

# NUF

# Newsletter!



- NYC Pride 2017
- Opus 2017
- Money Matters
- ...and more

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

Registered Charity Number: 1040294

## *Dates for your diary...*

2018 GA Meetings to be held: **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> April to Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> April**, at Staverton Park Estate, Daventry Road, Daventry, NN11 6JT (<https://www.phcompany.com/de-vere/staverton-estate/>). This is a convenient location easily accessible from M1, M6, and Birmingham Airport. It is just a short drive to Northampton and Coventry. For further information go to the GA website: <https://unitarianmeetings2018.com/>. The date of the NUF AGM, which is held during the GA Meetings, will be advised in the *Spring Newsletter*.

**Group Weekend at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**, to be held: Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October to Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2018. For details contact: Joan Wilkinson, 01332 814055 or [joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk](mailto:joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk).



## *New Member*

A warm welcome is extended to Dr Kenneth Becker, who has now joined the Fellowship.

## ***President's Ponderings and Group Renewal Weekend***

After joining the NUF, in 1991, it was many years before I attended any events at The Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire, or any of the annual GA Meetings. This was partly lack of inclination and partly from a long period of suffering health problems. The NUF satisfied all my religious needs at that time, and allowed me to understand more of the religion I chose to be part of. It also allowed time to follow up on ideas which would fully utilize the growth of the Internet in reaching out to others, who for whatever reason, couldn't or chose not to, join with other Unitarians attending a congregation.

However, as my health improved, I was persuaded to attend one of the NUF Weekends at The Nightingale Centre. Yes, this Fellowship used to meet annually until regulars fell ill or died. As communication became easier members felt able to take advantage of the newly developed NUF Internet Forum and then Facebook. Lack of a volunteer to organize the weekend also influenced the decision to stop meeting annually.

It was at that first meeting I met other NUF members, and have remained good friends, some being active members in the running of this Fellowship. There is always a vibrancy when Unitarians come together. I never fail to be amazed at the talent amongst Unitarians and how the talented people bring out the best in each of us. Even when our numbers were small, we would share the Centre with another Society or group and reap the benefits of being together and meeting other Unitarians,

whose focus would be different from ours. Those NUF weekends at Hucklow, have been missed.

In life there are times when different strands come together and make sense. Such was one when it seemed the NUF would end due to the difficulty of finding a replacement for our Secretary, who had been in the role much longer than the five years expected. In the period following, a lot of heart searching took place as to whether this had to be an 'ending' or whether it might be the starting point of a new 'beginning'.

It seemed clear that one of the things we could, and should, be doing was talking to other groups, who may also be experiencing similar difficulties to our own. Imagine the delight experienced, when at the GA, it was discovered that other groups/Societies, felt the same: more was likely to be achieved together than could be achieved alone.

An informal group, representing the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network, the Unitarian Peace Fellowship, the Renewal Group and the NUF, met for an informal meeting over lunch and decided to come together for a **Group Renewal Weekend** at Great Hucklow, on **26th-28th October 2018**, taking the title **Endings and Beginnings** as the theme. Each group found different aspects of 'Endings and Beginnings' which they would like to work with, and which they would like to share with the other groups. Gradually a very exciting programme is emerging.

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There is one difference to that of our previous NUF Weekends. Instead of not being able to fill the Centre, the numbers available for each group will be limited, each group being allocated 12 places in the first instance. We feel sure that this weekend will be oversubscribed and that all those applying will be able to look forward to a full Nightingale Centre.

Imagine my delight that NUF members will be meeting together with other Unitarians again at Hucklow. I remember what a difference that first meeting and subsequent ones made in my life. As I read George King's article in the Autumn edition of the *Newsletter* I understood how important the occasional events can, and could be, not only for regular members of a chapel, but also for many NUF members unable, or like George, opting to find other ways of being a Unitarian.

Although the date may seem a long way in the future, I would encourage any members who wish to be part of the **Group Renewal Weekend** to get in touch with me on: 01332 814055 or [joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk](mailto:joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk) .

