

# NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

# NEWSLETTER



Issue 401

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Fellowship Matters  
President's Page  
From Your Minister  
Endurer Challenge  
Talking Points  
UKunitarian TV  
Reflections  
Society News  
Ritual  
Book Reviews  
Remembering Jean Mason  
Letters



Special Feature:  
NUF Weekend at  
Great Hucklow

In the flow of religious thought and practice,  
Unitarians represent openness and inquiry in the spiritual quest.

# Secretary's Page

Ken Smith

## Fellowship Matters

The General Assembly meetings, just ended, mark the start of a new year for the NUF. It was pleasant to meet many existing members at the fellowship's table at Keele and to receive several new subscriptions. The AGM was followed by a typically incisive and provocative talk on 'Sacred Writings' by Rev. Bill Darlison . A full account of his talk will appear in a future publication. Reports of the meetings will appear shortly in The Inquirer and The Unitarian and I shall be posting a personal reflection on the week on the Unitarian Internet Forum. If you have internet access and have not already completed the simple registration procedure on the main NUF website, may I encourage you to consider doing so.

It is a pleasure to welcome three new committee members – Naomi Linnell, Howard Wilkins and Peter Zone; they have all contributed much already to the work of the fellowship in various ways and we look forward to their future input. Two other members, Jo James and Indra Sikdar, will be compiling the Diary Dates and Webnews sections of the Newsletter respectively in the coming months. My thanks to those members who responded to my invitation to participate in the new 'Talking Points' feature.

We are extremely grateful to Joan Wilkinson for taking on the editorial role for the Newsletter with this issue and bringing a 'fresh touch' while maintaining the high standards set by Mark. We are always prepared to consider items for possible inclusion in the Newsletter – they need not be lengthy articles – short aphorisms and quotations are welcomed by editors !

## Talking Point

The General Assembly meetings passed an emergency motion from the Executive Committee deploring Government proposals for monitoring the internet and mobile phone usage of all UK citizens. How private should communications between citizens remain in an electronic age ? Your views are appreciated – reply, as briefly as possible, to the editor by the middle of May.

## President's Page

Dorothy Archer

It was a black-as-your-hat night. The rain poured down. It was Christmas Eve. An ambulance drew up at a long, low building surrounded by iron rails. Ambulance doors opened, a ramp descended and a wheelchair was pushed outside. The assembled party of three walked to the iron gates and pressed the bell. The bell rang. A quarter-of-an-hour went slowly by. Then a first floor window flew open and a head appeared. "Do you want to come in?", a voice asked, and knew we called "Yes". The reply came: "Good we want to get out", as if a deed were being done.

"I don't like the sound of this" I said to the ambulance women, from the depths of the wheel-chair. The gates had been opened by now and we entered the building. There I was deposited and signed for like a parcel

The prequel to this was that I had torn a muscle in my shoulder that morning and was sent to the A&E department of the local hospital. There I saw various people, and a consultant decreed that I must rest my arm completely. It was decided I must go to a care-home as I lived alone.

After a hunt around only one vacancy appeared at that moment. I took it. I later found out that the home specialised in dementia. I was the only person not obsessed with spelling out words. Then turning to my left saw a fellow member of the NUF, Rev Bob Pounder, who had suddenly appeared. There's fellowship for you.

The most pathetic patient was one who regularly prayed out loud in the lounge, asking God why he had not answered her prayers and sent (named relatives) to see her. Had he forgotten her? She always tried to do her best. Couldn't he help her? It had awful echoes of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

If you have a relative, friend, neighbour or acquaintance, do go and visit. They may not know you or forget you have been but will get some measure of comfort from being remembered.

"And when you are old others shall gird you and take you to a place that is not of your choosing."

## From Your Minister

**Tony McNeile**

Some years ago I joined a group who wanted to change the way the Unitarian Movement governed itself, mostly because we were still operating a system that was set up in 1926. So much had changed. Numbers had decreased, both of church buildings and Unitarians, yet in management terms we didn't seem to have noticed. The group I joined did not achieve the changes we wanted but there were some changes made.

