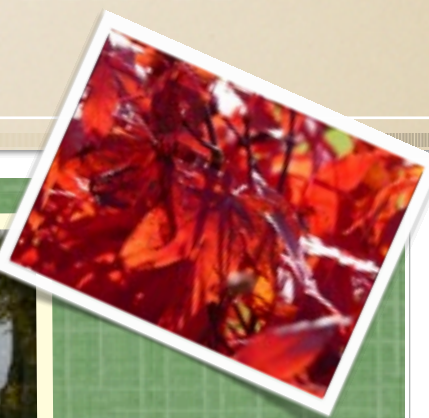


JANUARY
2011

UNITARIAN WOMEN'S GROUP NEWSLETTER



An October weekend at Great Hucklow

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A summary of the Annual Gathering 29-31 October 2010

As most of you know, this weekend is always a joy and delight but this year was exceptional.

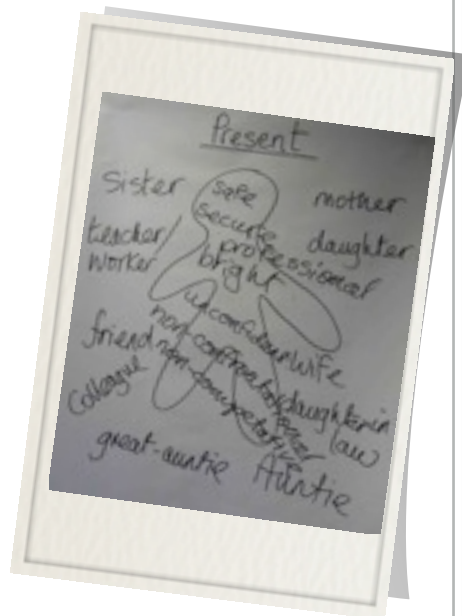
Despite the serious underlying message, we laughed and laughed and had an exceptional time. This was due to Cathie Masztalerz's skill at facilitating and her wicked sense of humour.

We all owe her a big debt of thanks (Thanks Cathie!) The activities she led could be used in the regional Women's groups, so here is a summary:

The theme was "Ourselves"

On Friday after supper we played "getting to know each other" games:

With a prepared list of roles you had to find other women who fitted the roles eg "Yes I am a gardener", "Yes I am a sister" etc. It was a great way to break the ice.



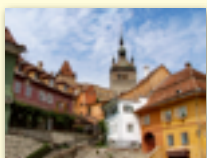
Next, a famous name was stuck on your back on a Post-It Note and you had to discover who it was by asking everybody else pertinent questions about your mystery identity.

Lastly, in groups of two you had to draw a likeness of your partner while keeping your hand hidden under a towel. There were some amazing results which were

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

For the past twenty years Unitarian **Cynthia Richardson** from Manchester has committed her time and effort, travelling to Romania for Woman Link.

These trips were organised to provide vitally needed facilities in pre-natal and post-natal care that were lacking for women there.



She has visited hospitals in Odorheiu Secuiesc and Sighisoara to see

at first hand the benefits that Unitarian monies have made to the women. This was made possible with the help of generous grants and donations both from the Women's League, the Women's Group and many individuals and congregations.

Some examples of the gynaecological advances that have been achieved are a decline in the number of abortions and the relieving of the suffering of the women patients by providing laparoscopes and foetal heart monitors.



For women to take a full and proper role in society they require the health care that we take for granted in this country. Therefore to acknowledge Cynthia's admirable involvement, the Women's League and the Women's Group have combined together and sent her gift vouchers as a token of our appreciation.

Surely Cynthia is a prime example of the 2011 GA theme, Valuing our Volunteers!

The Life of Angelina..



displayed on the notice board! (pics on pg 3)

Saturday found us back on task. Now we had drawings of 3 gingerbread people, labelled "Past, Present and Future." Taking "Past" as being when we were 18 yrs old, we filled in what roles we played at 18 around the figure. Inside the figure we added our feelings at that time e.g. anxious, hopeful, etc. In groups of three we compared notes and learnt a lot about each other. After coffee we looked at "Present" in the same way. What a difference between past and present. It was fascinating. (pic on pg 1)

In the afternoon we were free, walks among the changing colours of trees in autumn and drives out into the beautiful countryside.

After tea we looked at our gingerbread "Future" again in groups of three: what changes we each saw in our roles and feelings – also many characteristics that were true at 18, are still true now, and, we hope, will be true in the future. We then wrote accounts and poems about a particular special moment in our lives.

