



UNITARIAN WOMEN'S GROUP NEWSLETTER

An October weekend at Great Hucklow
24-26 October 2014

APRIL
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Celebration of Sheila Jones - Nightingale Centre - Great Hucklow 07/02/15

Cathie, Daniel and I would like offer a huge 'THANK YOU' to all who attended Mum's day at Great Hucklow. It was a truly wonderful and heartfelt occasion - mum would have loved it!

We would especially like to thank Rev Liz Birtles, Stephanie Ramage, Peter Samson, Derek Tatton and David Dawson for their support and contributions; making the day special

We would also like to extend our thanks to the Nightingale staff team. Their professional and emotional support went beyond any expectations.

'Mum's day', and indeed the crematorium service, was conceived and developed with mum, whilst she was in hospital. Mum of course, chaired and instigated proceedings! She was very focussed and careful to include significant achievements and milestones of her life.

She was a very proud woman.

Mum spoke of friendships, education, teaching, music, politics, her childhood and shared fond memories of her family. She was uplifting, inspiring and entertaining. I certainly learnt a lot more of mum and her life experiences during this time.

There was of course, so many sad occasions. One in particular, was when mum had made her decision to withdraw all treatment. For me it was the end of the world. The notion of losing mum within a few days time was heartbreaking and numbing. Nonetheless, I felt honoured and comforted at being a part of her great resolve; sensing her strength and determination 'to let go'.

This time also gave many great and marvellous opportunities for mum to talk to and see all her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren - heartbreaking, but wonderful too



On another occasion, I remember when my brother Daniel and I were sitting quietly at mums bedside (as she was sleeping, so we thought!) We began to whisper in conversation about 'mum's box'. We shared many ideas; the shape, the art work, size and so on. Our conversation became more and more creative to the point where we were both trying very hard not to laugh out loud. In fits of suppressed giggles, mum suddenly said " I can hear everything you two are saying you know" With that, we really did laugh out loud. Thereafter with mum's input, her box was designed.

Finally, following the scattering of mum's ashes amongst the butterfly plants at Nightingale centre. The sunset which developed was the most stunning I have ever witnessed, as though mum had acknowledged her day, with pride - painting the skies with pinks, purples and a magnificent red...what a show! Thank you mum!

It has been a short, but long traumatic journey for us all with many highs and equal lows. I will never be sure when I shall feel settled with my loss, but I have learnt, from mum that to acknowledge uncertainty is to be stronger than it - else it will gobble you up!!

To everyone who attended the crematorium service conducted by Nicky Jenkins and to those who sent messages, cards and words of support and comfort - we thank you for your generosity of love



After a while you learn....
The difference between
holding a hand and chaining a soul

And you learn...
That love doesn't mean leaning
and company doesn't mean security

And you begin to learn....
That kisses aren't contracts
and presents aren't promises

And you begin to accept...
Your defeats with your head up and your eyes open,
with the grace of an adult, not the grief of a child.

And you learn to build...
All your roads on today
because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans.

After a while you learn
That even sunshine burns if you get too much.

So you plant your own garden...
And decorate your own soul,
instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers.

And you learn...
That you really can endure...
that you are really strong.

And you really do have worth!



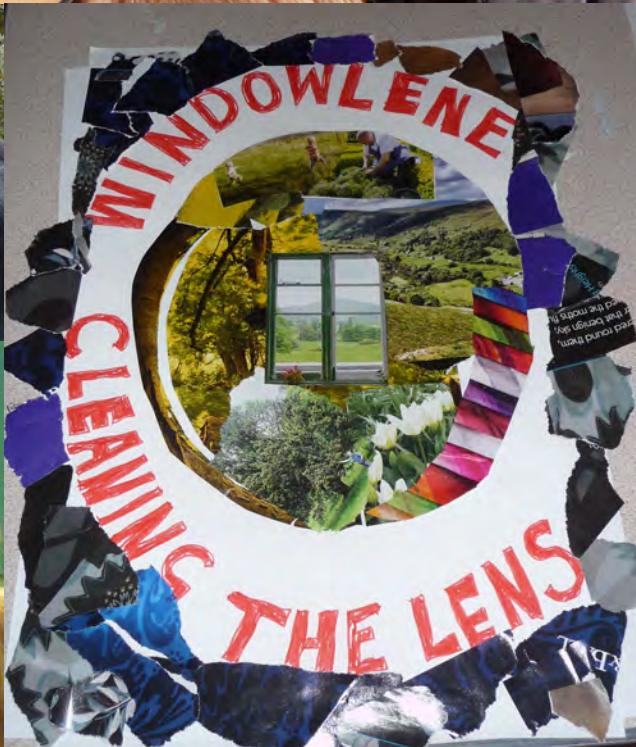
- Written by Veronica Shoftshall
- Read by Cathie Masztalerz at the Crematorium Service