There is a similar problem with Unitarianism itself. We are a Movement running at different speeds, not surprising since we enshrine the primacy of the individual and the primacy of each congregation. Anyone who lands on the NUF web site can be excited about what we appear to offer, the opportunity for discussion and the openness of debate about spirituality and worship. We have book reviews and articles in our Newsletter and Viewpoint Magazine. We hope we appear as an 'enlightened and thrusting' fellowship.

The NUF though does not have congregations or even groups, we are a fellowship of individuals. When someone decides they would like to join one of our congregations they sometimes find the experience there quite different to what they had come to expect. Each congregation has its own traditions, its own age profile and generally most are content and many have become trust groups, small in number, caring deeply for one another and enjoying a traditional and unchallenging style of worship in a building they are proud of but which is also a burden to them. Of course there are exceptions.

It was put to me recently that perhaps the NUF should encourage its members to join together in small groups, for discussion, for meditation, for worship, maybe for all those, based on their own needs and with the support of the NUF and the Unitarian Headquarters.

Those of us who go to the annual House Party seem to gain so much from the ambience of physical presence. My experience of leading a meditation group was that as individuals we didn't do that well but when we met together it was really powerful and beneficial.

The God of Love listens but does not speak, the God of Love moves but we do not see. The God of Love is but has no form. In our prayer let us be aware of the God of Love listening and moving and being in our lives. Let us offer our silent prayers to the God of Love. We offer ourselves to be blessed by the mysterious God of Love. To be given strength to deal with the challenges that face us; to be given strength to accept our weaknesses and manage in spite of them; to be given the strength to be humble and to be strong in our humility, listening to the sorrows of others rather than unearthing our own in competition. To be given strength to support our loved ones and all who are close to us. To be given the strength to be positive in what we try to achieve. This is our prayer for ourselves.

It makes me wonder about the primacy of the individual against the primacy of the small group.

Does it sound selfish to pray for oneself? And does it sound strange to address a God of Love without a name and without form? In some of our Unitarian congregations they address God as mother God rather than father God to escape from the long tradition of the patriarch, but I wonder if God should be assigned a gender at all, even a physical form. I feel that God is a presence, and in our prayers we can engage with that presence, and it is sacred and holy. For me, God is the word I use to express that feeling. It is an abstract word. Many people say it is difficult to pray to a God who is abstract, they need to be able to visualise their God as a person, or have a statue, or a painting representing their vision of God. What is wrong with that? Well, nothing! It is all about feeling the connection.

Prayer helps us to prioritise and articulate our feelings. If they are said and then left to blow away like a floating autumn leaf to be picked up in the garden of God, we have passed our concerns to God and can then simply wait for results. It is a test of God. If the prayers are said and we ourselves are stimulated to take some action then I would say that is a good prayer and God is not put to the test.

# 'Endurer Challenge' for SACH

by Tony Mcneile



It is fifty years since the first group of children were taken to the Unitarian Holiday Centre at Great Hucklow for a holiday. Then, as now, the children were from deprived backgrounds. When I began my ministry at Bolton, we were able to send a group through the Council's Childrens Services

Department. They provided the leaders and the children knew them. None of the children had ever been on holiday before and they had only ever seen the countryside on television. They expected all the cows to be mad and they were fascinated by cow pats. We next sent a group of young muslim girls from Blackburn. Each time the children were picked up by a coach taken to Hucklow. They had days out in the coach, walks and games and they were fed. One child wrote that she was given three dinners at the same time - it was soup, mains and pudding!

It costs a lot of money to set up thirteen of these holidays a year and groups come from all over the country. They are chosen because of need, irrespective of faith, race, gender or culture. 'The Send A Child to Hucklow Fund' raises all the money for these holidays from Unitarian donations and events. This year, Stella, the centre manager with her two sons, John and Matthew, has completed 'The Endurer Challenge' in Derbyshire to raise funds. This was a five mile long assault course - through tunnels, under nets, up cliffs and ropes. The challenge is to 'beat the marines'! Their sponsorship has so far reached £2,000. Stella thought it must have been twice the length and she was pleased not to have been last.

Donations to support the Send a Child to Hucklow Fund should be sent to the Treasurer, Rev Chris Goacher, 19 Demontford Rd, Hinckley, Leics, LE10 1 LQ. Donations can be gift aided by tax payers.

