

National Unitarian Fellowship

*Affiliated to the General Assembly of Unitarians
And Free Christian Churches*

News & Views

Issue 7



Winter 2020



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

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CHRISTMAS

Since when did Christmas start in October
when we celebrate the event in December?
Where tins of baked beans and the like once stood
there's now Christmas paper and Christmas Pud.

The shelves that once housed tinned savaloyes
are now stuffed full with Christmas toys.
There are tins of biscuits and loads of chocs
with snowy, festive scenes on each box.

To make our houses festive and jolly,
there's tinsel and lights and ivy and holly
and around each corner, surprise! surprise!
Mountains and mountains of flippin' mince pies.

And, as if that isn't bad enough,
other aisles are packed out with this stuff.
There isn't room to swing a cat, so,
"Bah humbug" I say to all of that.

Bernice Lashbrook



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Contributions to News & Views

Contributions (of letters, articles, poems and pictures) are welcome. Contributions should be emailed or typed and may be edited for content or length. They should be consistent with the charitable objectives of the NUF and the Unitarian General Assembly. They should be the writer's original work or attributed appropriately. The preferred length is maximum 750 words (News reports), 1500 words (Views pieces). Contributions should be sent to the Editor at the address shown on the back cover.

Nick Saunders, Editor

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Editorial

"We need good leaders now more than ever". So reads the heading to an article on one vital issue raised by the Covid-19 pandemic by Ban Ki-Moon, former Secretary-General of the UN and Susana Malcorra, dean of IE School of Global and Public Affairs in the *i* newspaper for 19 August 2020. By good leaders they mean leaders with *"vision, courage, persistence, humility and creativity."* The writers are confident that such leaders exist in every walk of life.

This issue of *News & Views* accordingly focuses on leadership. Indra Sikhar reminds us of the different approaches to and styles of leadership. Bob Pounder examines the approach to leadership taken by Winston Churchill – a controversial figure in some quarters. In the News section we mention opportunities to get involved in the leadership of the NUF as vacancies on the Executive Committee become available after the AGM next April. We also hear how the GA is encouraging Young Unitarians, some of whom will be the Unitarian leaders of the future. Leadership, both of thought and action, is also a theme of the books reviewed in this issue, including the personal vision of Britain held by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the legacy of dissent passed on by significant Unitarian women.

We will be continuing a variant of the leadership theme in the Spring issue, which will look at “New Beginnings”. This issue will look at a range of possibilities, including the opportunities and limitations of new IT based approaches to communication. As always we would welcome contributions from readers, whether letters, articles, poems or pictures. I would be particularly interested in any cartoons or other examples of Unitarian humour – my Google search has only so far found American Unitarian Universalist examples. Contributions should be sent to me by **15 February**. My contact details are on the back cover.

Meanwhile all of us on the NUF Committee hope that you and your family are able to enjoy a very different but still happy Christmas, despite the pandemic and the restrictions that may be in place over the coming months.

Nick Saunders, Editor

Letter to the Editor

I meant to write and congratulate you for the last News and Views, which was really impressive. The current one is equally good. My partner Nick has been inspired to write up a book he has enjoyed and I hope you will see fit to publish the write-up*.

I was particularly pleased to see the article about Findhorn, as I am a member of the Findhorn Unitarian Network committee (FUN). I wonder if your readers are aware that we have such a network of about 30 members - we are now an affiliated society to the GA. We welcome anyone who is interested in the Findhorn connection to get in touch so that they can receive our mail-

ings: FindhornUnitarianNetwork@gmail.com

We had hoped to sponsor a Unitarianian flavoured Experience Week at Findhorn during 2020, but because of the pandemic it was cancelled. We hope to have something on offer next year.

Best wishes

Adrienne Wilson—York Unitarian, FUN Treasurer,
Associate Member GA, NUF

* See Nick Morrice's review of *The Wonderbox* by Roman Krznaric in the Book Suggestions section.

