

# NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

# NEWSLETTER



Issue 408

July 2013



## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

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**Life in Kathmandu**

**Perspectives on the General Assembly Meetings**

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

Reg. Charity No. 1040294



## Secretary's Notes

**Ken Smith**

This Newsletter contains further reports and reaction to the recent General Assembly of Unitarians held at Nottingham in April. The motion on legislation for assisted dying provoked a long and passionate debate in which opinions were sharply divided – you may have read the article on this topic by our President, Rev. Bob Pounder in a recent edition of *The Unitarian* ; Hugh Barlow's article in this Newsletter articulates a different view. In issues such as this, a vote, whatever the majority, at a General Assembly meeting does not close the matter and we should be wary of claiming that a 'Unitarian position' on the subject has been decided thereby.

May I draw your attention to the NUF Internet Forum where a section is set aside for the posting of responses to our publications, which allows for more immediate discussion and reaction to what is printed. This does not preclude the occasional publication in the Newsletter of 'letters to the editor' where there is a high level of interest in a particular issue.

This issue marks my debut as an occasional editor of the Newsletter; that you are reading this at all is evidence that the 'age of miracles' is not yet over as producing it has involved quite a steep learning curve. Any member who would like to take on the challenge of producing an edition in 2014 when Joan 'bows out' as editor is warmly invited to contact me for further details. It does require an investment of time and effort but I am sure you will gain valuable skills and personal satisfaction in doing it.

Cover ; Nick Morrice, NUF committee member and author of a forthcoming book '5 Boys in Nepal' on his recent visit ( see page 14 ).



## President's Letter

Rev. Bob Pounder

Dear Friends,

I hoped you enjoyed reading the April issue of *Viewpoint* as much as I did. You will recall that the Rev. Tony McNeile provided an excellent article titled *Synchronicity* in fact it was the text of a talk he had recently delivered to the Theosophical Society in Bolton. I think that the gist of this article is that there is some sort of a connection between the manifested and the un-manifested, between the material and the spiritual. This connection exists because there is a reality that exists outside of time and space and at some level we too are part of that reality. As Tony says it is a world which only exists as 'now'. In any case we are often given insights into this other world through the experience of synchronicity or what we might deem to be amazing coincidences. Not too long ago I had a dream that I was out walking in a wooded area and came across a pack of hunting dogs. The following morning, there I was in that wooded area and I met a man who had five Jack Russell terriers with him. The man then went on to tell me all about the hunting exploits of his dogs. I have never seen the man before or since.

This synchronicity reminds us that we are spiritual beings. Our ego as Tony says, serves as a barrier to this kind of consciousness, 'It thinks it knows it all because it lives in the world of experience and influence.' This is an arrogant dismissiveness, apart from a lack of tolerance, it is perhaps indicative of a perverse obstinacy, a refusal to fully explore the spiritual riches of religious teachings and to understand what it really means to be fully human.

The good news however, is that we are much closer to this spiritual life than we think as in the words of St Paul, 'For in Him we live and move and have our being'. In the past couple of weeks I have had the

pleasure of seeing the beauty of the trees in blossom and the glory of the spring flowers. There is a song that says 'love is all around' how true this is. Martin Laird the author of *Into the Silent Land* likens our search for God to that of a deep-sea fisherman who was fishing for minnows while standing on a whale. May you enjoy the beauty of the coming summer days.

All good wishes  
Bob

## **Worship Piece**

**Rev. Tony McNeile**

Every time I see a small white feather, I remember being told that it is a sign that an angel is near, or had been near. It is a sign that the heavenly world is interacting with our own world. Now it doesn't matter to me whether this is true or not but I like to believe it is true. There are times in our lives when we feel we have been helped. There have been turning points. We have felt pushed or directed in a certain direction and it has led to something meaningful or special. Sometimes it feels necessary to surrender to some inner call - as if the voice of that angelic world has a plan for good that you are part of. Sometimes it is just a feeling that warns against a particular decision. It is very comforting to think that those unseen angels have an interest in your life. You must mean something.

### **Prayer**

Let us take some moments within the chase of living to pause. To take a little of that time to do nothing but look at one particular thing - whether it be the canopy of stars, a tree in full leaf, a field or a hill. In that pause feel at one with what you are studying. See in it the miracle of a living thing and in your heart before you move on, give thanks to that divine presence we call God, for it and for you.