*Joan Wilkinson*



## ***Letter to the Writer of 'Why I have failed as a Unitarian' (NL Autumn 2017)***

This is a thoughtful and heartfelt article by a young Unitarian who feels he may have 'failed' as a Unitarian because he is not a regular attender at Church or Chapel. Well, George I entirely agree with your conclusion that this is in no way a failure, and there are many ways of expressing our faith. Even if Sunday Church services are still the choice for a majority, there isn't a better or worse way to be a Unitarian apart from what works for you. The NUF is one example of a fellowship outside the traditional Chapel congregational structure and I am reminded that the Christian Church began as small house groups of followers of Jesus and the institutional church developed later on. It's an interesting and vital observation that younger people are often alienated by traditional services and are experimenting with alternatives, I do hope the movement can take notice and support new ways of meeting and being Unitarian, and we can avoid having to say that the rest of the movement is failing its young people.

Best wishes, Nick Honneyman



# Embroidering winter

Overnight  
snow snuggles  
into the landscape;  
makes itself at home;  
no place unvisited.

It's a Christmas present  
to my busy mind,  
this gift of nothing.

I adore witnessing  
these sacred acres  
of white on white.

I want this train I'm on  
to stitch its way  
over the turning Earth  
for ever ... and ever...

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## My Opus Adventure By Caroline Boyce

I am a young Unitarian from Cardiff who had the pleasure of going through the Unitarian youth programme and finding my feet and my identity through that. I am currently at a strange bridging stage in my Unitarian life. I am twenty-three years old and clinging on to the memories of the youth programme while trying to become more involved with BUYAN. When my former youth leaders Jen Hazel and Sarah Atkinson told us about their previous experience of Opus in the United States and how inspiring it was, I jumped at the opportunity. Michael Readett and I approached the FOY society and the youth programme for funding support to make this hope a reality and they kindly granted us this. For this, I am eternally grateful.

I would now like to give you a brief account of my experience of Opus, but I will firstly give a quick explanation of what Opus is. Opus is a 5-day annual retreat for Unitarian Universalist Young Adults aged 18-35 which includes worship, workshops, and social justice activities set on a given theme. The theme for this year was *'Dance Magic Dance!'* inspired by the 1986 film starring David Bowie. The theme was based around treasuring and finding all things magical in our lives. This year's retreat took place at Buckhorn Camp in the beautiful Rocky Mountains in Colorado with lots of hiking trails, rock climbing, fire pits, and ponds. Every time I glanced around camp I couldn't believe how lucky I was to be in such a beautiful place. I found myself in awe time and time again with Colorado and its magical zest.

## Worship and Touch Groups

Worship at Opus was not what you expect it to be in a conventional sense. Completely far from it! It took place every day, mostly in the evening, for about 45 minutes to an hour. I was truly blown away and touched by the rituals offered at Opus. For example, on the first evening we entered a circle and began chanting 'Take my hand' (a UU bridging song). The regular Opus-goers then walked down a path into the darkness and formed a line facing one another continuing to chant the song. The newcomers followed in suit one-by-one being welcomed by the chant. Everyone then sat around a beautiful rock face. An altar was then lit up with fairy lights and there was a bowl of water full of glitter. Julie Brock, the lead worship co-ordinator, gave a wonderful speech about us entering a magical space where everyone is held and loved and far from the stresses and realities back home. One-by-one we then offered items to the altar that represented us and shared "my magical stardust quality" while throwing glitter dust into the air. This ritual symbolised us offering a quality we cherish and that would enrich one another's week. It was heart-warming to see how keen everyone was to get up and get involved. Julie mentioned that worship is a time to activate our 'ritual brains' and I came to realise what she meant by this. The opening ritual took me to a place of contentment, calmness, mindfulness, appreciation, connection and community. To really enter a moment and connect with others, it's very powerful! In that moment the outside world stood still and everybody was in a special place together simultaneously. Quite an experience for a first jet-lagged day!

Another worship that stood out for me was one focusing on realising the good in you and embracing it and letting go of the bad. This was done high up in the mountainside with the wonderful views in the distance during sunset. Everybody lined up to have their hands washed slowly with the magical glittery water whilst being blessed with encouraging words. I cannot even put it into words how touching a simple act as this was. A few teary eyes were amongst us during the worship!

Opus also offered touch groups that took place every evening. A time to meet as a small group to process how everyone was doing, feeling, and anything else that was on our minds. These were similar to credo groups that I had experienced at Unitarian youth events in the UK. I can't recall every single fond moment from my touch group as there are too many to mention. But one included playing the 'HA HA' game by placing our heads on each other's stomachs and starting a laughing chain which went on forever.