Life Through a Lens: UWG weekend October 24th — 26th 2014

There is a certain magic to being a bunch of feminist women together, let loose, as it were, on an unsuspecting small village — used as they must be to having the goings on at Hucklow in their midst. It was my first UWG, and I had no idea what to expect — except the intriguing title of the weekend ‘life through a lens’ which provided just enough material for banter, light hearted capers through the village taking pictures for our ‘lens’ projects — and general larks and high jinx. The lens gave us the focus (so to speak) to talk, share, reflect and make new friends. The given was our collective commitment to feminism — and to friendship among women that reaches out into the world and makes change. That side of UWG was in evidence — but what was much more present was the need to find the space to open up, relax, chew over ideas and experiences, in the company of like minded women. And we found it. The UWG weekend is much more festival than conference, much more connecting and recharging than campaigning, and much more about spiritual centring than social action. In a way I think and hope that it provides the creative nurturing to go out and do the other things we do. Highlights were many — and, as organisers, Angela Maher and Kate Dean marked our way through the time we spent together with light and thoughtful projects and conversational exchanges that harnessed our creative energies. We had expected Sheila Jones to be there — and knew she had wanted to be, but as it turned out, we were told, Sheila was in hospital — or at least she was until Saturday evening. She discharged herself in order to be with us, and one of our great highlights was Sheila playing hymns, us belting them out to request, followed by Cathie and more (increasingly raucous) singing — this time old-time folk and country. No mention of the future, just the fun of the present, and the presence of Sheila, knowing as we all did, that we were all looking towards a horizon that had now come very close indeed. And so we sang our way into the evening, and on Sunday morning we sang in the chapel, with Sheila present with us, and then we parted, and Sheila left. Perhaps this marks a turn for UWG — if there was an undercurrent for me it was in the tension, in the best sense, between catching up and meeting old friends, and the turn that feminism has taken lately, which has brought a new energy and urgency to campaigning. Last week the WOW festivals across the UK and the world hosted new kinds of voices — and as Unitarian feminist women I think we want to engage with this renewed vitality. and be part of it.

And we will be — just watch us.

- Claire MacDonald



UNITARIAN WOMEN'S GROUP

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 24th October- 26th October 2014



In Attendance

Janet Atherton, Anne Bodman, Dawn Buckle, Sue Cooper, Lynne Davies, Kate Dean, Juliet Edwards, Irene Hardisty (Friday), Dorothy Haughton, Nicky Jenkins, Sheila Jones (Sunday), Linda King, Liz Lumsden, Claire MacDonald, Angela Maher, Christine Martin, Cathie Masztalerz, Celia Midgley, Sandie O'Neil, Jo O'Sullivan, Helen Parsons, Margaret Pyle, Stephanie Ramage, Paulette Reed, Sonya Richards, Margaret Robinson, Barbara Smith, Christine Thompson, Hazel Warhurst, Danielle Wilson

Chair for the meeting: Chris Thompson

1. Apologies

Heather Foster, Dot Hewerdine, Irene Hardisty (Sunday), Sheila Jones (Friday), Alison Patrick, Ann Peart, Patricia Williams.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th October to 27th October 2013.

The minutes were accepted unanimously as an accurate record of the meeting.
(Proposed by Sue Cooper, seconded by Hazel Warhurst).