Delivery of Autumn issue of News & Views – Apology

We do apologise if you received your copy of the Autumn issue of the magazine rather later than usual. This was the result of IT problems. Steps have been taken to ensure that these problems should not recur.

Membership subscriptions

We are concerned to note that there are a few members who have still not paid their subscriptions for 2020. Please note that if you have not paid your subscription you will not receive further copies of the magazine until you do so. Further, to ensure fairness to those who choose to receive the magazine electronically, the current issue of the magazine will not now appear on the NUF website with open access; the website will now only provide back copies, to show non-members what they are missing.

Subscriptions for 2021 will be due on **1 January**. Subscriptions will be **unchanged** at £13.00 for adults and £5 for students. A renewal form is enclosed with this issue.

Do also think of giving a subscription as a **gift** for Christmas. If a relative or friend is unable to attend services as the result of Covid – 19 restrictions, geography or ill health NUF membership could be a great way of helping them keep in touch with the Unitarian movement.

Minister's Page

I have a friend who is very proud of not being 'religious', as he puts it. He quite enjoys teasing me about my faith. I am not likely to change my faith, just as he is not likely to change his love for a popular football club. Where faith is strong no amount of mockery or persecution is likely to break it.

I often hear people say that they are 'spiritual but not religious' and that that is sufficient in today's world; whereas I would say that there is more to life if you are spiritual *and* religious. It is a progression. Firstly we are physical beings charged up with emotions. At this level

we know about hunger, desire, anger, jealousy, fear and happiness. The mind of the spiritual person can operate at a higher level and is able to keep those emotions in check. The spiritual mind connects with the abstracts of life - beauty, truth and justice. The spiritual person can feel at one with nature and also at one with other like minded people. The religious person takes spirituality to a level where there seems to be a purpose behind the life we are living. There are ways to acknowledge this purpose, often through rituals to acknowledge a higher form of consciousness than one's own. The religious purpose is a need to love the world we live in by bringing goodness to it.

I expect most of us will be out of the second lockdown by the time this News and Views is printed. Let's hope so but keep a bit of energy in reserve just in case there is more to come, and use some of it to enjoy Christmas.

Prayer

Let us reach through ourselves into the world that is beyond our physical power to reach. It is a world the eyes cannot see and where no sound comes to the ears. It is the world of our higher selves, the unconscious world of love and knowledge. We reach through the stillness of contemplation, focussing our mind on a symbol of that higher self and allowing it to fill our minds. Let it push away the earthly chatter that continuously fills our heads until we feel the stillness arrive.

Float in that stillness for a few moments, gently breathing...and eventually withdraw back to our living world and feel refreshed.

Tony McNeile

October Reflection by Tony McNeile

www.ukunitarian.tv?oct-20

Welcome to October. October arrives in beauty. October bids farewell to the summer in a rash of autumn colours, emotional to behold. How wonderful to wander in the woodlands feasting the heart on the red and gold and feel the first breath of winter chill gathering beneath them. Summer warmth is in retreat during October.

Autumn in October carries a cold burnished sword to hush the woodlands life and send all to winter's rest. Animals seek warm shelters to hide away in, birds fly after the sun. We wanderers are drawn towards the warmth of home where the cold cannot reach. Winter has a desolate feel yet can still be beautiful. Life for us becomes more focussed on inside than outside.

At home we gather closer. October is a month for remembering. Remember the spring and summer that has gone. The things we did, the places we went to, and this year too, the sad memories. What could not be done, who could not be loved as we wished. So much of our ordinary living was put out of bounds and in many parts still is. But still we can remember in this October month. Remember how we coped and how we clapped and how we managed to keep in touch. The month of October ends with the traditional Halloween. Many in the world call it the festival of the dead. It sounds gruesome but it isn't. It is an ancient festival that predates Christianity. In the Christian calendar it becomes All Souls Day. Halloween has now become a commercial event that sells dressing up clothes, so children can go trick or treating as skeletons, ghosts or little devils. Its ancient purpose to remember has been lost in the fake cobwebs of the pound stores.

