

# NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

# NEWSLETTER



Issue 403

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SPECIAL FEATURE

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY IN VOLUNTEERING

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

Reg. Charity No. 1040294

## Fellowship Matters

Ken Smith

Watching again the film 'Chariots of Fire' amid the excitement generated by the London Olympic Games leads me to reflect that although we may harbour regrets that competitive sport has departed from the Corinthian ideals portrayed by Eric Liddell, the requirement of dedication to training and preparation remains the same now as in 1926.

Then, as now, those aiming at high achievement require not only dedication, but good training and encouragement. By the time you read this piece, many thousands of young people will know the results of their dedication and training in the annual round of A Level and GCSE examination results. I hope their efforts will be rewarded by the encouragement, not only of their families but also of politicians and the media who have too often sought to disparage their successes in the past.

We all need encouragement in life, whatever our age; one of the chief benefits of belonging to a church or chapel should be to have a source of encouragement and support, in good times and in bad. For those of our members who are unable for various reasons to have such support, the principal aim of the NUF is to create a 'congregational ethos'; so feel free to share your joys and successes with us; our minister, Tony McNeile, can be contacted if confidential advice is needed. Just as athletes need to 'work out', we all need 'spiritual exercise' as well as physical exercise – spiritual reading, periods of meditation and reflection. At the forthcoming NUF week-end (details elsewhere ) we aim to develop resources we can share with members to increase our personal spiritual health.

## President's Piece

Dorothy Archer

It was the best of cottage gardens. The paths twisted and curled round the clumps of perennials that jostled with each other for space and competed with each other in pouring out rainbows of colour. All this was against a background of taller trees and shrubs. In front of the door was a porch dripping with purple clematis. Perhaps a touch of chocolate box-like but very comfortable and colourful.

A man walked past the gate. "Good morning" called a cheerful voice. "Morning" he grunted in reply. A second passer by was similarly greeted. He looked round with a smile but couldn't see the caller. A third man, who was

the next door neighbour responded with “Good morning Poll” and a parrot in a huge cage in the porch seemed to chuckle as if he enjoyed copying and tricking humans ...

His wife was a dominant character no doubt of that and when their son got consistently poor marks she decided that enough was enough and that she would deliver extra French lessons, at home to their son. True though the son did need to get down to some work. When the appointed day and hour arrived and the son was marched into the sitting room and the door clicked shut his father did feel a twinge of sympathy. Silence fell but it was soon broken by a strong female voice. “Wrong!” it said and many more “wrongs” were repeated at frequent intervals. Eventually the boy emerged after having completed his task. Next day the budgerigar that had listened to the lesson from his cage started to call, at inappropriate intervals, “Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!”...

The third bird in this story is “Stone” a crow, who lived near my garden. “Stone” had observed me. He knew the times I walked my dog and what we did. I was in the habit of carrying a few dog biscuits in my pocket and hurling them as far as I could across the field for “Elsa,” my “rescued” dog to chase, find and eat. “Stone” followed us. Then he decided that he could beat “Elsa” to the biscuit. When he did not get the biscuit he resorted to dive bombing and swooping down as if to attack “Elsa’s” back. He knew what the odds were and never really attacked her. Now and then he was rewarded by being given a biscuit himself. He improved his technique by being on the roof top by 9.15 a.m. and waiting for us to emerge. Later I discovered that he had trained several other humans to feed him regularly...

“Stone’s” behaviour was of a completely different order to that of “Poll” and “Budgie”. He had created a plan to feed himself. He was doing some quite complicated thinking and carrying out a plan. “Poll” and “Budgie” were only slightly modifying their natural behaviour in copying calls to others as they would call to the rest of their flock.

Very young children, it seems to me are of the same order as that of “Poll” and “Budgie”. They observe and copy. When they get a little older they become “Stones” working out strategies which suit their own desires. Be aware if you have young children around you that you are being constantly observed by them and that your behaviour is being noted and copied. A daunting thought for all parents, grand-parents and increasingly, great-grandparents! Be sure that you do nothing “wrong”.

*Best Wishes Dorothy Archer*

## From Our Minister

Tony McNeile

Unitarians talk eternally about themselves - what we believe in; how we express our belief; why is it such a sensible sort of faith yet we do not attract many new people? We are not holding our own because society is becoming even more secular - and so it goes on. But nettles are being grasped, committees have been formed to discuss all these questions and come up with a strategy or two.