## Talking Points

by Indra Sikdar

### **Does participation in sport develop fitness of character as well as of body? Is there a spiritual aspect to sport?**

(Indra Sikdar in response to Ken Smith's question, in edition 400 of the Newsletter, writes as follows.)

This question reminds me of a story I read of a lady who wanted to start a running club – she enlisted some unemployed people to participate. And soon the unemployed people had a purpose in life to get up early - go for a run – then use the rest of the day constructively to find work. Most educational institutions encourage a balance of sports and learning. I find when I go swimming the time spent exercising allows me to muse over any challenges faced in the day – and I usually get a solution by the end of the exercise.

## Launch of UKunitarian TV

by Joan Wilkinson

UKunitarian TV has just been launched and congratulations are due to James Barry. It is now possible to see Unitarian video material just by visiting [www.nufonline.org.uk](http://www.nufonline.org.uk), scrolling down the menu and clicking on to the appropriate link. There are already several audio services to choose from plus a choice of other material. The publicity training workshops from the recent UCCN weekend are there in video for those who wish to learn more about presenting good images plus other promotional material. The Sunday Service at the Old Chapel, Hucklow led by Rev Dr Ann Peart, on that same weekend, was directly linked to the workshops of the previous day and can be heard as an audio presentation.

Hopefully this resource will go some way to accessing Unitarian worship for those NUF members who cannot get to a local congregation. James has already managed to include some of the presentations given at the GA Meetings at Keele. Perhaps the NUF can submit their own material in the future.

## Reflections

*When you go down to the shore's edge my friends, what do you see?*

1st Voice I see rock pools full of storm dirty grey water,  
red plastic rubbished, crumpled and torn,  
a sightless fish stripped stark ugly to the bone,  
thong weed fronds garishly slimy bright,  
viridian treachery of algae paths underfoot.

2nd Voice I see rock pools teeming with microcosmic new life,  
A sweet peony shore-blown to its resting place,  
a delicate skeleton marvellous in its symmetry,  
kelp and bladder wrack decorating the sands,  
green algae finely patterned against the rocks.

1st Voice I see men with faces harsh with bleak despair  
mirrored in a sky dark with swirling clouds,  
tearful children grapple with sharp edged rain,  
small boats founder amongst scum tipped waves  
in an ocean polluted by an uncaring world.

2nd Voice I see men take to the sea beneath the dark sky,  
speeding their orange craft through the pounding waves  
to recover the small boats' foundering,  
and children laugh as they pit their small strength  
against the whirling rain's boisterous battle cry.

1st Voice I see a thousand fall exhausted on this sad shore,  
and the poisoned ocean give up its dead  
to a land dying of neglect under a fiery sun,  
men and children lost to a cruel oblivion,  
and my glass half empty dashed against the rocks.



2nd Voice I see a shining time laid out before us,  
life and love prevailing the shore lives again,  
our glasses half full shall be replenished,  
our land once desolate will blossom anew  
and a great Te Deum fill the wide sky with glory.

*Naomi Linnell*



## Unitarian Societies

by Tony McNeile

Unitarianism is like a coloured cloth. The warp is the worshipping groups - congregations and fellowships and the weft is the societies who are the special interest groups who draw their membership from the whole Movement. They are an opportunity for like minded people who share the ethos of Unitarianism to meet together for specific interests. They include: The Meditational Fellowship, the Historical Society, the Psychical Society, the Earth Spirit Network, RE Week and Experience Week, Winter Walking Group, Children and Youth groups run by a Unitarian leader. Contact details can be found on the web site: [www.unitariansocieties.org.uk](http://www.unitariansocieties.org.uk) but in these pages we will be looking at some in more detail.

# Reflections on a first visit to the NUF Weekend

by Jo James



I'm a new member of the National Unitarian Fellowship, I recently moved to an area not blessed with a Unitarian congregation nearby and the NUF website is an ideal resource for me; a space to read and share in ideas and debate. I noticed that the theme of their annual meeting this year was Sacred Texts. As I'm currently studying Biblical theology I decided to overcome my hesitancy and book a place.