3. Matters Arising

Dawn Buckle reported that the UWG GA session had gone well with people being particularly interested in the newsletters on our stall. Dorothy Haughton said that feedback on the talk given by Health Poverty Action had been very positive. It was recognised that the charity worked closely with local people and went into less glamorous but equally important areas, often ignored by larger charities. The AGM thanked Dawn and Dorothy for their work on behalf of the UWG at the GA.

4.

4.1 UWG Slot at 2015 GA Meeting.

An email had been previously circulated to members providing a time scale for proposed GA motions and emphasising that any motion should be accompanied by an explanatory document or notes. The Administrator had not received any proposed motions for the GA.

It was agreed to reserve a double slot of ninety minutes at the GA (to be held from 29th March to 1st April 2015).

Anne Bodman had previously circulated information and suggested that we invite a speaker from the charity Womankind. Womankind had already agreed in principle, depending on the decision of the AGM.

It was unanimously agreed that Womankind would be invited to speak at the GA session (proposed by Anne Bodman, seconded by Linda King).

Anne would now confirm arrangements with their speaker.

Action: Anne Bodman

The Administrator would reserve the slot for the GA. She would request that the slot should not clash with the Women's League.

Action: Anne Bodman

4.2 UWG delegate at 2015 GA in Birmingham

It was proposed by Margaret Robinson, seconded by Dorothy Haughton and unanimously agreed that Lynne Davies would be the 2015 UWG delegate.

The delegate duties comprised of:

Reporting back in writing to the UWG, attending meetings, voting, speaking if necessary and carrying the UWG banner, and assisting in organising the table and display.

There is also a requirement to liaise and generally act as a host to the speaker.

Action: Lynne Davies/Anne Bodman

Womankind Leaflets and newsletters would be obtained for the stall.

Action: Anne Bodman

More photographs were required for the stall and should be sent to Lynne. The slide shows created at the UWG Conference were also required.

Action: All

4.3 Steering Group

An email had been previously circulated requesting nominations for Steering Group representatives. No nominations had been forthcoming. The present Steering Group were willing to continue in their roles, except the Chairperson, who wished to step down as long as there was someone willing to fulfil the vacancy. Christine Martin said she was willing to take up the role of Chairperson (proposed Dorothy Haughton, seconded by Sue Cooper). This proposal was passed unanimously and the rest of the Steering group were unanimously re-appointed in their roles as follows;

Chairperson – Christine Martin

Administrator – Anne Bodman

Membership Secretary – Dorothy Haughton

Newsletter Editor – Danielle Wilson

Treasurer – Dorothy Haughton

The UWG wished to thank all the representatives on the Steering Group for their work during the year and to give a special thanks to Chris Thompson who stepped down from the role of Chairperson.

5. Treasurer's Report

The report was circulated and showed a balance of £3387.02 in the bank. This sum includes £1940.60 from Margaret Hamer's bequest. Hence the working capital is of the order of £1400.

Dorothy reported there was a small profit of £115.22 on the conference after taking into account the conference fees and the small loss from the "wine bar".

Dorothy was thanked for all her hard work and the report was unanimously accepted.

6. Membership Report

Membership stood at a total of 36 and members were reminded that annual fees were £15 and £10 for concessions.

7. Conference

The membership thanked Kate Dean and Angela Maher for all their hard work in producing a very creative, thought provoking and enjoyable weekend with the Theme of "Life Through A Lens."

The membership also gave thanks to Cathie Masztalerz and Sheila Jones for their music and songs.

Stephanie Ramage had agreed to write up the UWG weekend for the Inquirer, Claire MacDonald for the UWG Newsletter and Nicky Jenkins for the Unitarian.

Action: Stephanie/Claire/Nicky

The dates of **23rd to 25th October 2015** had been reserved with the Nightingale Centre for the 2015 Conference and these were formally agreed.

Dawn Buckle and Lynne Davies offered to organise the UWG 2015 Conference. The Title was "Inside Outside" and would be a creative experience.

A poster advertising the Conference was required for the UWG stall and web page.

Action: Dawn Buckle and Lynne Davies

The membership gave thanks to Dawn and Lynne for volunteering to run the next Conference.