One such strategy is to create twenty new congregations by the year 2020. It is a grand strategy and has provoked much debate on the Unitarian 'facebook' pages. To do this we have to decide exactly what it is that we are able to offer to the world.

When I thought about it, I realised how difficult it is to say exactly what it is that we offer. I am certain that first of all we must offer 'community'. Anyone who joins the Unitarians must feel welcome and accepted. They must feel that there is value for them in joining in with the community and sharing its activities - whether it is through the worship or through the social programmes; whether it is being able to make friendships; whether it is simply the comfort of belonging to a group who care for you and will visit you if you are ill, or give you a lift with the shopping. Belonging is an important part of being in a community. But that goes for any community. Unitarians should offer more than that. We are also a faith community.

'What faith?' people ask. The answer is we bring our own faiths to the community. Because the Unitarians came off a Christian rootstock, their style of worship looks Christian - but it only looks Christian. Everyone has arrived with their own faith and if it fits in for them, they tend to stay and become part of the whole Unitarian community. They have values too that go with their faith.

I picked up one idea from the 'facebook' page. Someone said Unitarianism was like a train. It is a spiritual train made up of coaches that have come from different places. There is a Christian coach, an Earth Spirit coach, a Buddhist coach, a Spiritualism coach, a Hindu coach, a social awareness and action coach, an agnostic coach ... and many more. Some people feel happy to stay on just one of the coaches, others move about between them, some get off the train early and come back later. Others find it is not for them at all. No one minds. Individual choice is respected. We are not on a stationary train or

Circle Line train. Everyone agrees that the Unitarian Spiritual train has a destination and that it is towards personal and spiritual understanding. It is while we are on the train that we can talk to one another, listen to other people's ideas and discuss them. We feel connected to the world we are travelling through and we certainly don't want to feel isolated from it.

The Unitarian Train is a colourful train where you will find music, dancing and laughter. It is a joyful train. The passengers do take life seriously and they know about the problems of the world. In fact many of them are actively involved in addressing those problems. Above all, everyone enjoys life and wants to make the most of it - and there is always a seat for anyone who climbs on board. The Unitarian train is not just a train - it is a Spiritual train! Those who travel on it will find a deeper meaning about life and their own place in the world. They often find the world within themselves! So, roll up! Tickets are free.

### **Prayer**

*I pray that my ears will be opened to the song of life. I will delight in the harmonies that are pleasurable and where the notes are discordant I will try to change the sound for the good of all. As I listen may I feel the power in my own voice and dare to lift it and join in.*

*If my song becomes sad, may I look for a long time at a flower, or a tree, or a bird, or an insect, or at the sky, or at the ground beneath me. May I see that the invisible touch of the divine breath has been there and blessed what I see with life and colour.*

*Let me consider how that divine breath has also touched me - given me a place in this garden which is life. Let me see in my family and in my friends that same touch from the divine breath.*

*As I walk through the garden of life, may all my senses acknowledge that touch of the divine breath. I know that I am blessed.*

What good does it do to put a person in prison? Well;

- a) it removes them from society;
- b) it is a punishment;
- c) it is an opportunity to rehabilitate the offender so they do not offend again.

Do we have the balance right or have our prisons become schools for crime and so dehumanising that they set people against society for ever?

Unitarians through the Penal Affairs Panel address these issues. The Penal Affairs Panel is a social responsibility effort of the Unitarians. The PAP strives to bring Unitarian views to the British legal systems, especially those involving imprisonment or civil detention. The PAP was created in 1992 following the General Assembly's *"great concern at the poor conditions and regime at many local prisons."* The Panel was given the task *"to investigate the current situation on all matters of penal policy, to keep the denomination informed wherever possible of all developments, and to provide a liberal religious voice in response to issues arising out of current legislation."*

Since 1992, the prisons, criminal justice and related systems, such as asylum and immigration, have got into more and more difficulties. The numbers in UK prisons have doubled. The trickle of justice legislation in 1992/3 has become a torrent in 2010/11. In September 2010 the UK prison population had reached a record 85,500. The current figure, according to the statistics published by the Ministry of Justice is 10% more than the number of bed spaces available in UK prisons and the inhuman process of *"slopping-out"* in the absence of toilet facilities continues in many prisons.