## Minister's Page

**Rev. Tony McNeile**

I felt quite flattered when the local radio station emailed to ask if I would contribute to their programme 'It's the thought that counts'. So I said 'Of course!' Then came the detail. It can be about anything as long as it is not controversial, as long as it does not offend any faith or ethnic groups and as long as it is exactly ninety seconds long. It will be recorded and go out in June. Please bring three pieces to record!

The timing was the most difficult. I wrote a couple of pieces and rehearsed them with a stop watch. Sometimes I beat the watch and sometimes it beat me but eventually I managed the ninety seconds.

I duly turned up at the appointed time, sat in a rather dimly lit studio, did a voice check and then the producer said, '1,2,3, go.' I won't be around to hear myself when it is broadcast which is probably as well because I may feel disappointed when I hear myself.

What do you say in a broadcast to people you do not know and cannot see? I thought of all the things they would be doing as soon as my 'Thought' was announced. Putting the kettle on, putting the cat out, visiting the bathroom, turning off! I didn't want to offend anyone and yet I liked the idea of trying to hold their attention.

I chose to talk about different individuals who had come to the Chapel while I was the minister - no names of course, what spiritual gifts' and values they had brought to us and what we had gained from their being with us.

I don't know what the listeners will make of it all but it made me realise that sometimes we should take time to think of our friends and acquaintances - and recognise the gifts they bring to our lives.

*The following two reports give contrasting but complementary glimpses of the General Assembly meeting . Elizabeth Barlow is a Unitarian of long standing ,both in the NUF and the wider movement :Peter Zone, who lives in Stockholm , has made most of his acquaintance with Unitarianism through the NUF and the recent FUSE weekend.*

## **General Assembly Nottingham April 2013**

**Elizabeth Barlow**

I had been to the GA several times as a church delegate and also once or twice as myself, but being the NUF delegate was a completely different experience. I attended all the plenary sessions when, amongst other matters, we heard reports from various Strategy Groups which support our ministers and congregations and of the work of the Executive Committee.

The Youth Panel told us about the work they are doing with young people – anyone of the right age can attend their weekends or weeks away, making new friends and learning new skills. Other reports told of the training opportunities available to all of us and one ‘mature student’ was presented with the Certificate in Worship Studies ( Advanced). Many of the events and courses are advertised in the NUF Newsletter.

The Acting Treasurer presented the Accounts for the year ;like many other treasurers throughout the land ( even me !), he has seen a very tiny upturn in the value of investments although not yet in the income from them.

Interspersed with more serious topics were extracts from the audio-visual diary of the retiring GA President, Lis Dyson-Jones, covering key events during her year of office.

There were debates on four motions this year, all of which were carried. The one on Assisted Dying is covered elsewhere in this Newsletter. The others referred to respect for all creation ,a review of the current legislation on drugs ,which doesn't seem to be working, and the possibility of holding a Unitarian Day for World Peace - all worthy causes where Unitarians hope 'to punch above our weight 'and help to influence public opinion.

One highlight of the GA meetings is always the Anniversary Service – a celebration of Unitarianism by Unitarians ; a time when we remember 'with gratitude' the ministers who have recently died ,including this year the Rev. Kenneth Ridgway, a former Minister to the NUF. We also thank those ministers who have retired, and welcome those just setting out on their careers.

The children present have their own slot, and this year they acted out a story on the importance of kindness. It is often said that congregations in church remember more about the children's talks than they do their Minister's carefully crafted sermons !

Then there is music ; several hundred Unitarians joining in the hymns, the choir providing their own offering after only a few brief rehearsals and the postlude – not always appreciated by those anxious to leave the hall and socialise with friends who have come especially for this one occasion.

As NUF Treasurer, I attended our own AGM, in case there were any queries on the accounts – there weren't ! was also present at the lecture given by the Hungarian Unitarian Bishop Ferenc, who told us how his churches have recovered after the end of Communist oppression.

At the Bookshop I purchased several books ( as usual) ,two of which stand out as being of interest to NUF members:

*Twelve Steps to Spiritual Health* by David Usher – described as a practical manual, designed for use by anyone seeking eternal life ( a life measured by quality and intensity not quantity )

*Wednesday at the Oasis* by John Midgley. This is a compendium of very short sermons, delivered at a mid-week meeting in a city centre Unitarian chapel over the course of a year. \*\*

Both these books are ideal for use by individuals at home as well as by small intimate groups.

