

# National Unitarian Fellowship

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and Free Christian Churches  
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# Viewpoint



## Meditations

by

## NUF Members



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## NUF MEDITATIONS

In September 2003 the NUF launched a weekly meditation spot on its website. Initially these were culled from a variety of sources, but later, Tony McNeile took them under his wing. As new possibilities developed so did we. Firstly presenting them in both large and small print, moving on to print and audio and finally making them accessible visually. As it became difficult to film the writer presenting his own meditation, the spot became, as it is now, 'The Monthly Meditation'. Then more members were co-opted to writing and presenting so that now there is a wide range of NUF members happy to be involved with this ongoing project. All the meditations are kept in an accessible archive, so that this has now become a rich and growing resource.

All the meditations included in this *Viewpoint*, are written by current NUF members or those who were members at the time of writing. A selection from the archive is now being offered in print for all members to enjoy.

### JANUARY

The National Unitarian Fellowship wishes you all a peaceful and a happy year. We all know that the realities of life are that some will be tested during the year.

That is the way of things but I hope you don't have to experience sorrow, disappointment or tragedy as the year rolls on. It is best for all of us if we can make ourselves strong - both spiritually and emotionally.

Strong in spirit you will survive all things that come your way and you will be a person of peace.

*Rev Tony McNeile – NUF Minister*

Religion is the vision of something that stands behind, beyond yet lies within the flux of our everyday experience.

It is both remote from us yet can touch us very closely at times.

It can give meaning to our lives yet will forever elude our complete understanding.

It is both our ultimate ideal yet will remain our unfulfilled quest.

*Ken Smith*

## **FEBRUARY**

### The Race

The space where our races  
Must be won  
Is the surface of the earth,  
And inner space ...  
Under the sun  
Where all are one.

*Rev Phil Silk*

Snow drops are pushing their shoots through the frozen ground. In the middle of a cold winter when there is discontent around the world here is a sign of promise that spring will come again; life will be restored; the world will go on as it always has. It is a lesson for life. Whatever we have to face in the coming year, let us remember the snowdrop with its hidden energy that waits for the mysterious message that says 'time to grow'.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

Consensus is meaningless if we look from one viewpoint.

A change of perspective is more instructive.

Change your perspective and learn!

*Vic Mason*

## **MARCH**

In the early Spring, just after first light, I was walking the dogs in the fields above my son's home in rural Mid Wales. An area I have known since childhood.

Overnight there had been a frost and a dusting of snow. As I walked along, in the stillness, I reflected on the timelessness of the countryside, how much of it stays the same whilst elsewhere change is relentless.

I was also profoundly aware of the healing nature of the peace which I so often find there, which centres my mind and uplifts my spirit.

*Ella Lewis-Jones*

A person whose faith is strong can live with criticism of it can even live with ridicule of it. A strong faith gives direction and hope to the believer. A faith is judged by what it gives to the world. A faith is judged to be good or bad by the actions of its followers.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

## **APRIL**

There's a story in the Secret Bible of multicolour dreamcoat Joseph being blessed by God. The blessing appears as white bees flying around him. The bee is sacred to many because the hive lives in community with nature for mutual support.

It blesses us too if we copy.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

God created the world in seven days, the Hebrew Bible says. What a clever move to create it imperfect rather than perfect. An imperfect world can live and grow towards perfection. Perfect, it is finished before it can have life and can only be admired as a thing of beauty. Better to know that we are born imperfect and the adventure of life is to strive towards perfection.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

## **MAY**

As Unitarians, we like to take a liberal attitude towards the lives and conduct of other people. However, does there ever come a point where our liberal attitude could be described as indifference or even a cover up for our reluctance to risk speaking out against, or confronting what is wrong?

Taking a liberal attitude is not a soft option, liberalism involves a delicate balance between a genuine respect for the liberty and autonomy of others, and, when needed, the courage to speak out and stand up for what is right.

*Ella Lewis-Jones*

In eight billion years time the Milky Way is going to collide with the Andromeda galaxy and that will be the end of us - unless we have found a new place to go, maybe a new earth in some far distant earlier place. Let us hope those future generations of our children will travel in peace and they carry the wisdom learnt from us.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

Hidden God, upon your face we cannot gaze, we know you only by your constant love.  
Accept us into your shrouded presence, may there we find the blessedness and joy of the  
bold adventure of faith.

*Vernon Marshall*

Eternal Oversoul, whose universal beauty dwells in the soul of all, break through our intellect,  
and bring us inspiration, breathe through our will, and bring us virtue, flow through our affecta-  
tions, and bring us love.