For the old country dwellers, October and autumn was a time for tak-

ing stock. It was the time of the third harvest, for nuts and berries. What is needed to survive the winter, what is needed for the next spring, what can be sold.

Halloween was for remembering those who had died during the year. The family would gather for a special meal. An empty place was set for the ones who had died. They talked about them. The things they had done. How they had influenced the lives of the present generation, by teaching skills and passing on wisdom. Someone might bring an item which is now a treasured possession because it came from that lost person. And in talking about them they are remembered more vividly. The superstitious might feel that the spirits of the dead came near to hear the stories that were being told about them. That is the root of the commercial Halloween.

Remembering is important. Wisdom comes from remembering and taking stock of what is good and what not so good, what has worked and what hasn't worked. It comes too from remembering our ancestors, how they lived their lives, how they dealt with the hardships, the joys they shared and the love they gave.

In this month of October let us remember what has been, prepare ourselves for the coming winter, plan for the spring, and enjoy and take comfort from the world as it settles into winter.

I am Tony McNeile minister of the National Unitarian Fellowship. This is a spiritual community for those freely seeking meaning and purpose in life. It is a community of individual belief.

Stay spiritually strong in troubled times.

November Reflection - Remembrance and Legacy

www.ukunitarian.tv?nuf-nov20

Joan Wilkinson

As we move into November and All Soul's Day on the 2nd November, we remember those no longer with us. This year, especially, many will be grieving and remembering friends and family who have lost their lives to Coronavirus. How close it is to Remembrance Day too, when we now remember all those killed in wars throughout the world. Many at this time also remember the innocent civilians who have also lost their lives in conflict.

A few weeks ago, I was trawling through my bookshelves and found a small booklet entitled 'Reflections – an anthology of prayers, meditations and poems' by contemporary Unitarians, published by the Unitarian Worship Sub-committee. However, it was published back in 1979, and many of the contributors are no longer with us. This reminds us that what is contemporary to us now, won't be for coming generations. Even the committees, sub-committees, and organizations to which many give their time, energy and commitment, may have disappeared too.

However, those Unitarians writing in the above book and other material of the past have left us a valuable legacy in their ideas, thoughts and words, which continue to speak to us now.

Frank Clabburn, who was born in 1947 and died far too young in the year 2000, was just one of the contributors to 'Reflections'. Frank's words in the following poem speak to me powerfully at this time of year as we think of remembrance and legacy. He expresses our close relationship with nature both physically and metaphorically in the words: '...a soil made rich for life/of coming time/by death of now'.

Just as we know that trees shed their leaves in autumn, enriching the earth for future life, just so, we must live and die in peace with the earth and those around us, in order to leave a healthy legacy for the life of future generations.

I thank Frank and all others in the past who have left us with a legacy, which reminds us of the ongoing search for peace and for right relationship with the natural world of which we are part.

Frank Clabburn, in this short and powerful poem, expresses a universal message in a language that I hope will be appreciated now and for years to come. There is no better time to share it than in this month of remembrance.

Falling Leaves by Frank Clabburn

*I have walked in search of peace
in parks where leaves
around me danced
like children playing:
Till my careless foot would crush
Their joy in mud; their dance conformed
To deeper rhythms of the changing world;
And, in what may seem destruction
Know a soil made rich for life
of coming time
by death of now.
And I know not, when dead I lay
in seal of wood or flame
the aftermath,
but this: some soil made rich for life
Of coming trees which offer playing children
to the wind.
May my dance be part of All,
and may I fall where feet can tread
a path of sought for peace.*

UKUTV Report and NUF Website

The introduction of Zoom with its range of facilities available to congregations and groups will certainly broaden the range of on-line resources available to our members. However, the UKUTV Steering Group now have time to plan for the future, and that is what we continue to do. There is even more scope than ever to use our imagination and skills gained over the past years to work with and for other groups, making the most of what the Movement can offer.