This whole experience of living, worshipping, and eating with Unitarian friends for a few days gives many who feel ‘out on a limb’ an energy boost to return to small, sometimes isolated, Unitarian congregations for the months ahead.

*Elizabeth Barlow is Treasurer of the NUF and a member of Sidmouth Unitarians.*

*A review of John Midgely’s book can be found in this Newsletter.*

## **Reflections from my visit to the GA Annual Meetings Peter Zone**

Firstly I would like to thank the Editor for giving me the opportunity to write a few lines of my thoughts after attending my first GA annual meeting, held at the University of Nottingham, Jubilee Campus, 11-14 April 2013.

I finally decided to attend the GA meetings, after having taken part in the wonderful FUSE weekend that took place in Worthing 8-10<sup>th</sup> February this year. I was told then that I would have the opportunity to meet there “ all the makers and shakers” of the Unitarian movement. Well, I did not meet anybody in Nottingham who openly admitted to being either a maker or a shaker, however a few admitted being “shaky”, but I did meet a number of interesting people and discussed

a wide range of everyday subjects with them. Many Unitarians have a great knowledge of life within the UK and overseas, also many have fantastic experiences from their own lives which they gladly share with others.

Although the programmes were carefully scheduled, and much of the weekend went according to plan, two weeks have elapsed in which I have been trying to get all the experiences, ideas and discussions settled in my mind. The main conclusion I have come to, is, that the Unitarian movement is a messy mess. I do not think it could be anything else. Unitarians come in all ages, shapes and sizes, but mostly middle class, middle aged or higher middle-aged Caucasians.. Within the “movement” there are all kinds of people with different spiritual or religious backgrounds, from very Christian Christians to pagans/atheists.

The “movement” is very academic in tone ; many Unitarians love to discuss very complex issues such as assisted dying, the reformation of the drug policy etc, carefully at length, weighing their words and evaluating all comments or suggestions, but are not so willing to make a final decision, or to “put their feet down” on where they stand. I think they would have preferred to keep on discussing the issues for ever. Many Unitarians are very creative and very interested in cultural events ; some are very good musicians and singers, which many of us at this GA experienced with joy, during the “Social Evening and Talent show” on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>. A fantastic social event.

There are dark clouds on the Unitarian skies; many congregations are small, isolated, with dwindling numbers of elderly members. The issue of getting the Unitarian movement better known and taking a more active part in society etc was often discussed. But then the Unitarian messy mess phenomenon arose. Whilst many speakers with great vigour talked about reaching out, opening up to newcomers, to people in their districts that do not know anything about Uni-

tarians, a motion to place an identifying sign on the door to the Unitarian headquarters at the Essex Hall, Essex Street in London was withdrawn.

Apparently the Headquarters management felt that having symbolic silhouettes of chalices placed in the office windows, was good enough to attract people to come in and check what this is all about. I have never previously heard of any spiritual or religious movement based in a open, democratic society who did not want a sign put up on the door to their Headquarters. I travel a lot and pride myself in being able to find unfamiliar locations in strange countries in the Asian or African continents, but although I knew what I was looking for, it was not all that easy to find Essex Hall.

I sincerely think the Unitarians have a place in the modern social debates and social and charity work, for years to come, and there is certainly room for more active members . I hope the Unitarian TV-project which I am presently involved in, will help boost and strengthen the activity of Unitarian congregations and show newcomers what Unitarianism is all about.

The spiritual need is out there, but I think the people in the movement need to make up their minds as to what Unitarianism is really all about. One of the good things with Unitarianism is there are no “creeds” but should it be a “do your own thing” or “DIY” spiritual/religious movement? Unitarians can talk the talk, but can they, and/or do they want to, walk the walk?

I hope readers do not think I have danced badly and everyone who has read these lines is left with sore feet and high blood pressure levels. I do look forward to comments from other attendants to the GA meeting in Nottingham. Finally I hope to be able to attend, and be welcomed, to next years GA General Meeting where ever that will be arranged.

*Peter Zonè lives in Stockholm and is a member of the NUF Committee*

At this year's General Assembly, my wife Elizabeth represented the NUF and I represented the Sidmouth congregation, but we both felt backed in our personal support for the resolution, that legislation should allow any individual who faces an intolerable existence because of a debilitating and/or incurable physical condition the right to seek assistance to terminate their life in a painless and dignified manner, without fear of prosecution of anyone involved. The actual wording is fuller, but an amendment which sought to incorporate a list of safeguards in Lord Falconer's bill or any proposed legislation was rejected, so that what we decided was not tied to his specific bill which hopefully begins its progress through Parliament later this year. The resolution was passed 101 to 30 with 9 abstentions, and it is possible that some of those against simply wanted the fuller resolution.