Today, the PAP's specialist work has the same two directions as in 1992. The first is to inform Unitarians and others on developments in criminal law and practice and current issues. The aim is to encourage interest in the issues and understanding, through information and views, of their backgrounds. The Panel usually drafts and publishes two or more "PAP News Papers" each year. The latest, PAP News Issue 11 on *"Illicit Drugs"*, appeared in 2010. The online "PAP News" goes out to members of the PAP Network and others, including the NUF Internet Fellowship. Members of the Panel speak to Unitarian and other groups on criminal justice matters.

Google the Unitarian Penal Affairs Panel for more information.

## Websites

Indra Sikdar

[www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk)

Our main UK website is a joy to the eye. There is a prominent strap line “many beliefs, one faith”. The bit that caught my eye was of course the excellent pictures which came up on the moving picture section of the web site. This gave a glimpse of life as a Unitarian with many of the activities that we do, attending chapel, young people’s events, AGMs in a Cathedral.

A possible improvement could be that there was no obvious tab such as “how to join” or “contact us here”. By having a contact form the webmaster could capture name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of a visitor to the website. The visitor could be offered to be placed onto a Unitarian National Mailing List – or even have their contact details passed onto their local Unitarian Chapel – particularly if the web visitor was asked to identify their local congregation from a drop down list.

The reasons for the above suggestions are as follows – web visitors often only visit a web site for a short period of time possibly during their lunch break at work – so it’s best to capture contact details quite quickly. Also, struggling Unitarian congregations might like to have contact details of interested parties sent to them for a follow up call or visit. The National Unitarian web site is more likely to get exposure in the national media and so the vast majority of contacts - I expect - would come through this web site (as opposed to a local web site).

Just above the moving picture overview is the Quick links section – these bits are fun to click – such as “What we Believe” and “What is a Unitarian”.

For someone doing research on Unitarian beliefs the website is great as there is a lot of info on there. But for “selling” i.e. capturing visitors contact details and passing them onto local congregations (if that is what the visitor would like) we could possible do a little more without expending too much extra effort. A visitor to the website is probably looking for a religious community to join.

Let’s make it easy for them to leave their contact details and let’s follow up and welcome new interest in Unitarianism.

## The Great White Owl

'Let me fly with the great white owl,  
give me strong poison' she said,  
'and I will drink a draft  
of blessed oblivion.  
My strength is all but past,  
my time here now is done.'  
But he had no strong poison  
to give her, and she wept  
that she must live another day.

'Let me fly with the great white owl,  
fetch me Nembutal' she  
entreated, 'mix it with  
honey and sweet white wine,  
and I will draw close at last  
to death's kindly sleep.'  
But he had no Nembutal  
to fetch for her, and she  
cried out in her misery.

'Let me fly with the great white owl,  
bring me a gun' she begged,  
'that I may find an end  
to this living death.'  
But he had no gun  
to bring to her and she turned  
her face away from him  
that he might not see now  
her ultimate despair.

Kiss me once' she whispered,  
'and kiss me once again,  
this be our sweet good night.  
Smother me with a pillow,  
hold me close in your arms  
until all my breath is gone.  
Give me a final blessing,  
as you set me free  
to fly at last with the great white owl.'

He kissed her once, he kissed  
her gently once again.  
He took up the pillow  
and held it to her face,  
clasped his arms about her  
until her struggles ceased,  
and her soul's soft whisper  
bade him a faint adieu.  
'Go fly my love' he said, 'it is your time.'

Quietly he laid her down  
grateful for her passing,  
and looked out into the  
long night's mist grey ending  
as the great white owl flew  
with her departing soul,  
while angels and morning  
bright stars sang in chorus  
and Love held out his arms in welcome.

*Naomi Linnell*

## Complementary Therapy In Volunteering

Pat Caddick



I was born into what future historians will probably call a 'golden age' in Britain - from 1941, during the 2nd World War, onwards. The only memory I have of the war is being puzzled by my parents gazing into a blue sky at some aeroplanes. Post war austerity meant nothing. For me it was normality. No sweets, sugar, cakes or fizzy drinks (I still have all my own teeth!), but a diet of bread, spam, powdered egg, and cremola pudding. Then came the NHS, welfare state and free education, all of which enabled my upward mobility from a hard working middle class family in rented accommodation, through grammar school and university, to qualifying as a dentist, getting married and eventually owning our own home. This potted history is to explain my current involvement as a reflexologist to the elderly in our village, which I practise without charge.