The membership also gave thanks to Claire MacDonald who volunteered to organise the 2016 Conference.

8. Facebook

Danielle had previously circulated a paper on the proposed operation of a Facebook account for the UWG. Responses had been positive. The account would be a closed group just for UWG members and would only include UWG information, activities and concerns. It was unanimously agreed to have a Facebook account (proposed Danielle Wilson, seconded by Sheila Jones).

Danielle had kindly said she would set up the account and act as administrator and Angela also agreed to help its administration.

Action: Danielle Wilson and Angela Maher

9. Donation to GA Speaker

A donation was usually given to the speaker's charity and this item on the agenda was to formalise the procedure.

It was agreed unanimously to donate £200 to the charity and reimburse the speaker's expenses (Proposed Helen Parsons, seconded by Christine Martin).

10. Bursary for Attendees of UWG Conference

A bursary was available in principle but the details had not been formalised.

There was general agreement that it was good to have a bursary and Irene and Stephanie offered and it was subsequently agreed to run a silent auction to meet some of the costs.

It was proposed and unanimously agreed to have one bursary per year which would comprise of half the cost of residence and half travel expenses by public transport (Proposed Sonya Richards, seconded by Helen Parsons).

It was also agreed that it would be good practice for a member of the UWG to recommend a person applying for a bursary.

11. Report of The Women's League

Penny Johnson had kindly produced a report of the Women's League which was circulated

I have supported the charity Womankind for a number of years. It is one of the few, possibly the only charity, whose aims are to promote women's rights and work directly with Women's organisations. It works in many countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.



However, I was surprised to receive an email from Bethan Cansfield of Womankind asking whether I would like to attend a training day to learn how to lobby my MP to support action against violence against women. I knew this was something I would be interested in doing because I like politics and I am an ardent feminist. At last, I could combine the two activities. So I accepted and Beth asked me to email my MP and arrange a meeting in the Houses of Parliament lobby. I managed to arrange a meeting with my MP Cheryl Gillan for 4:45pm on the training day.

About 15 other women, one man and I assembled on 22nd October at Womankind's offices in Shoreditch. The training was very concentrated and effective. The first thing we had to do was to devise an opening statement to say to our MP. We were given the key issues of the campaign and had to do a role playing exercise involving three delegates where I was given the role of the MP (a Lib Dem one) and the two others acted as constituents. The idea was to gain a commitment from our MP to write to the International Development Minister, Justine Greening, to ask her to ensure all 28 countries to which we provide aid money, place specific commitments to tackle violence against women in

This was exciting stuff because we were going to lobby on behalf of women and hopefully get some action.

The man (David), on the training course lived only 3 miles from me and shared the same MP. He was totally committed to equality for women, had a wife and daughters. He shared the same view as I do that the world would be a better and more peaceful place if women attained equal rights. It was really refreshing to hear these words from a man.

Mid- afternoon, we all went off to



the House of Commons. Not all of us had managed to arrange a meeting with our MP. However David and I met with Cheryl Gillan (Conservative, Chesham and Amersham). She supported our cause and committed to write to the Minister. It was a great feeling to meet my MP and do my bit for the cause. There is nothing like direct democratic action!

Anne Bodman

FOLLOW UP TO THIS ARTICLE by Anne Bodman

Please find below a response from Bethan who was our speaker at the GA 2015 recently. I was part of a group of women who were given training by Womankind to lobby their MPs to ensure that there would be an emphasis and funding to support the work against Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in our overseas aid.

You can see from the extract below that the lobbying and the work by Womankind paid off. It was really good to have this feedback:

"Firstly, a very belated happy new year and hope you are all well!

Secondly, I have some good news to share with you:

On Friday, the Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening announced the UK government will be giving £8million to the AmplifyChange Fund – a fund that supports small organisations working on women's rights issues including violence against women and girls.

Not only that but the Fund includes supporting organisations through core costs (i.e. staff time) and is run by a consortium of women's funds. These were two of Womankind's key advocacy asks.

We are really excited that our work has paid off – and I wanted to say thank you again for your campaigning with MPs last year, this really helped to build a momentum that funding WROs is important.