## Workshops and Activities

Opus also offered a wonderful selection of diverse and enriching workshops. My personal favourite and most inspiring was the all camp workshop '*Dances of Universal World Peace*' which offered an experience of group connection and ritualised dance in celebration of diversity and to honour unity. Our dance leader took us through many chants from different cultures including Arabic and Sanskrit which was accompanied by circle and pair dance movements. It was magical as the group moved as one and we entered in a moment to let go of the everyday hustle and bustle to connect on a deeper level

of meeting and appreciation for diversity and unity. It was equally a meditative experience full of joy. I cannot recommend this practice enough and also recently discovered it exists in the UK!

I also thoroughly enjoyed Christopher Lamb's 'Song writing as a spiritual practice' workshop whereby we worked as a group to offer words and have them turned into a tune together. Amazingly, the outcome became a song about the local rabbits who carry the plague. I guess you had to be there to appreciate the humour in this! It was a unifying process with lots of harmonies and free-style emerging effortlessly. I could not fathom how we all felt comfortable and compelled to offer anything without any judgment and lots of encouragement along the way!

Opus also offered a good balance of free-time and other activities. This included hiking in the beautiful mountains although altitude left us breathless many times! We also had team-building exercises such as human foosball (foosball is a table-top game/sport: human foosball is just like the table-top game but with real people). Evenings included Coffee house where people shared and enjoyed one another's talents and the 'Black Lives Matter Dance' where black artists were celebrated and appreciated to raise money and support a local charity in Denver.



## Closing Thoughts

Opus has been truly *magical*! It has been a pleasure to meet our counterparts from across the pond, hear their experiences, share our stories together, celebrate our similarities and respect our differences. It was both surprising and refreshing to see an even newer wave of liberalism that extended in terms of sexuality, sex positivity, identity, language awareness and awareness of our own privilege and its effects on others. I also discovered many wonderful alternative ways of worship and had a lot of laughs and fun throughout. Our UU youth counterparts are so passionate, liberal and social justice-minded and throw themselves into everything enthusiastically. I absolutely could not recommend the experience enough and can't really put into words how inspired I am by the experience. I really, really, really would go back in a second and hope that I will be able to with funding help once again. I also hope I can spread the word for other young Unitarians to join me and experience the magic of Opus too. I have made some wonderful friendships and have taken away with me so many new ideas and reflected much more deeply on my own beliefs, faith, spirituality and identity from the process. Pretty powerful for a five-day retreat I would say!



## **MONEY MATTERS**

One of those tiresome things people dealing with the finances of any group has to do is to remind members of the SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL.

2018 will be the third year when annual NUF subscriptions are due in JANUARY.

Sadly many members still do not renew on time, hence my chivvying! It really is a nuisance having cheques appearing on my doormat at odd times throughout the year. I live in a village so it means a trip into nearest town, parking etc., so it is impractical (and a nuisance!) to do the banking every time, that is why some cheques take quite a while to be cleared. Please consider the poor treasurer and use the bank transfer system rather than sending a cheque if you can. Some members have already set up an annual standing order, so thank-you for that. For those who have not yet, our bank details are at the end of this article.

Our subscription remains at £13 per household, church/ chapel £15 and £5 for students for UK\* membership, although additional donations are always welcome and we appreciate the generosity of many members. We provide printed copies of the Newsletter and Viewpoint, but are happy for these to be distributed by email, and we also can provide CD copies for those who find printed matter or computer screen a problem.

Having said (when caught at a weak moment at another Unitarian get-together in 2014) that I would 'help out for a year or so' when the NUF was looking for a Treasurer, I

am pleased to let you know that our former Secretary and Newsletter editor Ken Smith has agreed to take over the task from the AGM in 2018. Ken will be combining the Treasurer position with that of Membership Secretary which should facilitate membership record updates.

Also during the next year we expect to change our bank as CAF are now making a monthly charge which, as we have very little activity on our account most of the year, we consider unreasonable. Information about any change will be provided in good time for you to amend your bank instructions.

For the 2018 renewals:

Either:

By cheque payable to National Unitarian Fellowship  
(send to Treasurer)

or PREFERABLY by BACS transfer :-

CAF Bank Ltd. West Malling, Kent

Sort Code : 40-52-40

Account Name National Unitarian Fellowship

Account Number : 00060019

If paying by BACS please identify your payment by including your Surname and Town as a reference.