The group of NUF members I met at The Nightingale Centre embodied the Unitarian principles of welcome and inclusivity and demonstrated immediately the intellectual rigour, insight and delight in discourse that I had hoped I might encounter. Tony McNeil and Louse Rogers had devised a structured and participatory writing programme beginning on Friday evening, first with introductions to each other and then to our theme.

While we acknowledged the central importance of those ancient scriptures that centuries of worship have sanctified, we defined 'Sacred Texts' for the purposes of the weekend's exploration as any texts which document our connection to the divine. We decided that contemporary texts could be considered sacred insofar as their intended purpose and action tended to sustain our spiritual growth. This emphasis encouraged participants to enlarge their understanding of themselves as writers and in particular to begin writing towards the sacred. The following day a six word exercise, a five minute "free write", and a longer meditation inspired by a walk in the beautiful November afternoon formed a satisfyingly organic way in to a profound investigation. EM Forster's consideration that a writer investigates his or her individual consciousness through the act of writing; "*How do I know what I think until I see what I say?*" could, we found, be extended to the realm of the sacred. This inspiring work session concluded with participants making video recordings of the meditations written while walking.

I was grateful to get to know in a short space of time, a diverse and dynamic group of people whose immediate friendship reflects the lively currency of the long tradition of Unitarian intellectual interaction and fellowship.

# Response to evil actions

by Peter Zoné

Friday the 22nd July 2011 will always be a landmark in Norwegian history. During a few horrific hours that afternoon, a young Norwegian man named Anders Behring Brevik, first placed a powerful car bomb in the Government building quarters of central Oslo, which destroyed several Government buildings and killed a handful of people. Some of the buildings are so damaged, that it is still (Nov 2011) an open question, if they can be rebuilt or if they must be completely demolished.

After the bombing, Anders, then disguised as a policeman, headed out to the youth camp on the small island of Utoeya (outer island) when he shot dead 69 of the 600 teenagers at the island's camp site. The teenagers were taking part in an annual political summer rally organised by the ruling Arbeiderpartiet (the Labour Party).

These evil actions were aimed at the modern, open, multi-cultural, democratic, Norwegian society. Anders incorrectly used religious views to defend his actions. He thought himself as a modern Christian Knight, with a mission to defend Europe from the Muslims.

After the initial response of shock, the Norwegian society from the Royal Family, the Government, all the Parliament parties, all legitimate organisations and the entire population responded by saying and showing, the only possible counter-action is to be more open, more democratic and care for each other even more than previously. Love each other more than ever before.

There is now a recently erected stone monument in the centre of Oslo, with the inscription "Kjaerlghet er allt" (Love is everything).

*Peter wrote this piece for one of the creative writing exercises at the NUF Weekend. (Ed. Note)*

Love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence.

*Erich Fromm 1900-1980*

# Sharing Sacred Time

by Wade Miller-Knight

I experienced a weekend that seemed purposeful, focused, and substantial, fully bringing to fruition its planned intentions, yet without feeling bustle-busy with a thousand and fourteen flustersome choices. I felt no sense of rush or of being hustled. To me, the leadership was subtle and skilful: effective steering to keep us on course, but without bossiness.

I have rarely been in a group that was mostly men yet so peaceful, gentle, co-operating... and free from insensitivity, cutting comments, harsh or loud voices, rambling off-focus waffle, or people evidently suffering from I, I, ... "I trouble". No-one was "hogging the microphone". I felt a non-competitive energy where all nine participants contributed abundantly from our diverse perspectives and life experiences. Everyone was gladly listening attentively when one person was speaking.

I felt accepted as a person and delightfully connected with, and safe to share openly in this heart-centred environment. There were differences such as we know to expect in any Unitarian gathering, however small; yet, without divisiveness. For example, one person about whom I said to myself on first impression 'is going to be difficult for me' because of obvious theological difference became a person I related with well, our mutual understanding growing from gentleness, kindness, and genuine respect.

Workshop participants co-operating together felt positively guided and motivated by a shared depth of caring for spiritual life and a gladness to contribute to nurturing the spirituality of other people in the Unitarian community at large.