When I retired I decided that I would like to put something back into the community as a thank you for the enormous privileges that I have received from my country, and chose to train in Swedish massage, reflexology and aromatherapy as a way of doing it. This sounds horribly pious but on the selfish side I only do 4 days a month, leaving me free the rest of the time to do exactly as I please. During my course I found myself to be a grandma figure to youngsters straight out of school! I was often in amused opposition to much of the underlying theories, for example in reflexology, when we were told that the dorsal surfaces of the toes were reflexly related to the teeth; but they accepted me as a batty eccentric. What I most definitely do believe in, is the power of massage to relax a person and to allow the para-sympathetic nervous system to take over from the sympathetic nervous system and, even if for just a short time, to ensure that 'normal service' is restored to the body.

For my elderly clients, the advantage of reflexology is that they only have to remove socks and shoes in order to enjoy that human physical contact without losing dignity. So many lead restricted, lonely,

lives, and my visits are a welcome break in their day. For my part I am treated to wonderful gossip, both current and ancient, with a cup of tea and a slice of home made cake afterwards! I love this connection with the old folk; they are repositories of primary source history spanning nearly 100 years, which would have remained a closed book to me had I not taken this path to be 'a volunteer'.

*The editor would welcome articles about what you may do as a volunteer or of any connections you may have with your local communities. Please use these pages to get to know more about others in our Fellowship.*

*When submitting an article or letter to the editor, please include your name. If you don't wish your name to be shown in the printed publication, please state that clearly. However, your name should be made available on request.*

## **Letter to the Editor**

I was interested to read Tony McNeil's article regarding meditation. Meditation and visualisation can bring so many positive changes to our lives. Although I'm not disciplined in the art of meditation, when I do have these 'quieter moments', the end result has usually been a positive one. There was one lady, here in the village where I live, who never spoke to me or smiled. Following a few meditation sessions when I sent out loving thoughts to her, the situation changed. She has greeted me with a smile ever since.

Meditation can also be a great focus for healing; whether for oneself or others. Several years ago, out of sheer desperation, as a family we used to have 20 minutes every day praying and meditating. This was on account of my severely autistic daughter, Hannah, being very ill and she'd literally scream for hours on end. No-one knew what was wrong with her; not even the doctors and we felt that she was going to die. Within a fortnight of these meditation sessions, I started experiencing odd sensations during these sessions. I had severe pins & needles in my face, strange sensations in my head and everything appeared to look

out of focus.

During this time, a book I'd long since ordered from one of the Epilepsy Associations arrived. Through reading that book, based on MY symptoms, we realised that Hannah was experiencing a complex form of epilepsy. Although she'd had a couple of major seizures (requiring hospital admissions) prior to that, and was on medication, we had no inkling that her illness was due to epilepsy. A visit to the GP and a referral to an epilepsy consultant confirmed the diagnosis. More medication solved the problem.

We are all connected and studies on the subject of meditation have found it to be very therapeutic and highly effective in bringing about positive changes. On account of this, I feel it important not to send out negative thoughts to others as it can often result in illness and general mishaps.

The effectiveness of thought and meditation is powerful. I often play a little game...usually in the bank....staring at people's backs and willing them to turn around...and it always works!

*Sue Davidson*

## **On Assisted Dying**

**Wade Miller-Knight**

I once saw a woman outside a vet's in tears. Yes, floods of tears, in England, on the public highway. Beside her, a man carried an empty cat cage. An intense, feelingsful, moment – even for me.

Now imagine this woman if, instead of an empty cat cage, it was her husband “put to sleep”. “Darling, this pill will kill you. Shall I put it on your tongue now?”

People rarely say “poison” and “kill”. Such sharp truths are “put to sleep” under the carpet.

Assisted suicide relieves unbearable suffering. When would love, understanding, respect not arrogance from doctors, spiritual care, be better remedies? What if it's “depression” that says die? At suicide's Christmas dinner, “I should have” and “what if” sit in the empty chair. After assisted suicide, those spectres may eat cold turkey also at the assister's table.