Best wishes
Bethan"



BEING THE UNITARIAN WOMEN'S GROUP DELEGATE AT THE GA MEETINGS 2014

I travelled from Stalybridge, Greater Manchester to Whittlebury, Northamptonshire as a passenger in a friend's car in glorious sunshine. So, a delightful and restful start to what I knew would be a hectic few days. The new style venue for the meetings, a hotel and conference centre, turned out to be quite luxurious, compared with many of the university campuses the meetings are usually held at. The service and rooms were excellent and the food good, unless you were a vegetarian when portions at the evening meal were small, I've heard.



The UWG stall was in an excellent place in the display room near where the drinks were served in the middle of the morning and afternoon. So I had lots of visitors who picked up information about the Group and our activities. Angela Maher and Kate Buchanan designed attractive posters and booking forms for our conference in November and most of them disappeared. Two new members and one returning member paid their subs and interest was shown by many others. I'd like to thank Linda King for covering for me at two breaks when I was called away to other duties.

I was unable, due to a late change to the timetable, to introduce our visiting speaker from Health Poverty Action. Dorothy Haughton who had arranged the speaker took on that job and Kate Buchanan has reported on its success.

The other main role of the delegate is to attend the business sessions and to vote on motions and reports as their conscience dictates which I duly did. The motions this year were concerned with:

1. the non-selection of the Vice-president for upcoming year. I'm not going to say anything about this except that it was very contentious and inevitably, personal and it passed with support for the Executive Committee's decision not to recommend;
2. pressuring the BBC's Religion and Ethics department to include secular and spiritual non-theists on Radio 4's Thought for Today – passed;
3. adding a dissolution clause to the GA constitution – passed;
4. support for the Hungarian Unitarian Church in opposing gold mining in Rosia Montana in Transylvania where several villages will be destroyed – passed;
5. asking the GA to make their recommendation for GA Vice-president without concern for alternating minister and lay- person – passed;
6. acclaiming the work of the Red Cross – passed. This was accompanied by a presentation from an impressive young woman who was one of the first aid workers into the Philippines after the hurricane.

There were two emergency motions:

1. asking the government to reconsider the instruction to the prison services regarding the limit on books sent to prisoners - passed;
2. pressuring our MPs to recognise the human role in climate change. This motion, full of complex issues, which delegates were not given in advance was introduced on the last day of the meetings and, with no background paper, proved almost impossible for delegates to vote on. Realising this, I moved that the motion be 'referred back', a mechanism in Standing Orders which allows the promoters of the motion to consult about it and return with it to a subsequent meeting. The meeting agreed with this procedure.

As well as these motions on the last day, there are procedural motions concerning the acceptance of the annual report including finance and thanks to various people including the President. The Rev Bill Darlison has been a splendid President not shying away from controversy.



At the Celebrating our Community slot, we waved flags and blew blowers and banners were carried. Except ours nearly wasn't! Anne Bodman had taken the banner to Essex Hall for them to bring to the meetings. Two staff members couldn't remember what had happened to it. I asked several times on the day of the banner parade. At the last minute Andrew Mason remembered 'something' being left at the Women's League stall and ran to get it. And there it was. (Hooray!) We struggled to get it on the banner poles and just in time I was able to join the back of the procession. (Whew!) The UWG support for the Unitarian community in the Khasi Hills was mentioned by Elizabeth Friers who has just returned from India where she has been on a fact finding mission for the Bowland Trust.

The afternoons at the GA Meetings are a nightmare because it's so difficult to make a choice between three or four interesting activities each session. I went to some out of duty eg Local Leadership Strategy Group, some out of interest eg UUA Partners Workshop and some because I knew I'd get some physical activity eg Youth Panel and REvolution. The voting-in of the new President this year was very significant for us, as it is UWG member Marion Baker. Marion, who many of us know as Chair of the Nightingale Centre Committee, took her place with calm dignity, after an amusing introduction, chairing the remainder of the meetings and conducting a short act of worship to close the meetings.