*Vernon Marshall – after Ralph Waldo Emerson*

While holding on to what is stable and valuable, we should cherish our curiosity and encour-  
age it in each other. It is natural for young people to be curious, but it is also important that  
older people should never cease to be so. A mentally and spiritually healthy person will al-  
ways be interested in new ideas, both in the visible and invisible world. But we should not let  
go what is good or the old – the proved – foundations of our being, which are the solid base  
and standard against which we measure all things new, including the ephemeral – yes, even  
our dreams.

*From: The Minister's Letter in the NUF Newsletter May 2005: Rev Roger Tarbuck*

## **JUNE**

### **SUMMERTIME**

There is a stillness in the summertime which is majestic.

A stationary moment in time when the full flower of life is open. The newness of the spring foli-  
age has become darkly rich and still. The flowers in the hedgerows and meadows which be-  
gan the season of growth were like young brides ready for love.. They veiled the tree and the  
hedgerow in shimmering whites but now at last they have put on the garments of maturity.  
Their white light of spring has passed through the prism and scattered all that whiteness into  
the rainbow hues of reds and golds, violet and primrose. The sunlight dapples into the wood-  
land trees from imperious heights and casts strong shadows and no one dares look at the  
sun.

Here is power, strength, life and sadness.

Sadness because within all this splendour the seeds of decay are also at work. One leaf has  
turned. One petal has fallen. One stem lies broken. The summer has grown to be consumed  
and yet it could not be otherwise. Perfection would hurt us too much.

Perfection is arid and lifeless - beautiful yes.

Often very beautiful and as we admire the perfect painting or the perfect story but the sculptor had to stop and say I will do no more. The painter could always add another stroke but had to declare that enough was enough. The word smith could always change another word.

Imperfection is the driving force of our being.

The great summer's imperfection is making for a better summer next time-adjusting and changing for the best it could ever be but a state it will never reach – and never must.

And we poor mortals who gaze in love at the imperfect glory of the summer are imperfect too. We have to be. It is nature. Our imperfections make us what we are but they help us to grow - to be always striving to improve - and being able to.  
Thank you summer for being not quite good enough.

*Tony McNeile- NUF Minister. First published in the UESN Files, Summer Issue – No.33*

I think everyone should have a secret place in their mind, a sanctuary where they can go to, where they can reason with themselves, talk things through, a place of safety where no one else can go, your very own. You can make it a house or a room; you can make it a seaside or a riverside. Make a place which is just for you in your own mind.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

I'm a fan of Pythagoras, he of the right angle triangle fame. He formed a religion in the town in Italy where he lived. He said that everything came out of the one source, all people, all nature, all flowers and he introduced this word to describe it all, and the word is harmony. If we live in harmony with nature and with one another the world will forward in a nice smooth path, happily.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

## **JULY**

Spirit, Giver of Life:  
Whom I can approach but not find  
Whom I can sense but not know:  
Whatever you have made me is what I am  
Whatever you give me is what I have  
Whatever you let me see and say is what I know  
Let me let go of the need to ask,  
To ask as though there were a lack in my life;  
Instead let me reframe what feels like a lack in my life

To be an edge against which I can test myself and grow  
Let me live a life of growth and anticipation  
Let me move in your presence in such a way as to find what is in me,  
And what else is there:  
Which is: your love: your grace: your universal and infinite kindness.

*Lucy Harris*

Published in the July/August 2005 *Newsletter* of the National Unitarian Fellowship

## **AUGUST**

Dwell on everything you love – people & things.  
Dwell on everything you don't love & work out why you don't.  
Changes some things, forgive some things.  
Love yourself warts & all – no one is perfect.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

## **THE NUF PRAYER**

We give thanks for light and life, for the pageantry of field and sky, for the laughter of children and the hand of a friend. We give thanks for the gifts of poetry and music, for beauty unfolded in the arts, for philosophy and science, and all that helps us in our quest for meaning.

May the divine spark in each one of us inspire us with the courage and strength to seek the universal truth in the many diverse ways of our earthly life.

Amid conflict and strife may we be enabled to discern the living spirit working in the hearts of others. May we be joined in sympathy with the needs and longings of all, expressed or unexpressed, so that all may rise in fellowship from the darkness of ignorance and sloth, and draw nearer to each other and to the Eternal

## **PRAYER CAN CHANGE THE WORLD**

Lord our God, let us take this time for prayer. Prayer is both a personal wish and a collective power. For ourselves we pray for inner peace, we pray for understanding - of ourselves. We pray for inner strength. We pray to be close to that divine power that is a force of love within the world that will sweep over us and comfort us.