A much neglected question: when someone suicides, what happens for them in Spirit? The evidence is disturbing; yet perhaps less so for the painfully terminal.

A principle in a pre-litigious age was: “thou shalt not kill, but don’t strive to keep alive”. Would there be less call for assisted suicide if there were less keeping alive at all costs? £ billions spent on chemotherapy and other painful “treatments” often add only one or two years - of suffering. Palliative care professionals claim they can prevent all hurt from pain. So why ever not prevent it? Or: a suffering patient wilfully keeps disconnecting life-sustaining tubes. Do nothing, they’ll die. Do you reconnect them? Might laws be changed so no-one would fear doing nothing – or giving too much painkiller?

My wife’s last months were almost painless, to the unvoiced surprise of professionals familiar with cancer. I believe a key fact in her peacefulness was her no resistance to leaving this world.

Many people don’t deeply know they will meet their dying loved one again, abundantly, in life’s fullness. They don’t discover until some while *after* bereavement that their love need not, indeed for their true Self must not, be caged by clinging to any one relationship.

The root of this malaise is spiritual. Many people don’t reach this world’s departure lounge certain from within, or confident from Buddha, Jesus and Krishna, that they *are* souls who merely *have temporarily* a body. They hang on in a worn-out body, not knowing death as like leaving work on a N Sea oilrig in a force 9 gale for a Caribbean holiday with one’s beloved.

I could experience flames eagerly covering my thighs, spectacularly persuading me to leave the body within minutes; but statistical probability is I’ll leave it after some “terminal illness”. How would I feel if society sort-of expected me to take poison, to release others from caring for my physicality’s elementary needs? A question for assisted-dying advocates to whom this seems a ‘straw man’: if inaction and unlimited painkilling become legally safe, but deliberately assisting dying doesn’t, the boundary is clear. How would you draw an equally robust boundary?

*The General Assembly has published a pack to help Unitarians address the issue of Assisted Dying before the motion in support is revisited again at the GA Meetings, at Nottingham, in 2013. It can be downloaded from their website at: [www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk)*

## World Record Smashed

Congratulations to James Barry from Ditchling Unitarian Chapel, in his successful attempt to break the previous 30 hour record for a 'Marathon Speech'. James spoke for 31 hours, taking only the short breaks as stipulated officially.

James said that the challenge was an attempt to webcast live via [www.ukunitarian.tv](http://www.ukunitarian.tv), with connections to facebook so that people could send in questions to which he would respond. A couple in Manchester took it in turns to sleep through the night so one of them would be present via facebook, throughout the whole event. I didn't quite manage this particular endurance test but spent from early morning to late at night, supporting James. It felt wonderful to be connected not only with James but also with the Unitarians at Ditchling, and through facebook with Unitarians around the world.

As well as being a valuable learning exercise James managed to raise over £3,000 in total. This will be divided between: The National Youth Programme, for which James and his partner Lorna are leaders, Send a Child to Hucklow, a Unitarian Charity, that gives under-privileged children a holiday in Derbyshire and Ditchling Unitarians, who have the job of maintaining their 17th century listed building.

**[www.ukunitarian.tv](http://www.ukunitarian.tv)**. In the short time since this project was introduced, big steps have been taken. A Steering Committee has been established to structure the organisation, with phone committee meetings having taken place to allocate and monitor necessary tasks. An electronic newsletter has been published so that Unitarians around the country, and overseas, can keep abreast of developments to date, follow both short and long term plans, aimed at providing greater accessibility, details about training to improve quality of presentation in filming and transmission on screen, all of which will give a better experience of watching, accessibility and full utilisation of the resource. To read the newsletter go to:

[http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/tv/images/UKUTV\\_news1.pdf](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/tv/images/UKUTV_news1.pdf)

Do send the above link to your Unitarian friends and subscribe on-line to receive the electronic newsletter regularly. *Editor*

## Book Reviews

What a delight it is to review two new publications by three members of our Fellowship. The first is a small paperback of 134 pages and just the right size to pop in your pocket or bag. Tony McNeile and Lucy Harris have collaborated to give us: **Through the Prism**—A pocketful of 28 prayers and 30 ruminations.