After supper Cathie introduced us to the "Life of Angelina." In groups of five we had to take two parts of Angelina's life eg infancy and maturity, old age and make up the story of her life at that time. Then we had to produce a tableau of a special moment in her life. We were as imaginative as possible and all the stories were ridiculous and absurd. Each

drama had a narrator and all the bits were put together until the Life of Angelina became more and more outrageous! I have never seen so many women laughing and crying at the same time! Thankfully circle time helped us prepare for sleep.

On Sunday morning we held our AGM with a service afterwards at the Chapel; Dawn Buckle led the service with the theme of Transformation. She was easily able to incorporate the subject of Angelina (after having been dared by a number of us!) Afterwards there was a little more AGM business, lunch and goodbyes.

Another fun exercise was a "match the childhood photo to the real person".

As Barbara and I left to go home, the echoes of laughter were still in our ears.

See you next year 28-30th October 2011.

- Helen Parsons



STILL SINGING

Singing "New York, New York" and "Give My Regards to Broadway"

There we were, Phyllis and me, long time friends,
Striving for peace, CND & Greenham. Real lefties we were.

Innumerable marches in support of,

In protest against.

Has it all been worth it?

Have we helped to change peoples' lives for the better?

I hope so. Many comrades, now dead,

Would be angered at the ravages of global markets, recession,
bankers & history repeating itself.

The pain and anguish of loss, personal and the collective.

For failed dreams, for battles fought & lost.

December is the cruellest month.

Yet still we hope for May – our children still live there.

Marching and challenging injustice.

Yes, it goes on, still singing.

Still marching.

- Sheila

TOO MANY CHOICES

The serried ranks of the war graves

Surrounded them

Almost unseen.

The blurred outline of the real world

Rendered meaningless by the news.

The love, their love, her love

Could die if they made the wrong decision.

Did the need to know outweigh the risk?

She needed to know. She couldn't wait.

She could not lose him.

She paced.

The cold seeped in.

Others walked about seemingly normal

But now she had embarked she was cocooned in her fear &
the heat of her passion.

There's no such thing as the wrong decision only no decision.

No! No! No! She screamed. It has to be the right decision.

We cannot know, we may not tell

We cross our fingers. The odds are good.

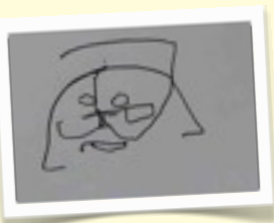
The second time they knew better.

They didn't need to know

They just loved.

So much easier.

- Nicky



*Can you identify any of these
Unitarian Women?*



NOW

Where am I now?

At this moment I have a sense of
being poised on the edge of
'something'.

It may be a sudden, steep drop,
that I can't see the bottom of.

It may be a gentle shallow slope
with few stumbling blocks.

It may be that the edge is all
there is.

What do I want?

Comfortable last years:-

to age without major illness or
infirmity

to be the wise crone to those
younger than me

to love and care for those I love
and who love me

to be a good friend

to nurture my spiritual depths

to develop my aesthetic senses

to look back with equanimity

to grieve with love

And at the last to 'let go'.

- Dawn



MOMENT

There was a moment when I was myself and part of all of it. 'It' was a meadow and a brook and sunlight, trees, possibly cow parsley, possibly not. Not high summer (no cow parsley then), maybe spring or autumn. I was wearing a big green jumper that I loved. It was Richard's. I loved him too at the time – a little more than the jumper but not for so long.

He was there that day but not at that moment. We were four – two couples on a day out in the country – Derbyshire – maybe not so far from here. The other three had lain down on the grass to doze in the sun. I was more restless and walked a little way alongside the brook, and as I walked the moment happened. A minute or two of...what? How do you describe a feeling – calm joy, sense of beauty and oneness etc, etc...a sort of golden nostalgia yet totally in the present. No reason for it. Well, yes, OK – sun, meadow, brook, friends, young love – reason enough.

- Alison



BREAKDOWN

or

ON WATCHING TURNER ON BLACK & WHITE TELEVISION

A book – West Cumbrian Views – lies on the floor,
The picture bleak grey cloud and ghostly trees
and Ruskin and his painters come to me
and draw me back to half my life ago.

Did Turner also picture the absurd,
a television life in black and white –
his glorious haze of blue and rust and gold,
his panorama shrunk to lifeless dark?

