush was planted in the garden at The Nightingale Centre in remembrance of Sheila Jones a beloved member of UWG.

GA ANNUAL MEETINGS 2023

Registration is now open for the 2023 GA Annual Meetings

This year's meetings will be held at Staverton Park Hotel, Daventry, on 4-6 April 2023. The Annual Meetings offer a time to be together in person – reconnecting with spiritual friends and making new connections for the journey ahead.

Join us for community building, spiritual nourishment, learning, inspiration and togetherness. We will eat, talk, worship, sing, pray, celebrate, reflect, laugh, and make decisions for our collective future.

We are delighted to share with you that this year's Anniversary Service preacher will be Rev. Winnie Gordon, minister of Birmingham Unitarians.

Sue MacFarlane will be leading the UWG Workshop at these meetings.



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FESTIVAL OF UNITARIANS
IN THE SOUTH EAST

2nd-4th
JUNE 2023
The Friars
Ayleford

Building Paradise

- Theme and Guest Speakers
- Workshops
- Worship and Morning Devotions
- Creativity & Music
- Meditation
- Nature Walks



Theme Speaker
Stephen Lingwood
Author of "Seeking Paradise"

DEVELOP
OUR