However, the opposition needs to be regarded with respect. Within the Assembly and beyond, there has been a volume of concern that any provision for assisted dying puts additional pressure on vulnerable, and especially vulnerable disabled people who feel they are useless or a burden to others. It is rightly a crime to encourage anyone to end their life but that is not the only pressure. It is an essential part of hospice care and should be part of all pastoral care for terminally ill people, to make them feel valued. But for some patients there comes a point where they themselves feel, whatever anyone else says, that there is no further value to their remaining alive and suffering. The principal causes are extreme pain, such that they have no waking experience of anything but pain, or extreme incapacity, such that they have to be artificially fed and toiletted and eventually cannot speak or communicate at all.

Some specialists believe that all pain is controllable, but that is not the experience of all patients and other specialist accept it is not al-

ways possible. For patients who cannot speak there are sophisticated devices that would enable some, but not all, to communicate or even eventually to trigger a final lethal injection. Meanwhile, many doctors are excessively cautious in administering pain relief because they are afraid of accidentally killing the patient; this can be less for the sake of the patient than because, since the Shipman and Mid Staffordshire cases, mortality statistics are almost obsessively scrutinised.

From the doctors' point of view, many remain unable to recognise a possible distinction between always seeking the best interest of the patient and seeking to preserve life in every case. It is arguable that the Hippocratic oath does not always mean the latter. It was interesting to observe that every one of the doctors who spoke in the Assembly debate favoured the legal assisted dying option.

Attitudes to the doctors' professional duty are closely mirrored by attitudes to the religious principle of the sanctity of all human life; it was observed that keeping an animal alive and in pain is generally held to be cruelty, while keeping a human being alive, though in pain, is apparently considered a sacred and professional obligation. As a religious dissenter, I do not believe that there is any rule or principle to which there is never any possible exception. Rightly we tremble at the thought of taking a life but can it be the best and most compassionate action that can be taken for some patients? The sanctity of life principle is invoked against suicide or assisting suicide: does this mean that the lives of terminally ill patients have to be prolonged as long as medically possible?

Finally there is another theological and existential objection which carries some weight. In the URC assembly of 2007 which considered this issue, some were disturbed by the view of many supporters of assisted dying, that they wanted to be in control of their end as they had been of their lives to that stage. The objection does not depend

on the idea that God decides when our time is up but on the fact that we are contingent beings ,who cannot control all the circumstances of our lives :it is human hubris to aspire to doing so . We need to be open in humility to whatever happens to us but that does not detract from our responsibility in every decision in which we can have a say . The advances of modern medicine mean that it is already in human hands to manipulate the circumstances of our terminal decline: those hands, in the present state of UK law ,are exclusively those of doctors. I would advocate that the patient should have a say, even the primary say, where there is a choice that can be made .

Facing our own death is life's final challenge but once we have faced it, do we have to go on facing it as long as it can be dragged out ? Happily most of us will not be faced with this question in this most extreme form but we should have a concern for those terminally ill people for whom there is not legal end in sight.

#### Foot notes

An amendment, which was not in the end debated, sought to incorporate a general call for better end-of-life care. This is very much a post code lottery. It might be a matter for individual members to raise with their local NHS Trusts, because it is they who have to resource such provision .

A preliminary discussion enabled people to raise issues which might/might not become part of the debate, such as 'who cares for the carers ,including doctors ,who make such decisions as when to cease treatment or turn off life support .'

A contrasting view to the above was given by our President, Rev. Bob Pounder in the May issue of The Unitarian. If you do not take that publication but would like to read the article ,please contact the Secretary who has extra copies .

The Nepalese have no concept of time in quite the way that we do. Kathmandu itself is so overcrowded and congested that trying to keep to any sort of time schedule is almost impossible. Days just seem to evolve in their own way, which can have a liberating effect, but I am often left wondering how things ever happen at all in this strange city.