Through tears and self-absorption in my grief,
I saw still the great artist's light,
the strong white brilliance that kindles hope
and packaged greatness fires nor kills the spirit.



- Celia



GOODBYE DEAR MOTHER

It's taken a long time for you to be mother of mine.
Hard work and much loving. Much stress and despair.
The history of a mad father and a lost son.
Now our bodies, minds and souls meet at last

In your little flat, in my home on the hill.

Your grey eyes are gentler now as
blindness comes.

We laugh and touch coffee cups.
You are still rude about my French!

What anger
lies behind that I wonder? Am I still
not
good enough?

Well that is how it is, dear mother.

The brain haemorrhage is
enormous.

The registrar waits.
You breath but are not with us.
Dear John is here but I feel like
ice.

I hear you "I do not want to be a vegetable"
What shall we do? What shall I do?

You must go my dear with all our love to 'wherever'.

The machine is off, you grunt & groan.

I weep & weep.

It goes on for ever.

Now you are gone. Now it is done dear mother.

That love so hard won.

I hear you laugh, I feel my tears.

You still live here, in my heart.

- Helen



IN MEMORIAM.....remembering those UWG members who have left us

.....DORIS SHUTE

For Doris' funeral to be taking place here, in this old Meeting House, is akin to holding it in her home; for this is her home too, her spiritual home and many members of our Ipswich congregation are here today to say 'farewell' to one of our family: a member whose presence will be fondly remembered and sorely missed.

Doris first came here almost thirty years ago along with her late husband Clive. After her beloved Clive's death in 2005 we were all concerned that Doris would find it very difficult to manage alone; but our concerns proved needless, and Doris' determination to take control of her life and carry on regardless, saw her blossom.



A wife, mother, grandmother, and other family roles & relationships were all very important to Doris – in fact, a Unitarian friend has described her as a chronicler as she had a real delight and love of sharing everything her much loved grandson did! However, it is here, within the Unitarian community that I got to know Doris; she wasn't just a

member, she was a very active constituent of this congregation. If unable to attend an event, Doris would still ask what she could contribute - cakes were always first on our list! Doris could always be relied upon to make the Dundee cake for the Christmas raffle....did I said always? There was one year when the oven went on the blink so instead she contributed the ingredients all separately wrapped up in Christmas paper - just before she dashed off to America!



Visitors here were always assured of a welcome from Doris and words such as friendly, sincere, fun, reliable and one of the backbones of our community, have all been used to describe her by members of this congregation.

Doris's links within the Unitarian movement spread wider than this congregation. She was an active member of the National Unitarian Women's Group and every year attended their annual meetings at the Unitarian Holiday Centre in Derbyshire. As you all know, Doris was a very neat and tidy woman... but I have seen her in her white puffer jacket, ordinary lace ups and a big smile on her face, struggling through the rain, across a muddy farmyard, into the even muddier field of the Arbor Low Stone Age circle. On our return walk, it was a saturated white puffer jacket with brown spots, mud caked shoes and

Doris, still with a big smile on her face!

In 2002 Doris, along with three others from East Anglia volunteered to organise the UWG conference for the following year. The four of us became good friends and after the conference maintained our friendship and went on together to establish the East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group. Doris continued to play a full and active part in the activities and discussions of this group right up until the last few months. She will be very much missed for her lively and considered input to our discussions.

Doris valued her family, her neighbours & friends and was thankful for all the care and concern shown toward her, but I think what was happening was that she was reaping what she had sown.

When my anxiety started to rise about doing this today, I spoke to a mutual friend from the Women's group, saying "I'll just have to go up to her coffin and say Doris, I'm really sorry, I can't do this". "Yes", she said "and Doris will reply" "is there anything I can do to help?". And she has.



Dear Doris, 'goodbye and a safe journey'

- Linda King
Ipswich Unitarians
6 September 2010

‘Church’ should be a verb, not a ‘noun’

At Shrewsbury Unitarian Church we have a circle service once a month, lead by a member of the congregation. Usually there is a theme announced in advance for which people bring readings, music, thoughts. I used the January circle service to introduce a discussion on Social Justice. I opened the service, entitled "Church" should be a verb not a noun' with

Salaam Alaykom

Wa Alaykum-uss-Salaam

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Feed the hungry, visit the sick and free the prisoner.

then four readings (see box to the right):

Reading 1 Isiah 58

Reading 2 John 21

Reading 3 The Complete Catholic Handbook

Reading 4 Matthew 25

and asked for discussion on four questions:

1 If there were to be a Social Justice Officer with responsibility for raising awareness of significant social issues, would this congregation be willing to respond?