Which leads me on to other worship I attended - Morning Worship almost always sets me up in a good frame of mind to face the day and this year was no exception. Leaders were Rev Sue Woolley, Jef Jones and on the last day Jane Blackall introduced an alternative communion. Spots of worship preceded the plenary sessions each day and we sang some lovely hymns/songs. Indeed 'Blue Boat Home' echoed throughout the meetings. Peace Vespers led by student ministers from Oxford closed the first day. Our own Cathie Masztalerz took a major role in the Anniversary Service led by Rev David Usher. Cathie sang, played her guitar and read beautifully. To my knowledge, she is only the second lay person to have a large part in this service. It's usually the domain of ministers. So well done Kathy (and David for choosing her!!)

I was honoured to be the UWG representative at the GA Meetings 2014 and I highly recommend it. Thank you.

Dawn Buckle



We now have a Facebook group. This is a private group, i.e. no one can see it or join it unless invited by the Group Administrator.

Everyone who was a paid up member as at 16/1/15 has been invited by email to join the group. Please don't suggest who else should join unless you are certain they are a fully paid up member.

To date, 18 have joined the group. There is room for more!!!

If you have not received an invitation by email to join the Facebook group AND you are a fully paid up member, please email Danielle Wilson (danielle@daniellewilson.com) and you will be added!!!

Our Facebook group was particularly appreciated recently by some members who wished to remember Sheila Jones.

Health Poverty Action at the GA 2015

I attended the UWG slot at the GA Annual meetings and Dorothy asked me to compile this short report:

Dorothy Houghton introduced the speaker, Martin Drewry. He is the Director of [Health Poverty Action](#) (HPA). He began by explaining that UWG presents justice issues at the Annual Meetings in the hope that people will take the information back to their congregations and consider supporting UWG's annual cause.

Two memorable examples...

Of the many examples that Martin showed, I thought I'd share two with you:

Respecting local customs while improving maternal health

Martin showed us a photo of a pregnant woman in Latin America. In this striking image, the woman was shown in the birthing position used by the indigenous people. Fully clothed, she was sitting on a birthing stool and grasping a rope which hung from the ceiling. In contrast, the local Western-style delivery room was a hospital trolley in a concrete room. In this setting, the woman would take off all her clothes and take up a position which was not traditional. HPA works with indigenous midwives to ensure that the mothers get the best care whilst respecting their traditional customs and practices.

Innovative ways to spread health messages

If you listen to Radio 4, you may have heard of the success of a popular radio soap opera in Rwanda called Urunana. Mark showed us a photo of a Landrover with its door open, surrounded by hundreds of people. What were they doing? They were listening to the radio. They had travelled from local villages to listen to Rwanda's most popular radio show which includes storylines which help to spread the word about issues including HIV/AIDS, family planning, domestic violence and rape. You can read more about it by [clicking here](#).

More details about Martin's presentation...

Martin Drewry was educated in Peace Studies. He previously worked for Christian Aid and was involved with the Make Poverty History campaign. He joined HPA in 2006.

Martin gave an overview of the organisation and then showed some specific examples of women's health projects. Formerly called Health Unlimited, HPA is a UK-based international NGO which works in developing countries and is mainly funded through government grants. 5% of its funding comes from public donations.



- HPA believes in **justice, not charity** and don't want to be seen as 'generous benefactors'.
- HPA prioritise people and issues that other organisations either can't or won't work on – mainly because the others are already established in other geographical areas and don't want to go into new countries.
- HPA tries to target the 'missing millions' of people who miss out on international development projects for various reasons. 95% of their staff are locals.
- HPA has an integrated approach, focusing on training and employing local people, and strengthening local health infrastructure. For example, they would work with a local clinic manager and provide them with a budget whereas UNICEF might build it themselves.

What you can do

As well as raising funds to support HPA, you can get involved by joining the charity's [advocacy campaigns](#) on maternal health, access to cheaper medicine in poor countries and the Robin Hood Tax. Martin spoke about supporting the Robin Hood Tax to compel big business to pay a small tax to tackle poverty and climate change in the UK and across the world. More info about this campaign here: <http://www.healthpovertyaction.org/campaigns/robin-hood-tax/>

Lynne Davies

UWG report on Unitarian GA Annual Meetings 2015

This report to you Unitarian Women, from me, Lynne Davies - 2015 delegate - starts with confessing to my fantasy of driving round Birmingham, bypassing the NEC, getting tangled up in a seemingly random maze of roads and motorways escorted by an elderly, grumbling satnav, only to return to Norwich three days later with a crumpled unused banner, a load of flyers, and a crumpled ego!