I go to Nepal each year to visit a small orphanage, Wasta Care Centre (Wasta means 'nurture') where live five young men aged from 18 to 23 who I am supporting through their higher education. The oldest, Ramesh, is in his third year at Lumbini Medical College; the second, Niran, is studying accountancy in Delhi; the third, Anish is taking a course in Catering and Hotel Management. The other two, Sunil and Arun, are still at High School and are considering doing Business Studies and Engineering respectively. I stay with them for about ten days at a time, and am looked after by their foster-mother Indra Maya. Let me describe a typical day; it is early morning and the sun is just rising.

Sunil knocks at my door and indicates, by a few jogging motions, that it is time for my early morning walk. Their tiny home (entirely uncluttered by books, newspapers, CDs or pictures) is on the southern edge of the city in an area called Nakhu, so we walk out across fields and up hills, fording small streams on the way. But this is no rural idyll, as the area is strewn with litter and detritus, and the aroma of pollution hangs heavy in the air. Sunil tells me about his early life as an orphan, shows me where they went to school as young boys, the warehouse where they buy rice at wholesale prices, and the rough open ground where you practise for your motorbike test by weaving between a few randomly placed rocks.

On the way we bump into his older brother, Kiran (for some reason Kiran is not at the orphanage – in fact he is 'persona non grata' there

but I never quite discover why.). He invites us back to his room for tea – this is a sweet milky and spicy drink called ‘chai’ and I love it. Kiran is a poor tailor who works long hours in a factory and is irregularly paid. Over our second cup of tea, I ask him if he will run up for me a pair of white cotton pyjamas. He takes my measurements and says they will be ready tomorrow.

About two hours later we are back home for breakfast, and then decide what to do next. Sunil wants to take me to his school, proudly named Oxbridge, where he has been President (that is, Head boy) for the last year. So we set off on foot again. The roads are heavy with dust as well as traffic, because there is nothing the local work force likes doing more than creating a lot of dust: putting up new buildings, knocking down old ones, bashing rocks with sledgehammers are common features of everyday life. I always get breathing problems after a few days, and sometimes a sore throat.

No appointment has been made, but the Principal is delighted to see me. He gives a good report on Sunil’s academic progress and presidential year, then offers some advice on studying abroad (Sunil is considering coming to an English university). After a short guided tour and brief introductions to some class mates, we head back home.

Sunil is walking badly, and I ask him why.

“My shoes are worn out, uncle, but I haven’t any money to buy new ones.”

So we stop at a shoe shop on the way, and equip him with a new pair. The wind has now picked up creating dust storms, so if you don’t have a face mask you have to hold your hand or hanky over your mouth. At one particularly busy crossroads, the traffic controller is almost lost in clouds of dust but sticks to his precarious post valiantly

trying to maintain a modicum of order in the confusion of cars, rickshaws, motorbikes, minibuses and bicycles. Not an enviable job.

We arrive home, and I go for a shower – well, not so much a shower as a wash under a cold tap. Mama has prepared a typical Nepalese meal: Dal Bhat, which consists of plain boiled rice with a sort of lentil sauce, and a small bowl of vegetables. It is unfailingly delicious, and very welcome. More members of the family have turned up by now, so there are cousins, uncles and aunts who appear from time to time. While I eat, one of the cousins, Ashish, plays and sings to me on the guitar. He writes songs of worship for church, as well as sentimental love songs, but I can never quite tell which are which. He sings with great feeling, and I sit back in peaceful enjoyment. After a while, he stops as he has a suggestion to make.

“Uncle, would you like to go for a haircut and head massage? I know a really good place which you will enjoy.”

The wind has died down, the working day is coming to an end, so in the early evening Sunil, Ashish and I set off for the Barber’s. But this is no ordinary haircut. We are each given nearly half an hour’s worth of meticulous hairdressing, followed by face, neck, head, shoulder and back massage which has us in turn groaning with delight and pleasure. It costs about £1-50, which is a tenth of what I pay in England for barely a ten minute standard cut. This barber’s working day starts at dawn and finishes at 9.0pm, with only a short break for lunch, and always a heavy evening schedule.

It is dark by the time we walk home. The stars are coming up, and apart from a few dogs barking it is quiet and peaceful. Once back at home, the boys get on to their laptops, and now that they are sitting still I can work on drawing their portraits. As and when tiredness overcomes us, we gradually and in our own time drift towards bed. So ends another timeless day in Kathmandu.

**Wednesday at the Oasis – Pause for thought in the busy week**

By John Midgley – Lensden Publishing 2013. ISBN 978 0-0-9575891-0-0

This delightful book is a collection of 52 short sermons, following the passage of the weeks through just one year. They were originally written to be delivered at lunchtime mid-week to create a space of reflection for those caught up in the busyness of life in the centre of Manchester.