In the meantime I would refer you to the UKUTV's own website at: www.ukunitarian.tv and if youtube is your site of choice you can find NUF and Unitarian material on the UKUnitariantv section. Added to this is our own website: www.nufonline.org.uk where a weekly service from Plymouth and the NUF monthly video can be found on the front page. There is also more archived material on our own site. If you wish to join the weekly service from Plymouth on Zoom please contact me after 1.00 pm on the day before the Sunday Service and I will send you the contact details: joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk

The website team is presently exploring how the present website can be re-designed and updated. Watch this space!

Joan Wilkinson

NUF Executive Committee

Call for nominations

The NUF Constitution provides for a Committee of eight members, four honorary officers (President, Secretary, Treasurer and Minister) and four ordinary members. Kenneth Smith and Nick Saunders have indicated that they wish to stand down from the roles of Treasurer

and Secretary respectively at the AGM in April 2021. Nick will however continue as Editor of News & Views. Nick has also been an ordinary member of the Committee but his term of office will expire in April 2021 and under the Constitution an ordinary member must wait for a year before they can be considered for re-election.

The following positions will therefore need to be filled at the AGM:

Treasurer

Secretary

Ordinary member

NUF members are asked to consider whether they wish to be considered for these vital roles. If you are interested please contact Tony McNeile at tony.mcneile@virgin.net or Nick Saunders at rnssaunders@outlook.com for further information and a nomination form.

Nomination forms should be sent to the Secretary, Nick Saunders, by **15 February 2021**. Ballot papers will be sent out in March with the Spring issue of News & Views.

Books of Fellowship

Our two small groups are still going strong, particularly during this strange time of the pandemic which has slapped us in the face and is, let us hope, a timely reminder of how we humans are affecting all life on this beautiful planet of ours.

We scribblers are mainly in the so-called vulnerable group (i.e. getting on a bit), but apart from one who very unfortunately is not well at the moment, we seem to be a feisty lot and getting on as best we can in the face of practical difficulties. Letters come in to their own when visits to places of worship are constrained for those for whom this has been an important part of their lives. BT says 'It is good to talk' but in

our case 'It is good to write', and in this way, to communicate thoughts and feelings.

It has been interesting to read in what ways we have filled our enforced isolation during lockdown: gardening, golf, reading, talking (phone, Zoom, socially distanced in gardens), walking – and – writing letters! This doesn't mean there haven't been down-sides: not being able to celebrate birthdays, weddings, funerals, and especially, not being able to hug those we love. However, these things will pass, even if it takes a long time before our amazing scientists create that all important vaccine. We must stay sensible.

In case any lover of letter writing is reading this and might be interested in joining us, you would be most welcome. I can assure you we are a mixed bunch who walk to the beat of our own drums, but love to share opinions and experiences, always mindful of being courteous to each other and accepting differences.

Pat Caddick

GA Unitarian Youth Programme Update

So, what's happening with the General Assembly Unitarian Youth Programme?

2020 has not played out as imagined. In April, following advice from the National Youth Agency and Public Health England, we made the hard decision to cancel all planned residential weekends until judged safe to resume again. This, as you can imagine, was a difficult decision as our events are much loved and, for many, are an integral part of the Unitarian calendar.

However, undeterred by the current situation, we have used this time, I believe wisely, to reflect upon our arrangements and assess whether they are meeting the ever changing needs of our participants.

What has become evident is that we greatly need to embrace differentiation and broaden our offering.

To some extent this was already happening before the pandemic. Both Junior Weekend and UniFEST saw the introduction of adult programming to complement that of the children. This introduction represents our desire to take a more holistic approach in seeking to meet the needs of the whole family unit, from toddlers to grandparents. This is something I plan to develop further and look forward to the opportunity when it is safe to do so.

However, as positive as this development has been, it's still within the residential framework which, during an extended period of restrictions, is ineffective in terms of meeting participant need. So like many Unitarian groups, we have been exploring the potential of the online space and, to date, it's been an extremely positive and fruitful experience with a number of new initiatives emerging. For me, the most exciting is 'Bad Coffee Club.' It's an online group created by young people for young people. They see themselves as holding a safe and relaxing space for people to meet, have fun and live life to the full.