It didn't happen ... I arrived So here is my somewhat idiosyncratic report. My guess is that most of you will have feedback via The Inquirer, Unitarian, Congregational Delegates and others. Thanks to the support of some of you I was able to set up stall with a slide show, posters, leaflets, forms and enthusiasm - it was good to see and feel supported by other Women's Group members who were there; our Chair, Christine, is a great gofer with a microphone! Barbara, your toenails remain a secret between us!

The main conference began with a challenging and edgy film. The John Reilly Beard Performance was a film rather than a live show because the playwright and actor transsexual Jo Clifford, a proud father and grandmother, was in hospital and our wishes for a good recovery are extended to her.

Quote - "The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven", which portrays Jesus as a transsexual woman is 'about rescuing Jesus from the Fundamentalists.' But it's also about Jo's pride in being transgendered. Jo says, 'what I had meant to do with this play was to look at the fact that Christianity is often used as a weapon against LGBT people to deny us our rights. I wanted to see how this could be justified by the source texts; and in Jesus Queen of Heaven I make the simple point that Jesus never attacked us, and I assert our human rights to justice and respect.' - unquote.

This was an intelligent and poetic 'dance' between the present day and New Testament sources, filmed in St Mark's, Edinburgh where Jo performed during the Edinburgh Festival 2014. It raised many questions and challenged 'norm' and 'dispossessed'. So we began with Jesus - that has to be a challenge in itself within this Unitarian Community which often, it seems to me, welcomes inspiration from many faiths and none yet so often denies and is intolerant of our Christian roots - I think I can write that as I have held such a position before - so what's changed? My attitude!

And here I would draw people's attention to the document, 'A Vision for Our Future' - April 2015. Copies were given to all attenders at the GA, they are available from Essex Hall and I believe will be available on the website. It is a result of the meeting held in 2014 with 'leading' (not sure of the necessary credentials for this) Unitarians and Free Christians to share their vision for the Future of Unitarianism in this country. This document, parts of which have already appeared in the Inquirer, is well worth a read and many of the 'articles' could provide a rich source for conversation and reflection. On the inside of the front cover is "Never believe anyone who says we cannot change"

Still reeling from the impact of "Jesus Queen of Heaven," we had the Anniversary Service in the evening. The Service Leader was Rev Sheena Gabriel, the Anniversary Preacher the Rev John Harley - and as a metaphor for the whole conference in my book, was a dramatized intergenerational performance of 'The Conference of the Birds' - A Seeker's Journey to God - by Farid-Ud-Din Attar - 12th century Persian Poet, read by Rev Lindy Latham. It was visually beautiful, funny and memorable set against a backdrop of projected dramatic bird images chosen by Jane Blackall.

And this -



"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrases 'each other' doesn't make any sense" Jalaludin Mohamad Rumi - 13th century Persian poet and mystic.

Thank you for those words in your address John.

There was so much going on this year, in between conversations, laughter, sharing stories, great live music, prayers, devotions, peace vespers, the inevitable agonising over which group to go to and - I mustn't ramble on -

Re Jill McAllister was the Keynote speaker - 'Living in the Whole World' - and taken with her previous talk where she addressed 'Multiculturalism' this was a powerful message to the Unitarian Community to address differences, not get hung up on words and know that we share something important together. She said that 'the most radical thing we can do is to introduce people to one another' - we need each other to grow, to gain a bigger picture in order to become our best selves to live in the world, relationally, 'being in right relationship' - (anyone remember Thandeka?) and this is a vital part of spiritual living.