I am glad that the author has published them in a format that works just as well in the printed form. Each piece is just 2½ pages in length and although this reader raced through the weeks, being drawn to read ‘just one more’ the book will work much better read as they were delivered – one each week, or at least one at a time, to allow time for reflection. I certainly intend to do this as there were so many things to which I want to give more consideration.

The writer is a man of keen observation and a collector of interesting tit-bits of information collected from reading, listening, travelling and everyday experience. Although the pieces are easy to read, they do leave one pondering on life and thinking ‘well fancy that, something new I should have known’ or ‘I never thought of it in that way’. The months leading up to Easter and the weeks leading up to Christmas are packed with little nuggets of information that will trigger ideas to develop, when preparing to lead services or write blogs. The summer months were less religiously specific but no less enjoyable and often with a twist or a moral dilemma.

This beautifully presented paperback of just 160 pages is one that readers will take down from their bookshelves from time to time, long after their first reading.

It can be purchased directly from Rev John Midgley, 2 Hirds Yard, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 2AF. The price is £8.99 + £2.50 post and package. (Cheques payable to J. Midgley)

## How not to save the world

Naomi Linnell

The Venerable Elders were taking their ease in the late July afternoon sun when their slumbers were disturbed by a piteous cry from a very small hazel dormouse making its stumbling way along the flower lined path. “Great Mushika!” one of them exclaimed “What in the name of all the gods has happened to you?” The small mouse shuddered to a halt, lifted his bruised and bloodied face to the sky and wept.

“We were misled.” he said in a small sad voice, “We were foolish, we were naive.” “No, no!” instructed the Elder, “Begin at the beginning. Where have you been? How were you foolish? Who misled you?” “We got messages” squeaked the mouse. “We were invited to a Happening deep in the forest, where we would learn the cure to all the world’s troubles and ...” “No, no!” interrupted the Elder, “From where did the messages come?” “From the Save our World page on WoodFace.” said the mouse. “ We all get them, all the time. So, all four of us, we went.”

“But when we got to the dark thicket where the Happening was supposed to happen, there was no-one there. Until, suddenly, a horde of yellow necked mice and a few young rats jumped on us and beat us up. The yellow necks jeered and shouted at us that now they ruled the world, the forest was theirs and there was no welcome for us any more. They were on a mission to make the paths safe and clean for all of those to whom the Great God Pan had given the forest, but that didn’t include Dirty Immigrants. We should go back to wherever we had come from - because we were now the new Dirty Immigrants.

“We were very battered and frightened and soon my three cousins lay sprawled on the ground, crumpled and still like pale willow herb cut down in the meadow. I crept away and hid beneath the roots of an old oak tree, but my cousins lay with empty wide eyes turned up to an invisible sky. When at last the Yellow Necks and the rats marched away singing and dancing, I crept back here.” The small mouse put his paws up to his eyes and the tears streamed again down his face.



*Mushika:- the mouse who carried Ganesha on his back.*

“What a terrible tragedy.” said the Elder. He sighed, “All you young mice were born in this forest. Your mothers and fathers were born here. I was born here. We are all citizens of the forest. It is oh so sad, small mouse, that amazing devices like WoodFace can lead you into danger and despair. You have to learn to be more wary of whom you trust. Faceless creatures can always be false creatures; grandiloquent promises are always to be approached with very great caution. Some humans call their Web the Marvellous Mechanical Wonder Web, but we know our Web is only as marvellous as those who use it. If those users are driven by malevolence or anger or fear, then it is nothing but a force for evil with which we engage at our peril.

“Go now, back to your nest.” Gently he stroked the tear stained face. “Rest and recover in the healing paws of those whom you love, and give thanks to the Mushika that you survived. I and the other Elders will go deep into the forest to bury our dead and to ask the sylvan gods how best we may make our world a safer and a better place.”

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## **News of Members**

We are sorry to record the passing of NUF member Mary Newman at the age of 92 .Joan Wilkinson writes :-

*She was the reason we introduced the audio discs. She was delighted with her NUF membership and only wished she had discovered us earlier. She made arrangements for her funeral with Ant Howe and Diane Rutter and was delighted to have visits from Diane from time to time. She had never been a member of a congregation, just the NUF. As soon as her CD arrived she would ring to thank us and when she had listened ring to say how much she had appreciated it. I will miss her conversations. We last spoke only a week before her death .*

## **We extend a warm welcome to the following new members :-**

Dr. Carole Foot ; Mr. Richard Gaines

Contributions for the September issue should be sent to Joan Wilkinson .The closing date will be August 16th but early arrival of copy is always appreciated .