We've also established an online support group for congregational youth leaders to get creative, share ideas and develop new inter-congregational initiatives. The culture is extremely playful and supportive. Participants vary in outlook, experience and capacity, making

it a rich and stimulating environment with each seeking to develop a form of youth and family ministry in harmony with their setting. There is so much more to tell, from planned national online youth events, potential partnerships with Religions for Peace, the introduction of the Our Whole Lives (OWL) programme to the UK and explorations into young adult ministry but, alas, the word count is against me...

I would however like to mention one more development. This time has also provided us with an opportunity to reflect not only on what we do but also how we do it. More than ever, we want to get better at creating safe and enabling spaces which facilitate rich conversations; conversations which nurture trust, confidence and the free expression of hope, need and desire. Our hope is that relationships will grow and together, in our own way, we'll act on what emerges and bring about human flourishing.

If you'd like to get in contact please feel free to do so. I'm always very keen to chat.

Let's create our own space, have a conversation and see what emerges...

Gavin Howell

GA Youth Coordinator

ghowell@unitarian.org.uk

UNI-SING CELEBRATES ITS FIRST HARVEST FESTIVAL



Early in the first period of the COVID restriction, which began in March, there were Unitarians who wanted to utilize the opportunities Zoom gave them to make music together. A little later Louise Rogers, on the right, came up with the idea to create some way that Unitarians could meet on the Internet to sing hymns together. Together with musician Myrna Mitchell they made it happen, forming the Uni-sing Facebook group, followed by the Zoom meeting space where enthusiastic hymn singers and lovers of hymns could get together each Saturday afternoon at 3 pm.

On the 13th June approximately 30 participants met and to this day 20 – 30 singers get together to sing old favourites, as well as exploring hymns new to them, from the purple book *Sing Your Faith* and the green *Hymns for Living*. At first it seemed strange not to hear any other voices other than the pianist and leading singer – mostly one and the same person. However, I soon realized what a blessing it is not to be heard as I can't always reach the higher notes and my voice isn't of the strongest. Learning new tunes and reading the words of our hymns makes one realize what an abundance of talented people we

have in our own movement, both musicians and writers of hymns, as well as having a wealth of hymns that are comfortable for Unitarians to sing.

For the Harvest Festival on the 3rd October we had been asked to take along something we had grown or created. Came the day we all turned up with our offerings, keen to share them with the group. Some had brought produce which they had grown in their gardens, such as tomatoes, raspberries and flowers and others had created pieces of writing or written music.

It is usual after the physical and vocal warm-up and breathing exercises, the opening reading and the first five hymns that we have smaller break-out groups. We were a break-out group of four and it was a joy to find we were all lovers of gardening and gardens. It made me think that perhaps there is room for a Uni-gardeners group. We were still in deep conversation about gardening when we were alerted that it was almost time to return to the group and in the end had our conversation cut off, finding ourselves back with the main group.

The second half consists of five more hymns but this time our closing hymn was one written by Myrna especially for this celebration, *A Harvest of Voices*, sung to the tune St. George, Windsor by George Job Elvey (1816-93). Many readers will know this as the tune to which we would normally sing 'Come, ye thankful people, come'. This was a very amusing commentary on the Zoom Uni-singers and somehow, I can't see it being selected for the next Unitarian hymn book. However, all those in the group would, I feel sure, echo the closing two lines of the last verse:

"Uni-sing! Look what we've done –
We want this to run and run!"

If anyone reading this wishes to give Uni-sing a go then please contact Louise Rogers who will answer any questions you may have and add you to the weekly e-bulletin which gives details of the following Saturday's meeting: louise.rogers256@gmail.com.

Joan Wilkinson

Go we know not where

Go we know not where
Poetry excels as pioneer,
investigating unknowns.
It takes us by the hand,
guides us across the abyss,
brings to our eyes, our ears,
a world beyond.