2 How would this congregation respond? We have in the past had speakers in on various issues: Womankind and Fair Trade are two of the most recent but is that enough? Sometimes we have a special collection, is that enough? If we wanted to do something, what else could we do?

3 Various members of this congregation have particular interests and involvements. For example: Miriam and Alan gave a circle service about their interest in Palestine and then invited other church members to join a vigil in Shrewsbury which several of us did. Should church members bring their interests and seek the involvement of others, whatever that interest might be?

4 Is it possible for us to be a Unitarian church without some form of ongoing outreach if, indeed, church is a verb not a noun?

Reading 1 Isiah 58 Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

Reading 2 John 21 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Reading 3 The Complete Catholic Handbook

Which are the seven Corporal Works of Mercy?

- To feed the hungry; • To give drink to the thirsty; • To clothe the naked;
- To harbour the harbourless; • To visit the sick; • To visit the imprisoned;
- To bury the dead.

Reading 4 Matthew 25

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

I chose four hymns and invited people to choose when and which we sang

Sing Your Faith

220 Your life is good

200 What does the Lord require?

Hymns for Living

183 With Your Neighbour Share

33 Do You Hear?

and also four prayers, ditto.

We concluded that the Social Justice themes should go rather from the congregations to the centre than vice versa and that it might be more appropriate to have a person/group responsible for passing on information within the district and from district to district.

We are aware that many people have commitments to causes and charities and are busy but we felt it would be useful to do some things as a church, however small. It was therefore decided that we should hold another circle service and look at:

Will you help us send 10 groups of 20 children each year for a holiday at Great Hucklow



Our target is to raise £30,000

Please send gifts or get further
information from:

The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund*
24 Arlington Drive, Derby DE24 0AU
www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk

*A British Unitarian Social Action Project for nearly 50 years
Registered Charity No. 271585



- what we are all currently supporting and if there is a way that the church can help even if that help is only a one-off
- if there are enough people available for us to open the church once a week/fortnight/month to provide some sort of service to the community, eg: a meditation service in the afternoon for shoppers, a drop-in café.

We are very small and mostly elderly and few of us live near the church which has always seemed to be a barrier to action but we are now determined to be more positive and active. All we do, at present, is have a small change collection for Send a Child to Hucklow, but in the six months we have been running it we have raised £240 – almost enough to pay for one child.

Postscript

Ian Hislop: The Age of Do-Gooders
Preacher George Dawson taught the idea of a civic gospel in his area of Birmingham. Essentially, this was the teaching that it wasn't down to the people in power to make changes, but to the 'weak' collective. Ordinary people would make the difference wherever was necessary, and the movement introduced public libraries, water and sewerage systems, and even Birmingham University can be attributed to this movement.

- Dorothy Haughton



UNITARIAN WOMEN'S GROUP

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 29th October- 31st October 2010

In Attendance

Dawn Buckle, Anne Bodman, Juliet Edwards, Mary Frodsham, Sheila Jones, Jean Mason, Cathie Masztalerz, Margaret Pyle, Sonya Richards, Barbara Smith, Christine Thompson, Linda King, Jackie Richards, Alison Patrick, Danielle Wilson, Nicky Jenkins, Penny Johnson, Dorothy Haughton, Margaret Robinson, Celia Midgley, Sue Cooper, Helen Parsons, Stephanie Ramage.

Chair for the meeting: Sheila Jones

1. Apologies

Christine Martin, Ann Bateman, Margaret Hamer, Ingrid Tavkar, Reina Jackson, Ann Peart.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 30th October to 1st November 2009.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. (proposed Jean Mason and seconded Mary Frodsham).

3. Matters Arising

Jean Mason reported her concern that a Social Justice Officer had not been recruited by the Executive Committee even though the motion had been passed by the GA. Although Derek McAuley, the Chief Officer, had taken on this role and had taken some good initiatives, there was concern among the members of the UWG that from evidence of a recent questionnaire, the congregations did not appear to place the issue of social justice high on their list of priorities.