We wish all those taking holidays this summer a relaxing time wherever they may be travelling .

## THANK YOU NUF !

Some of our members may already know of the 2020 initiative of the GA : this aims to encourage congregations to grow by 20% by the year 2020 and to develop 20 new congregations by the same date . It is a bold strategy and all Unitarians should wish it success . Whatever comes of it we may be sure that by 2020 there will still be large areas of the UK with no Unitarian presence and many other areas where the Unitarian cause is very fragile. Many of our members live in those areas and for them the NUF is the only feasible way for them to stay in touch with the Unitarian movement.

It was for that reason that the NUF was started in 1945 ; as we approach our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015, the continuing need for the Fellowship was shown in a recent article in *The Inquirer* by NUF member Dorothy Haughton . Regular readers of that journal will already know of her regular dispatches from Upper Pocklington Unitarians – a fictional ( but , in many ways , all too credible ) Unitarian congregation , proud to preserve its independence and keep the ‘prying fingers ‘ of the General Assembly out of its business ! However on this occasion Dorothy was recounting her own personal Unitarian history and reflecting that of the 6 congregations of which she had been a member , only 2 were still in existence. At several stages of her life it was only through the NUF that she had kept contact with the wider movement ,hence her unsolicited testimonial that forms the title of this article.

Later in the year we shall send out a questionnaire to members about the work of the NUF to ascertain what you like about what we offer and what more we might do to increase your satisfaction – and, yes, we’ll welcome constructive criticism too ! As I outlined in the Annual Report ,I believe we offer a great deal already ; thanks to the tireless efforts of John and Joan Wilkinson we have a fine presence on the

Internet and our links with UKUTV are increasing the amount of video material available from the website . However , it needs to be borne in mind that the NUF is run by volunteers – no one is receipt of payment for their work ; in terms of the outreach of the Fellowship , ‘the harvest may be great but the labourers are – and always have been – remarkably few !’

All the articles in our publications are contributed by members or friends of members – I have found Unitarians to be a diverse and interesting group of people, and as Peter Zone remarks in his article elsewhere in this issue , they often have ‘interesting life experiences .’ Sue Davidson in her recent article about her daughter’s autism and Nick Morrice’s account of his visit to Nepal in this issue are outstanding examples of this and are much valued by readers . Your editors would be grateful to receive more examples of this type ; I know some members are involved with Food Banks and disability groups, to mention but two examples , so if you are involved in any form of social action , we invite you to share it with other members in the columns of our NUF publications.

## **Web news**

[Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience](http://www.studyspiritualexperiences.org/)

<http://www.studyspiritualexperiences.org/>

Alister Hardy, a noted evolutionary biologist and Unitarian , was a pioneer in the scientific study of religious experience ;the research unit he started was originally based at Manchester College Oxford but has since moved to Trinity St. David’s College, Lampeter. The Society publishes a regular magazine ,De Numine, and its website contains the texts of previous issues as well as other material of interest for download. There are study groups in various regions of the UK and the society organises an annual conference.

## DIARY DATES

### Thursday 8th August Ministry Inquiry Day

An Inquiry Day for people considering training for ministry.

VENUE: Leicester Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel

Thursday 8th August: 11am for 11.30 am start – 3.30pm

**Booking deadline: 29th July** contact Mary–Jean Hennis at Unitarian General Assembly, Email: [mhennis@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:mhennis@unitarian.org.uk)

### Fri 9th – Mon 12th Aug Unitarian Music Society Summer Conference

Hiawatha's Wedding feast.

A weekend of fellowship and music making for singers, instrumentalists and non-musicians. All ages are welcome.

Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

### 20th – 23rd Aug RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY IARF Conference.

Horsham Unitarians, West Sussex. Book through the website of our Co-sponsor, the World Congress of Faiths.

**Price including 3 nights at Horsham Travelodge and 5 meals**

£300 single, £450 double, £500 family **Price excl. lodging & suppers**  
£50

Rev. Richard Boeke, Co–chair, IARF Peacemaking Commission 01403

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