We pray in our hearts for others too, for the loved ones; we pray for them if they are experiencing trouble or difficulty or we pray just for their continuing happiness.

We pray in our hearts with thanksgiving – giving thanks to God for our own lives, for the world we live in, giving thanks for the fortunes of our lives and for surviving the misfortunes. There is comfort in our personal prayer - anguished lives are returned to peacefulness. Nor let us lose faith in the power of prayer when we pray together - when we focus our prayers towards people who suffer, people who make decisions for the world. The power of prayer harnesses the light of God's universe and directs it to the purpose of our thoughts. In prayer we can heal, in prayer we can restore love, in prayer we can change our selves and change the world. Amen.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

When the land is surrounded by water, let us not say there is nothing to drink – but how can we make the water drinkable.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

My prayer is a prayer of thanks for life.  
In spite of all hardships and sorrows, life is still beautiful.  
The hope that life brings helps us to manage pain and discomfort.  
When we look at life and allow life to look at us, a joy builds up from within and when the dawn breaks, the light that comes into the world is tinged with love.

For all of that I give thanks.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

Dwell on everything you love – people & things.  
Dwell on everything you don't love & work out why you don't.  
Changes some things, forgive some things.  
Love yourself warts & all – no one is perfect.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

Do you remember that book, Jonathan Livingstone Seagull? I read it and I have remembered seagulls ever since. I've seen them in their absolute joy of flying and just being over the cliffs and over the sea. Why do they do it? They take off, they fly around and they come back. They are not looking for anything, they're simply enjoying being, who they are, where they are. Couldn't we all be like seagulls?

*Rev Tony McNeile*

## SEPTEMBER

God, permit me today to live in each moment as an end in itself; grant me the gift of honesty with You, with myself and with other people; grant me the humility to accept the support that others will have for me today, and the opportunity to be of service in my turn.

*Mike Killingworth*

Creative Spirit, Giver of Life,  
Whom we can approach but not find  
Whom we can sense but not know

Whatever you have made us is what we are  
Whatever you give us is what we have  
Whatever you let us see and say is what we know:

Help us to reframe our fears and failings in such a way  
That we can instead take the bold step of trusting  
Trusting ourselves to be true to our uniqueness in a way that is good for us and fulfilling of our role in the universe  
Trusting others, that between us there will be that of good and security that will give our lives clarity and meaning  
Trusting you, that there is form and pattern within which we can move and learn according to our nature

And all of this, that we add to the sum of all inclusion, and connection, and oneness in the world.

*Lucy Harris*

"May the Force be with you" said Luke Skywalker in the film Star Wars.  
Harrison Ford, the actor who plays the part, said that to make a better world the phrase be: "Be the Force".

*Rev Tony McNeile*

Meditation on a Dahlia  
What a wondrous moment of meeting  
Through your canvas of colour,  
Welcoming all into relationship,  
Who have eyes to see.  
The divine beauty of your autumnal glory,  
Draws the soul seeker into sacred space.  
The same earth that sustains and nurtures you,  
Sustains and nurtures all.  
Weave your colours of enchantment in my heart,

That I may never fail to wonder and give thanks  
For this beautiful autumnal world we have shared for but a memorable moment  
Before the colours fade and die  
In preparation for new life yet to be.

*Joan Wilkinson*

There is a time to be fast, once in awhile; a time to be slow, more often; and many times in between. Let us truly enjoy balancing the times of our lives.

*Rev Phil Silk*

## **OCTOBER**

Stay awhile – Be still.  
Settle into the silence of autumnal beauty.  
Listen to the leaf gently falling onto the damp, green grass.  
Watch the water softly lapping at the bank's edge.  
Be grateful for all the beauty of this fleeting life  
Glimpsed, but for a moment, in the stillness  
Of your divine love.

*Joan Wilkinson*

Litany  
It doesn't matter how pretty it is:  
Thou art.  
It doesn't matter how ugly it is:  
Thou art.  
It doesn't matter how peaceful it is:  
Thou art.  
It doesn't matter how busy I am:  
Thou art.  
No matter the junk or rubbish around:  
Thou art.  
No matter the tumult and barrage of sound:  
Thou art.  
The sea can freeze over and Earth turn to mush:  
Thou art.  
No matter the wielding of hammer or brush:  
Thou art.  
All that there is, and all there might be:  
Thou art.  
No matter constraints, no matter how free:  
Thou art.  
All that I do, and all I can mean:

Thou art.  
Thou takest me grimy and takest me clean:  
Thou art.  
I cannot exist without saying "Thou art":  
Thou art.  
Distraction, distraction:  
Whatever the part, Thou art.  
Amen.