It was agreed that the Chairperson would write a letter to the Inquirer magazine on behalf of the UWG in which she would;

1. Applaud Derek McAuley's initiatives in the area of Social Justice.
2. Express concern that congregations did not view social justice as a high enough priority.
3. Express concern that a GA motion which had been passed unanimously had not been acted upon.

Action: Sheila Jones

It was also agreed that UWG members would promote the issue of social justice within their congregations.

4. Cynthia Richardson

The Chairperson reminded everyone that the UWG had provided Cynthia with a retirement gift of a voucher as a token of thanks for her work for Women's link. The UWG had received a letter of thanks from Cynthia.

It was agreed that Sonya would draft an article about Cynthia and her work with a view to sending it to the Inquirer for publication.

Action: Sonya Richards

5.1 Proposals for Charities

It was agreed that the UWG's focus was to be an Awareness Group and not a fund raising organisation. However it was agreed that the UWG would make the following donations:

1. £50 to the Margaret Barr Charity
2. £100 to Women's Refuges

Linda King would do some research to find an appropriate refuge organisation in London where the money could be donated. This was in recognition that the Olympics were being held in the city in 2012 and these type of events tended to increase the incidence of sex trafficking. Linda would also provide the information to the Women's League.

Action: Linda King

5.2 UWG delegate at 2011 GA in Swansea

It was proposed by Chris Thompson, seconded by Anne Bodman and unanimously agreed that Dorothy Haughton would be the 2011 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 also organising the table and display.

Chris Thompson would provide advice as she had been last year's delegate.

Action: Chris Thompson/Dorothy Haughton

5.3 UWG Slot at GA Meeting

The focus of the GA would be volunteers and volunteering and many of the slots would be taken up by this subject.

It was agreed that the UWG would not apply for a GA slot or organise a speaker. However there was interest expressed in the meeting of organising a speaker on Women's Refuges for the 2012 GA.

It was also agreed that the UWG would not propose a motion at the 2011 GA.

It was agreed that the administrator would apply for a Table and Display. The cost would be £50.

Action: Anne Bodman

The delegate would organise the display with assistance from last year's delegate.

Action: Dorothy Haughton /Christine Thompson/Sonya Richards

5.4 Steering Group

The following appointments were all agreed unanimously:

Chairperson – Sheila Jones

Administrator – Anne Bodman

Membership Secretary – Dorothy Haughton

Newsletter Editor – Danielle Wilson

Treasurer – Stephanie Ramage

5.5 Conference 2011

It was agreed that the UWG weekend in 2011 would be Friday 28th, Saturday 29th October and Sunday 30th October. The date was subsequently booked with the Nightingale Centre.

The Centre had changed booking arrangements so that individuals sent their conference forms and their fees direct to the Centre. Rooms were then allocated by the Centre. The UWG Conference fee would then be extracted and paid to the UWG. The booking form would be amended to reflect this arrangement.

Action: Anne Bodman

It was agreed that a steering group of Chris Thompson, Nicky Jenkins, Sonya Richards and Margaret Pyle would organise the next year's conference. Juliet Edwards offered to provide a session on poetry. The meeting thanked them for coming forward in such a positive manner.

It was agreed that a list of administration tasks required to be actioned during the conference weekend be circulated to the group.

Action: Anne Bodman

The meeting thanked Cathie, for this year's conference which had been both thought provoking and immense fun.

5.6 Treasurer's Report.

The treasurer reported that the bank balance was at a level of £1900.

The meeting conveyed thanks to Stephanie for her work as treasurer.

5.7 Any Other Business

Helen would provide a report of the weekend for the Newsletter.

Action: Helen Parsons

Celia would write up the weekend for the Inquirer and also send a copy of the group photo.

Action: Celia Midgley

Linda would write up a memorial to Doris Shute for the Newsletter.

Action: Linda King

Alison offered to type up individual's handwritten reflections created as part of the weekend's activities so that they could be published in the Newsletter.

Juliet explained that Patricia Walker had left a good proportion of money in her will to the Nightingale Centre and from this generous bequest the Centre had been able to replace the existing roof. In addition the sale of certain items of Patricia's jewellery had raised £40 which could go to a bursary.

6. Date of next meeting

28th to 30th October 2011 at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow.



DIARY DATES

28-30 October 2011 - UWG Annual Meeting @ Great Hucklow

* * *

31 March 2011 - UWG Annual Subs due for 2010/11 - Please send to

Dorothy Haughton, address in UWG Contacts box below.

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

* * *

15-18th April 2011 - General Assembly @ Swansea

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