To enter this magical kingdom
we must become children again,
be simple, humble, faithful, loving,
be open to wonder and awe,
ready to trust that miracles exist,
ready to be a stranger in paradise.

Liz Brownhill

Leadership



It would seem to me that there are at least two versions of leadership, an authoritarian form of leadership and a more democratic version. And there are various situations when one or other is required. The authoritarian version being more appropriate for short durations during times of emergency and the more democratic version being used most of the time.

Traditionally the view of a leader has been a charismatic, larger than life person and someone who uses the power of words to motivate people to a cause. However, I believe this traditional view perhaps overlooks people who do not conform to the traditional stereotype. This idea of non-traditional leaders being overlooked is considered in *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a world that can't stop talking* by Susan Cain.

I wanted to consider some leaders who come to my mind - Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Junior, Malcolm X and Winston Churchill. Gandhi was a most unlikely leader. He was not a powerful speaker and dressed modestly but he spoke with the healing concepts of the Hindu religion such as “ahimsa” (nonviolence), “satyagraha” (truth), and “swadeshi” (home produced items). He promoted the village life rather than modern multinational capitalism. You could say his motto was “simple living and high thinking”.

Martin Luther King was inspired by Gandhi. He was a passionate speaker and gave hope to his audience with lines such as this: “I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want

you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land”.

One of my favourite King quotations is:

“I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit together at the table of brotherhood”.

As with Mahatma Gandhi, King’s speeches are laced with fervently held religious sentiment.

Another contemporary leader was Malcolm X, whose birth name was Malcolm Little.

You will be familiar with the facts of slavery: slaves were transported by ship, allowed minimal possessions; families and tribal groups were split up. Slaves were not allowed to practise their religion nor speak their language and were even deprived of their surname and given the slave owner’s surname instead. In fact, everything was done to make the slaves feel degraded and powerless.

So one can perhaps empathise why having been let down by the majority in America Malcolm X initially preached that the best way for black people to achieve freedom was by racial separation and self-sufficiency.

But even Malcolm X later changed his view to one of multi-racialism, albeit via Islam.

Winston Churchill was a war time leader beloved by most English people. But I most admire the fact that he did not entertain the thought of defeat, even when the going got tough.

In a speech to Harrow School Churchill said:

“This is the lesson: never give in, never give in...in nothing, great or small, large or petty-never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense”.

Within this short essay we can see a variety of types of leadership from people from different races, countries and religions and it just goes to show that many different people can be “leaders”, especially if they can project the deeply held views and aspirations of those whom they wish to lead or empower.

A true leader will also attempt to empower their followers. Here is a quotation from Marianna Williamson:

“And as we let our own light shine
We unconsciously give other people
Permission to do the same.
As we’re liberated from our own fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others”.

I am involved in various Unitarian groups such as Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, NUF and UESN. I really appreciate the fact that I am encouraged to contribute verbally and in writing. I believe this helps me to understand my own values and this in turn has helped me to become a more confident person.

I would encourage those involved in Unitarianism to get involved with the leadership of the various societies and chapels. It is indeed an exciting voyage of self-discovery, both spiritually and practically.

Indra Sikdar

Winston Churchill and leadership

“You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy.” Winston Churchill, 1940.

You ask what leadership is? That question can be summed up in two words: Winston Churchill. Churchill was a great war-time leader. We and future generations who love freedom have much to thank Churchill for his leadership as the British prime minister during the Second World War. His first significant achievement in 1940 was to prevent the then foreign secretary, Lord Halifax, from seeking a negotiated peace settlement with Hitler. In time, Churchill’s bellicose attitude proved to be correct but, in his famous Blood, Sweat and Tears speech, he certainly did not exaggerate the cost. Already I can hear the objections to this well-deserved praise for Churchill. A candid response in the man’s own words comes to mind, ‘I should have made nothing if I had not made mistakes.’ The humility to acknowledge one’s own mistakes and to learn from them is a sign of character and character is a leadership quality.