The next workshop will be at Hucklow from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4th November this year. The intention is to create resources that Unitarians can use for experiencing worship in their own homes. The aim is to enrich the quality of the worship that people, especially NUF members, can practise themselves without going to a church.

# Ritual and Wholeness

by Lucy Harris

On digesting the newsletter I was left with two ideas: from Ken Smith, that there is something fundamental missing in Alain de Botton's vision of rituals for atheists, and from Warwick Fox (via George Cope), that it is impossible for us to love every particular instance of a "human unit".

I went to a Christian (C of E) service last Sunday, based on the Taizé ritual, and it had the theme of healing. In it there was a very powerful reading ("*The things he carried*", by Stephen Cottrell) in which there was a repeated couplet:

"And He sees us for what we are.  
And He loves us."

In the slow silence of the service, this gradually seeped in, as there was no challenge, or debate, in that form of service. It appeals to our deepest consciousness – the deep hunger to be loved unconditionally that we inherit from our infancy and childhood. The couplet gives us hope. Hope is not rational but in even small doses it is nourishing in a way that is essential, like vitamins, or the yeast in bread, and it is what gets us out of bed, and keeps us walking on.

The wonder that the traditional Christian churches work so hard to spread is that there could be a power that loves us no matter what we do, that everyone is included in this, that there was someone on Earth who loved everyone without exception – which is instinctively felt to be impossible, a marvel, an attribute that only God could have, impossible for humans to do. We don't have to get into arguments with mainstream churches over whether Jesus is the source, or the supreme describer and exponent, of this power to be able to stand with them in that wonder.

Returning to the Taizé service: on feeling en-wholed, or healed, by that wonder, that revelation, that hearing yet again of the couplet:

"And He sees us for what we are.

yet we keep trying. We look for subsequent rituals that reproduce the sensation, because it feels so good, so fulfilling, so satisfying; and our behaviour afterwards is materially affected, which in turn affects our experience of life. After a while a habit is fixed, and life for us and those around us is different as a result of what we have personally experienced deep inside, during the recognition of the meaning of those words.

And so we come back to the “what is missing” in the Alain de Botton rituals for atheists. The passion, which is the spark that has led to martyrdom and inspiration by turns, is surely the conviction that this impossible task, this task to love everyone no matter what, is nonetheless something that must be attempted. And in the attempt it benefits not only the attempter but the broadest range of persons that the attempter comes into contact with, or engages with. Traditional Christian teachers report that I surely will and must fail, but it is worth my attempt. For in fighting my reluctance to revere each and every person, in disciplining myself to try to do away with everything in myself that might block their way to hope and wholeness and growth, I myself become a different person – patient, nurturing, slow to anger, able to sit in humility with the inherent brokenness – a wounded healer able to stand in needy solidarity with others; more grounded, more resilient; having made good on my intrinsic, yet almost certainly unexpressed, promise to myself to do something meaningful with my life. There is great challenge, failure and growth in keeping on trying to love everyone in spite of oneself (to answer Warwick Fox) – this has been described as “the great Christian enterprise,” and it is that that the rituals aim at (to answer Alain de Botton).

The function of ritual...is to give form to the human life, not in the way of a mere surface arrangement, but in depth.

*Joseph Campbell 1904-1987*

Accustom yourself gradually to carry Prayer into all your daily occupation -- speak, act, work in peace, as if you were in prayer, as indeed you ought to be.

*François Fénelon 1651-1715*

## BOOK REVIEWS

by Joan Wilkinson

*A*  
**DIAMOND**  
*in the SKY*

### A DIAMOND IN THE SKY

By Margaret Pelling

Publisher: Honno 2011

Available from Amazon at £8.09



This second novel, by Margaret Pelling, long-time member of the Chapel Society at Harris Manchester College Oxford, *A Diamond in the Sky* published in 2011 by Honno, is just as much of a page-turner as her first, *Work For Four Hands*, but shows a more mature novelist. Her first novel was gripping but the latest book leaves the reader thinking, about the characters and issues raised, for long afterwards. It has a depth of insight into the slow breakdown of psychological descent into deep depression following the trauma of losing a baby, through cot-death, followed by the break down of a marriage.