\* Overseas members who still wish to receive printed copies are asked to pay in sterling and include postage of £20.00 for Air Mail / £11.00 for surface mail ( All European Mail £ 11.50 )

Thank you everyone for your continued support.

*Valerie Walker*  
NUF Treasurer

## Unitarians hit NYC Pride

Being in New York City for three months for an internship, one of the major events I was most excited for was the infamous New York City Pride. I had been to my local Norwich Pride celebrations in the past but never anything in such a massive city before.

I felt a mixture of anticipation and nervousness at the prospect, particularly as this was to be my first ever Pride march as an out Pansexual. But, there was no way I was diving into this alone. So I took to Facebook in search of groups open to more participants to join their group. Naturally, my first thought was to seek out Unitarians that are attending and I stumbled upon an event page setup by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Hudson Valley.

The march is 2 miles long streaming rainbows and glitter through Fifth Avenue headed south towards to the LGBT haven of Greenwich Village. Upon arrival I was greeted with friendly smiling faces and I immediately felt accepted. The ethos of acceptance of others regardless of gender, race or sexuality is one that I hold highly within the Unitarian movement and this was no different here.

It excited me that I was representing the Unitarianism faith in front of millions of spectators that lined the streets and truly felt a part of a family amongst people I had just met.

Feelings of bubbling warmth and compassion erupted from the second of kick off. Beaming smiles shone blindingly from thousands upon thousands, everywhere

you looked. No one was afraid to be whoever they wanted to be and it felt as if it were the safest place in the world.

Despite marching for seemingly endless hours there wasn't a single point that exhaustion hit. The infectious energy of love and enthusiasm was the only boost I needed to push forward.

The pavements were rammed with beautiful and kind faces all waving and high fiving us as we passed. The concept of being a stranger was demolished for one day; everyone was a part of a family connected for the cause of promoting Pride amongst LGBTQ+ people.

We handed out a thousand info cards very simply defining the accepting nature of Unitarianism encouraging others to join us. I hope some people were able to discover Unitarianism through that and join a congregation that they feel at home in.

I feel so grateful to the people that make this spectacular event happen every year. The "City Of Dreams" lived up to its title as that day felt like a stunning dream I will never forget. New York City is a beacon of openness and acceptance particularly in a time where the President may not share similar sentiments. Pride is still so desperately needed in today's society as it provides a safe space for queer people to truly express who they are and see that people are behind them for support.

*Kieran Raza*







## ***A Royal Commission of Inquiry into drug policy in the U.K.***

Spurred into action following a challenging sojourn at Hucklow Summer School, 2017, an opportunity opened up to start moving.

On a couple of occasions, I had introduced the subject of drug policy in the UK for discussion at our Castle Donington Fellowship meetings.

Our views were lively and disparate, (but isn't that what Unitarians are about!?).

However, we agreed on the fact that news on a daily basis was peppered with issues related to drug taking. e.g. heroin deaths, overcrowded prisons, the Duke of Cambridge raising questions about the decriminalising of drug taking, etc. We considered there are widening health and cost concerns, particularly arising from the links of drug taking with youth culture and also the increasing categories of substances (NPS's) available.

We queried whether this reflected a reality that current government policy in the UK was failing both individuals and the community at large.

We agreed to email our local MP Andrew Bridgen to ascertain whether he would be willing to initiate/promote/support a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the subject in this parliamentary term. This would provide an authoritative and Independent approach to a complex matter in order to report and advise on the future

formulation of a comprehensive and responsible drug policy in the UK.

Following an initial cagey response from Andrew Bridgen, he emailed a long exposition, mirroring and supporting current government policy. (I note this was updated in July 2017).

We now believe it would be useful to link up with the G.A. Penal Affairs Panel, with the aim of co-ordinating any other approaches being made.

Any suggestions will be warmly welcomed.

Anne Griffin  
Castle Donington Fellowship



## Remembrance

I want to remember  
But memories are being washed away  
As if by the rain outside the window.

I was 5 years old  
I remember the rough uniform  
As he clasped me in a close embrace.

And then he was gone  
I cannot see his face through the deluge  
It distorts, drips on the wintry branches.

I remember that knock  
The telegram 'regretting his brave death'  
The rain continues its bleak insistence.

Then suddenly I woke  
Within a ghostly light by my bed  
Stood my father, saluting, smiling.

I remember his face.

*Pat Caddick*

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