The above words taken from Churchill’s famous speech have a message and a resonance for each of us today. Our policy should be to



Creative Commons, Winston Churchill Statue

by Tin Buss Carisbad CA 92011

wage war with all the might and with all the strength that God can give us. We should wage war against monstrous tyrannies that are ever more present in the creep of totalitarian ideologies at home and abroad today.

In May 1940, Churchill's message was grim and uncompromising and yet it was inspiring and totally appropriate. At that time the evacuation of the British and Allied troops at Dunkirk was still days away. Meanwhile, the Nazis in Germany, Austria and occupied Poland were already murdering those with mental or physical disabilities. It was SS policy to eliminate 'life unworthy of life' which in 1941 led to the creation of extermination camps and the Final Solution.

The sheer horror and evil that can take hold of any society is not always obvious. Wickedness on that kind of scale is so shocking and is so hard to comprehend and describe that we falsely believe that it can't happen again, or that it can't happen in our own democratic civilised society. But the price of such security has to be built on eternal vigilance. Evil has many disguises, and the road to Hell, as they say, is paved with good intentions. Churchill remained politically isolated when he said that the peace agreement signed by Hitler in 1938 and celebrated as 'Peace for our time' 'brought shame to England'. True leadership requires bravery and an unflinching steadfastness in the face of opposition. In the storms of life, the true leader will speak the unpalatable truth rather than the convenient lie.

Andrew Roberts in his much-acclaimed biography of Churchill brought to mind the words he wrote on Friday 10th May 1940, the day he became the prime minister, 'I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial . . . I could not be reproached either for making the war or

with want of preparation for it. I thought I knew a good deal about it all and I was sure I would not fail.' Roberts wrote, 'He had believed in his own destiny since at least the age of sixteen, when he told a friend that he would save Britain from a foreign invasion.'

Shakespeare wrote, 'Some are born great, some achieve greatness and others have greatness thrust upon them'. 'Cometh the hour, cometh the man, is a saying we are also familiar with; it suggests that at a crucial moment, a time of urgency and uncertainty, a leader, a saviour will emerge. We can debate whether leaders are made or born but destiny follows her own rules. Every individual is a product of history, Hitler no less than Churchill. But to leave it at that would be to deprive ourselves of knowledge, insight and understanding. The statue of Winston Churchill that stands in Parliament Square, London, is based on a photograph taken of him inspecting the bomb wreckage of the Chamber of the House of Commons in May 1941. The statue conveys an inspiring yet stolid pose in the face of adversity, it reflects the leadership that gave the nation the will to survive, to succeed and to win in desperate times. Churchill's statue is a silent sermon on an important aspect of leadership, proclaiming that one must keep a steady hand at the helm during a storm. Churchill said, 'If you're going through hell, keep going'.

A leader has to become a living testimony to his vision. A leader's conduct is crucial to his image. If he wants the people to be there for him, he has to be seen to be there for them, to mourn with them when they mourn, to rejoice with them when they rejoice, to be steady, to be dependable and to inspire hope and courage in times of despair; such leadership is not only required, it is paramount.

There is the notion of the self-made man or self-made woman but

who in any true sense is really self-made? Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace, his paternal grandfather was John Winston Spencer-Churchill, 7th Duke of Marlborough, so Churchill came from an aristocratic background but that in itself could not be the single guarantor of success.

In his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, John C Maxwell wrote, 'He who thinks he leads, but has no followers, is only taking a walk'. Maxwell made the obvious yet profound point that even with great ability if you cannot influence others then, you will not be able to lead. This brings us back to a realisation that our relationship with others has to be based ultimately on who we are. Who we are is the measure of our inner life, and the measure of our deepest convictions. As First Lord of the Admiralty, during the First World War, Churchill was responsible and was blamed for the disastrous loss of life in the Dardanelles Campaign 1915-16. Later in life, a number of other serious political misjudgements would ensure his marginalisation during the years, 1929-1939.