*Lucy Harris*

Oliver's Poem  
I will not lumber you with love  
nor climb on you to measure you for sins  
nor wipe you over with foregivenesses  
nor kick your shins.

I know your eyes do not see out of mine  
nor are your tears the tears I shed  
but I don't care,  
for I will take your hand and make a place for you,  
because you're there.

Not for some complicated ploy  
of pity, piety or private greeds  
but for an older, simpler joy,  
that, nothing wanting, nothing needs,  
except to live.

for, as I see you feel the rain and breathe the air,  
so just to know the sun that shines on you  
shines on me too.  
confirms the sunlight,  
makes it sure,  
tells us we live, are there.  
that now will do,

and asks no more.

*Oliver Postgate 1979 by kind permission of Naomi Linnell*

Warm Florida sea; sandy palm-fringed beach;  
Gulf Coast Sunday sun; lapping rippling waves curl round my toes; sunshine permeates my  
soul;  
In my mind an ancient Guarani song; a single voice;  
A land of surging waters; a river is born; Parana flows; Itapu stands tall;  
A congregation, a nation, a civilisation affirms the universal Yes.

*Howard Wilkins*

I look to the stars so far away – light years beyond my grasp, but one day my grandchildren's grandchildren may sail among them – or maybe their grandchildren will.

We should believe they will and inspire them to do so.

*Derek Harvey*

## **NOVEMBER**

Remember - Remember

I sit on the seat 'In memory of Albert Walter who loved this place', watching the waves break on Shell Beach. The sight and sound is magnificent. Wind whips the waves, unfurling crested spray that runs across the bay. The waves crash against the rocks exploding spray into the clean, clear air before cascading droplets, momentarily suspended, catch the sunlight then fall and merge with the white foaming surf. Wet, black rocks starkly break through the swirling foam. Remember, remember the fifth of November. A firework display could be no more magnificent than this free spectacle and symphony of the sea.

The thunder of relentless breaking waves, the churning shells thrown against rocks tell of other exploding shells and sounds of war. Remember, remember the eleventh of November. Albert Walter, who died at 85, 'loved this place' where the splendour of the natural world was freely displayed for his delight. Countless other Albert Walters died young. Countless other Albert Walters will continue to be sacrificed on the fields of war.

The sea's relentless rhythm and breaking waves we cannot change – the relentless rhythm of waging war we surely can.

Remember, remember and learn.

*Joan Wilkinson*

Let us not be afraid to seek meaning in our lives.

Let us have no fear to enter the spiritual dimension of ourselves and see where it leads.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

Nourish friendship with your friends and value the good times you have had with your friends and relatives, when they are around.

Do not wait until after they have gone.

*Peter Zoné*

Let us not be afraid to seek meaning in our lives.

Let us have no fear to enter the spiritual dimension of ourselves and see where it leads.

*Rev Tony McNeile*

People you meet casually or businesswise – are they just passers-by or functionaries?  
Or are they people?  
That girl or fella who serves you in the shop – do you catch their eye?  
Do they feel noticed that they matter as people?  
Whether other people are people to you also tells them something about you.

*Hugh Barlow*

## **DECEMBER**

### TREE OF LIGHT

And Light was there  
into darkness rising, mingling  
with the sound of soaring choirs  
and scent of pines from the December tree.

And Light was there  
as the tree, tall reaching,  
bloomed with a sudden glory,  
white blossoms filled with light.

And Light was there  
as to people quietly waiting,  
the Light was carried,  
sharing each to each their pain and hope.

And Light was there,  
a thousand holding candles,  
flower flames spiralling upwards  
high into the sighing air  
lifting our hearts in joy and love..

*Alice Rawling*

Taken from: *From the Heart* - published 2004 by the NUF.

This time of year, the time of the winter solstice, is when the days are shortest and the nights are longest.

Over millennia this point in the calendar has signified both an end and a beginning.

Let us pause during this interval to reflect on, and cherish, what has past and to anticipate what might be.

*John Greenwood*

**Comments -**

We welcome your comments on this issue. With your permission your comments might also be included in the NUF Newsletter.

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