Bethan Cansfield, Womankind's Policy and Advocacy Manager gave us an excellent session on Tuesday afternoon. 45 people attended of which there were 3 men, and the whole session was interactive. She gave her presentation as part of a reflective session giving space for information, experience and story. What impressed me so much was her openness and ability to say - 'I hadn't thought of that' and 'I am not sure'. albeit only once! I think as Unitarians we also appreciate the way in which Womankind operates, it is evidence based, talks with the women and communities involved to ask how they can help and then works in a way that empowers and affirms women enabling them to then take the lead in change. I am delighted to tell you that the £200 we donated is being match funded by the government so Womankind is £400 better off! Bethan has offered to work with us again, she obviously enjoyed the session. A number of women and two of the men who came have since commented positively on the session, and whilst looking after our stand, several people saw the Womankind materials and said that they support them. I think that her session raised UWG's profile! And I hope we raised the profile of Womankind!

A highlight has to be the acknowledgement and thanks to Dawn Buckle for her inestimable contributions to the Unitarian and Free Christian Movement and conferring on her Honorary Membership. The proposal was seconded by Dot Hewardine and Dawn's speech was gracious, as one would expect, and moving. She is the first woman to become an Honorary Member! Such an ovation and well deserved - and we should be rightly proud of her!

Sheila Jones was also acknowledged, and amazingly, the final 'hymn' of the meetings was 'Bread and Roses' - that is now 'Sheila's theme' for me. How fitting. And appropriate because Rev John Clifford, President 2015-2016, emphasised the roles and value of women in his speech. He acknowledged that in hard times it is women who suffer most. I didn't think that he was relegating women to the victim role, rather acknowledging a truth.

So much I haven't included I will finish with mentioning the communion held on the last day. Proof of my ability to change? Even an old bird like me! I attended Rev Kate Whyman's morning worship based on the Socinian Communion Service - 'Bread is for Breaking - not bones or hearts. Wine is for Spilling not blood or tears' - well my tears flowed. Thank you Kate and everyone else there - thank you all my Unitarian friends for challenging me - my apologies to anyone I have left out of this report.

I give thanks for being part of a religious community that dares, that is diverse, that has new ministers with vision and enthusiasm, that has people, ministers and lay, who continue steadfastly over the years to keep the chalice flame alive - for being your delegate - and to you Barbara, for your sparkling toenails - oops! given the secret away!!

- Lynne Davies

During the UWG weekend 2014, we were shown a video about the work of Health Poverty Action in a village in Burma (Myanmar). This was especially concerned with teaching the community about childbirth and the care of mothers. There was a poignant story of a woman whose five children were waiting to see their mother with the new baby. Instead the father had to tell his children that both their mother and the baby were dead. She had been taken to the hospital too late in a difficult labour. We heard of the primitive care that women were given and how the umbilical cord was cut with a sharpened piece of bamboo.

The man whose wife and child had died became an advocate of the new methods of hygiene and health care brought to the village by HPA. They also brought clean water and improved sanitation and children were vaccinated against the most common diseases.



The following is a poem / reflection of my own childbirth experience:

I never even thought about death through childbirth.

Natural.

That was all the rage when I gave birth to Sarah.

I needed blood.

I had lost a lot.

I lost control of my bladder.

Distress.

My doctor was Indian.

My head ached. I cried;

“Two day blues” a lady said.

If I had been in Burma

I would very likely have died.

Oh the horror of that (dirty?)

Bamboo stick to cut the cord.

How lucky I am.

- Juliet Edwards

Unitarian Women's Group AUTUMN WEEKEND GATHERING

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

In Out - In Out - Shake It All About!

A creative weekend, celebrating what's inside and outside. With leaders Lynne Davies and Dawn Buckle



23rd October to 25th October 2015

Contact for booking: Stella Burney

info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk 01298 871218

Contact for further info: Lynne Davies 01603

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DIARY DATES



23-25 October 2015

UWG Annual Meeting @ Great Hucklow

* * *

October 2015 - UWG Annual Subs due for 2015/16

Please send to Dorothy Haughton, address in UWG Contacts box.

If you require a receipt, please send SAE with your payment.

* * *

30/3/16-2/4/16— General Assembly @ Birmingham

Please join us & help by keeping your membership subscription up-to-date.

Membership year is October to September