Initially the book was confusing as characters are introduced to us and the scene set, but readers should not be deterred. There are two sets of adult twins, Syd and Dora, and their friends Tom and Tommy. Dora lost her baby through cot death and three years later is still grieving that loss. She lives separately from her husband. Tom, a teacher and divorcee, grows too close to one of his very bright students, Mel, who becomes pregnant by him before she is 18. Larry is a lumbering maintenance man at the college where Dora works. The reader is in for many surprises as the story unfolds through the eyes of Dora, Tom, Mel and Larry.

The action is set almost always in Oxford giving the book a strong sense of place. The story takes place from February until September of one year. We are taken into the minds and lives of real people as each of the four central characters presents the action as it happens to them. The author follows an increasingly common device of presenting the story in discreet sections presented by each of the four characters. We see into their minds, coming to understand how each understands their world and relationships with the resulting behaviour and consequences.

The story addresses the profound moral, human dilemma; 'Why do good people do bad things?' The four central characters in the book are each vulnerable and flawed in some way. Yet it is in their full humanity that we can

identify with their actions. Emotional traumas experienced by each of these characters become more and more complex as the story proceeds. In spite of nervous breakdowns and actions that break the law and flout the norms of society, we recognise the complexities that make up the lives of all human beings. We find ourselves going beyond judging to witness the power of kindness, care and the saving nature of love, with the resolution going beyond the stereotypical norm of how we should live together.

This is a wonderful book and even though I have read it twice, there is no doubt that I shall return to it at a later date and discover other insights missed on these first readings. It's not often I find myself re-reading a novel in order to appreciate its craft, only to find myself being drawn once again into the lives of the characters and turning the pages all too quickly in spite of knowing how the story ends. This is certainly a book I would recommend to all our NUF fiction readers. I would also encourage readers to visit: [www.margaretpelling.co.uk](http://www.margaretpelling.co.uk) to learn more about the poetry, short stories, work and life of this Unitarian novelist.

The three books, from the NUF Book Collection, by Leonard Mason, who conducted his ministry in both England and Canada, are all short and continue to be very readable. All three are published by the Lindsey Press, the first being a sermon delivered at the Great Meeting, Leicester in 1959 titled: *Unitarian Bridge Builders*. Highlighted are the difficulties many Unitarians had, and continue to have, of promoting their faith without the missionary zeal of other faiths. We are people who have no wish to impose our beliefs on others but do have a zeal for listening and learning as we build bridges with other faiths and those of none. At the time of the sermon there was the need to understand and work with those of the Jewish religious tradition and we now see the fruits of that bridge building promoted by Leonard Mason. The second booklet, *Hinge of the Year – Christmas Crosstalk*, 1967, brings together science in conversation with legend and myth and is a welcome re-discovery of good Unitarian material suitable for the season. *Bold Antiphony – Meditations in Contrasting Moods*, 1967, the last of the three publications, currently sits on my bedside table, having become a favourite of mine. On each facing page is a poem that addresses the paradoxical nature of human experience. The last two booklets in particular I would highly recommend as devotional nourishment for the soul.



# Jean Mason remembered

by Howard Wilkins & Others



It is hard to remember where I first met Jean Mason; she seemed to be ever-present spotting people who were there for the first time and not quite sure what to do, finding out their name and coming to chat to you like an old friend, as well as finding time to talk to all her old friends. She was a passionate support of Religious Education, finding not only the time to attend UK events but US ones at Star Island, New Hampshire, where she found numerous new friends.

She will be sorely missed at Unitarian RE Summer School, an annual event at Great Hucklow she helped to found, and which she served as its Dean for several years.

She was ever-present at the annual General Assembly meetings of the UK Unitarians, and like me was an Associate Member, and shared my regret that as such we were able to speak but not vote at the meetings.

And Jean will never be far from my computer because among the downloads is a copy of the Meg Barnhouse CD, "Mango Thoughts in a Meatloaf Town", which contains the track "All Will Be Well" based on a saying by Dame Julian of Norwich, which Jean introduced to RE Summer School a couple of years ago, and Meg Barnhouse is supposed to have written an extra verse especially for Jean when they met at Star Island RE Summer School. And as long as Jean's memory lives on and inspires other people "All will be well". In fact the words appeared on the order of service for her memorial celebration.