Even if I had not known the two writers, the differences would have struck me right away. But these differences are a good demonstration of the balance and breadth that Unitarians try to display. Ruth Gledhill, Religion Correspondent of the Times, writes in the Foreword, that Tony and Lucy, “provide a space for both orthodox and unorthodox dissent and in the process, enrich the difficult landscape of religion”.

Tony writes 17 of the 28 prayers. He almost always begins by drawing his readers into a prayerful space, leading us in prayer. The phrases, “Let us” and “May we”, speak directly to us as we are connected to community in prayerful space. On the other hand Lucy’s prayers more privately approach a God of many names, asking a question or even stating a condition. She opens using phrases like; “Deep rich Well of life:/Grant...”: “God my Parent”: “Creative Spirit, Giver of Life”: “Divine Absolute”: “Universal Law that commands being:/Help us ...”

The balance is reversed in the second half of the book - ‘ruminations’ - with Lucy writing 23 of the 30 pieces. She invites us in to her most private experience of God, almost one could say, the world of a mystic. She is constantly moving to the margins of her understanding and expression, often using language that isn’t prose, not poetry as we know it either, but rather a language moulded by the reading, understanding and experience of the writer. At times the language is jagged in paradoxical phrases then to be resolved. Punctuation or one statement equalling=the next as unity of difference is achieved or accepted. The reader will be challenged, both by the unique writing style and by what is being expressed. We have to work at it. Tony’s writing in this section is more accessible. Like Lucy, he is able to incorporate Eastern

thinking into his writing but also refers to the Bible, which is his cultural heritage, a yardstick for making sense of his journey as his understanding has matured; rejecting the God to be feared, portrayed in the Old Testament, and embracing the teachings of Jesus, showing a new way of living and relating to God and fellow man. Yet I felt his ruminations and writing, reflected his many years of being a minister and a gift for communicating insights of a journey of faith that emphasises the personal nature of faith within the context of collective worship. His underlying wish is to communicate in a way that is easily accessible to anyone listening or reading, without losing the heart of his ruminations and not having avoided the challenges of religious thinking. In contrast I felt that Lucy was inviting us into her private conversations with the God of many name as she shared with us her personal faith. Her basic material seemed to be informed by a fruitful engagement with religious writers and the insights contained in their books. This has been no quick process but has depth and I hope will continue always. I hope too that she will share with us again as she has done in this nugget of a book.

The resulting contrast between the material of these two writers works well and is a brave endeavour that has resulted in a balanced and insightful book. But readers, be prepared to be both encouraged and stretched, whilst at the same time your spirit is nourished.

The book isn't cheap at £12.00, nevertheless I hope readers will feel encouraged to go to [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) and purchase the book or contact Tony directly.

**HAPPENINGS**—A Collection of Poems by Rev Phil Silk. This booklet of poems has been published in order to raise money towards the modernising of Newcastle-under Lyme Unitarian Church. It can be obtained from Phil for £4 and if postage is required £5. Mr Phil Silk, 1 Bala Grove, Cheadle, Stoke-on-Trent, ST10 1SY. Tel: 01538 757020. Email: [pandjsilk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pandjsilk@yahoo.co.uk).

I have long been an admirer of Phil's church services that are published on the Unitarian Internet Forum, accessed through: [www.nufonline.org.uk](http://www.nufonline.org.uk). This collection of poems also demonstrate his

skill at expressing profound insights through words, punctuation and shape on the page. In presenting the poems chronologically, he invites us to share his questioning, acceptance and growth through life. Phil uses words economically with each one being carefully chosen, placed and shaped. Not one word is out of place.

The first poem 'Forever' introduces us to his days at university, where he discovered his love of poetry; it has the energy of youth, embracing of life, and culminating with the words 'Dream' 'Scream' and 'LIVE', each of these words having a line to itself. During his university days questions abound expressed through a good sprinkling of words such as: 'Could', 'How', 'Will', 'Which', 'When', and an abundance of question marks.

The questions continue as he moves into the days after university, when, as a young man he reflects on marriage, 'What is a Wife?' and on to being a man in relationship with others in, 'The Choosing People' where each of the first three stanzas end with capitalised letters again: 'WHY', 'WHY', 'MAN'. This poetry must be read understanding that words and shaping are used for a purpose. 'The Choosing People' is the only poem in the book not to be centralised on the page. Is this to reinforce that being human we have choices and that rules can be challenged?

The period when Phil was teaching at Woodhouse Grove depicts for me a growing acceptance of life and all its mysteries, what he can and can't do physically and mentally, a growing confidence and maturity. The short poem entitled '!' is a good example:

I cannot conceive  
The start received  
When millions of molecules  
Rushed upstream  
To make  
Me.

However, this doesn't mean that questions are still not posed as in the poem 'Why?' 'We hurl the questions at the sky', but the poems in

this section also reflect the influence of home and family, growing as a family with all the pain and joys that entails. It is in this section we are presented with the rapid passing of time and the wish for 'More', opening with the lines, 'Days come and years go' and a sense of gratitude , which others don't always experience.

As Phil moves into retirement the mood can sometimes seem more melancholic but always complexity and joy are never far away, however the questions have turned to wonder and an acceptance of death; 'Born to die.../I wonder why' followed in the next verse by a repetition of, 'That's just the way it is,/The way it is/It is... ' A winding down with the final lines 'Let us rejoice-/Or be dust today' contrasting with the vigour in the opening poem, when Phil was at university, we end with the maturity and acceptance of life in its fullness. What a wonderful title is given to this final poem: 'AHA!'

I highly recommend this book by a member of our Fellowship and former editor of the *Viewpoint*.

*Editor*

## **UNITARIANS—A SHORT HISTORY** by Rev Dr Len Smith

Blackstone Editions, the small US/Canadian publishing company specializing in liberal religious history has now released a Kindle Edition of Len Smith's, *The Unitarians: A Short History*. It can be purchased from the Kindle Store at any Amazon website, where there is also an opportunity to take a "look inside".

The eBook format makes the work more easily available in Great Britain as well as internationally, for only £4.91. It can be read on a Kindle reader, and i-Pad, or by using a free Kindle programme downloaded to a personal computer. The illustrations, which appear smaller on Kindle than in the Paperback edition, may be enlarged using the cursor and zoom facility. A more expensive Paperback edition is also still available on the Blackstone Editions' website.

To buy go to Amazon: [http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Unitarians-Short-History-e-book/dp/B008DBP9C2/ref=sr\\_1\\_19?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1340283984&sr=1-19](http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Unitarians-Short-History-e-book/dp/B008DBP9C2/ref=sr_1_19?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1340283984&sr=1-19)

## Diary Dates

SAT 27th OCTOBER: UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION AUTUMN MEETING at Brighton Unitarian Church, New Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 1UF: [www.brightonunitarian.org.uk](http://www.brightonunitarian.org.uk). Contact Denise Birks.

26th-28th OCTOBER: UNITARIAN WOMEN'S GROUP—The Power of Anger in the Work of Love with Bridget Rees: discover the “work of love” towards social justice, peace, feminism, liberation theology and more. At The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow. Contact Stella Burney: [info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk](mailto:info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk).

2nd-4th NOVEMBER: UCCN WEEKEND—Be Seen and Heard. Learn and update your skills in using the social media on the Internet. Discover or update your skills using a video camera, filming and editing to be used as a webcast.

10th-12th NOVEMBER: MEDITATIONAL FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND Ivy House, Warminster. An annual, inspiring and popular event. All are welcome. Contact Brenda Knopf 02380 555333.

***Don't miss the NUF House Party at Great Hucklow, 2-4 November. The cost will be £99. To book please contact Stella at the Nightingale Centre: 01298 871218: [info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk](mailto:info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk). Go to: [www.nufonline.org.uk](http://www.nufonline.org.uk) where you will find the booking form or contact the NUF Secretary Ken Smith on: 01252 628320.***

***Even if you can't make it to the whole weekend please feel welcome to join the House Party on both or either Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday morning, our Minister will be leading the service, which is to be filmed and shown on [www.ukunitarian.tv](http://www.ukunitarian.tv) later that day.***

Our thoughts are with those members, who are unwell, anxious, lonely, bereaved, or distressed in any way. Please remember that Tony McNeile, your Minister, is available if you wish to speak to him.

Items for the next issue should be with the editor by 16th October.

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*Affiliated to the General Assembly  
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Linking others valuing Freedom, Reason and Tolerance in religion.*

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