## Joan Wilkinson writes:

It was at Hucklow Summer School that I first met Jean, this larger than life woman, who immediately welcomed me with a 'Jean hug', as if she had known me for a long time. At this time Jean was Dean, outgoing, open, generous and caring. I watched and experienced first-hand the gift she had of being there for everyone, tremendous fun yet very able to respond sensitively, when the occasion required.

Even at that time she had already come through cancer, but that didn't hold her back in any way. She was always looking forward as to how she could encourage other to catch and run with the vision she had, of learning, loving and transforming themselves and the movement through education.

Jean was a well-rounded person in every way and we shall miss her.

### **Sheila Jones writes:**

I'm sure Jean's death has knocked people back a bit as she was such a special person with a big heart. She made every individual feel special. I was sorry not to be able to join her friends to say goodbye to her on Saturday. I was pleased to hear that she had particularly wanted people to wear bright coloured clothes – that was typical Jean.

### **Tony McNeile writes:**

I know here have been many tributes to Jean for her contributions to the life of the Unitarian Movement – RE, Summer School, GA Council etc but I will always remember her for her bubbly friendship and hospitality. An invitation to take a service at Fulwood Chapel came with an invitation to stay at their house and have a meal. We would quaff a little wine and discuss the gossip that was doing the rounds of the Unitarian Village Green at the time. Afterwards we would all watch Match of the Day and I learnt from Gavin the trick of using the mute button on the 'two Alans'.

When we met at the GA, Jean would know where the evening's party was going to be and who would be gathered there. It always involved heated discussion on how to improve the Unitarian Movement and hypothetical exercises in moving ministers to different congregations. Jean had a network of friends and the last time I spoke to her she had been to the funeral of my friend Robin Boyes and had much to tell about it. I shall remember Jean's welcomes and greetings that came with, 'Hello, dear, guess what. . .'

## **Letter to the Editor**

**from Michael Ablett**

I would like to say how much I have enjoyed my time writing articles for the 'Newsletter' with Mark Allaby as Editor. Over the past five or so years we regularly corresponded on all sorts of subjects, spirituality being but one. When I needed advice or help in any way, Mark would promptly provide it. If, on the odd occasion, editing was felt to be necessary, the result was logical. The 'Newsletters' were always well presented and few of us will be fully aware of the work entailed therein.

I wish Mark well.

## Diary Dates

Sun 10 17 24 May 7.00pm–8.45pm: FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH at Essex Church, Notting Hill. Explore the origins of our liberal Unitarian and Free Christian faith, from the early Bible translators to Victorian social reformers. Contact [info@kensingtonunitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensingtonunitarians.org.uk) or leave a message on 020 7221 6514

Sat 26 May: THE 350th ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESTORATION SETTLEMENT OF RELIGION. Conference at: Dr Williams's Library, Centre for Dissenting Studies, London. <http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/events/c2012.html>  
[enquiries@dwlib.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@dwlib.co.uk)

Sat 9 June at 10.30am AGM OF THE WESTERN UNION  
Unitarian Chapel, Pound Square, Cullompton. All welcome. Tea will be served after a short service. Phone: 0139 5516787.

Sat 9 June FRIENDS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY SUMMER EVENT:  
350th Anniversary of The Great Ejectment of 1662: Dr Williams's Library Centre for Dissenting Studies, London. Info: [www.dwlib.co.uk/dwlib](http://www.dwlib.co.uk/dwlib)

Thurs 14 June 7.00pm ANNUAL LECTURE 2012 ABERDARE  
Highland Place. Unitarian Church, Monk St, Aberdare. The Workers Educational Association (WEA) in Wales between the Wars. Speaker is well known Welsh historian Mr John Davies. All are welcome.  
<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/info/events.shtml>

Sun 24 July 6.30pm YOUNGHUSBAND INTERFAITH SERVICE:  
St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 4JJ

Sat 28 July UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION SUMMER MEETING:  
All Souls Church (Non-Subscribing Presbyterian) Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AZ

## Next Issue

The deadline for the next issue is 16 June.