But deep within the soul of Churchill remained that undimmed vision of destiny. Every leader must have a vision, every leader must have the inner resources and the drive to go on. So it was with Churchill, 'cometh the hour cometh the man'. There need not have been a war with Nazi Germany, the easy thing to do would have been to have supported an accommodation with Hitler and all his evil. Today there is much confusion sown by so-called liberals concerning our past history. Indeed, it has become fashionable amongst a swathe of the population to denigrate all that was achieved during the war years 1939-1945 and in the aftermath. Indeed, in this perspective there is a wilful blindness to the cost of that sacrifice in human life and the loss of Britain's position as a major world power, as a sacrifice that was ulti-

mately made in exchange for freedom and democracy against a vile totalitarianism. None of this could have been achieved without leadership.

Churchill's observations on the creeping tyranny of Germany under Nazi rule were true and he knew what had to be done when others were trying to evade the issue and hope that the problem would go away. In Brian Wren's Unitarian hymn/song, '*Bring Many Names*', there is a line that speaks of an 'old aching God', 'calmly piercing evil's new disguises' and evil does stand before us today in a new disguise. When Parliament ceases to function properly, when laws are made by diktat, when civil and religious liberties are seriously curtailed, when arbitrary rules are enforced, when we are told that Christmas is cancelled, when the police enter a church to break up a Sunday service, when self-righteous ideologues will brook no debate, when the majority quietly hope that the problem will just go away, we need a leader who will declare that, 'Our policy is to wage war.'

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. - Ephesians 6:12.

Bob Pounder

Bob is Minister of Oldham Unitarian Chapel

Review Article - *Reimagining Britain*- Justin Welby

I first read the Archbishop of Canterbury's thoughts on the future of Britain in 2018. I was underwhelmed. It did not seem to have the vision which I was looking for. Justin Welby, writing in a personal capac-

ity, is no William Blake and the book does not paint a picture of a New Jerusalem. His aim is to sketch the foundations for a more unified country following the fragmentation resulting from many social forces and multiplied by the debate over Brexit. However, re-reading the book in the light of the UK's departure from the EU and also the coronavirus pandemic, I have revised my view somewhat. If the need for a complete rethink of our direction as a country was important post-Brexit the pandemic makes such thinking urgent. This has now been stated by Welby in his capacity as Archbishop, in his Easter message.

In the Introduction Welby argues that society is based on values, which are given form by practices and virtues. However, society has broken down so that whereas formerly there was a shared narrative, largely based on the Christian tradition, there are no longer such common values and some of the counter-narratives, such as apocalyptic terrorism, are threatening society as we know it. We “need a more inspiring and better narrative that shapes a sense of common purpose”. Such a vision will “promote community, be courageous and be lived out consistently”. Building on our history, it will ensure “stability through reconciliation, resilience and sustainability”. These values are deeper than the so called “British values” that schools now have to instil in pupils and that form the basis of the Government's Prevent strategy for fighting terrorism. However, I wonder whether Welby has given enough weight to the values encouraged by some of the well established non-Christian faith groups in British society, including those Unitarians who would not describe themselves as Christian.

In Part Two Welby lists the “basic building blocks” for putting these ideas into practice. These are the family, education, health, housing, economics and finance, foreign policy, immigration and the environment. Welby is more open to the value of the non-nuclear family

than might have been expected, but he does reject the claims of some Muslims to have the freedom to live by Sharia law. He insists on the freedom of religious groups to insist, for example on the celibacy of their priests. However, he fails to accept that Christianity may have something to learn from the family structures of other faith traditions.

With regard to education, Welby insists that an education system must have a clear internal sense of values. He perhaps underestimates the difficulty of creating this in a country where the idea of one overarching story is rejected by many people. His answer is to invoke the principle of subsidiarity, with decisions taken at the lowest possible level. In terms of education this leads him to support academies, able to set their own direction within a nationally set curriculum. I think Welby understates the difficulties of matching provision with local, regional and national needs if the system is allowed to fragment without the support of intermediate bodies such as local authorities. Welby is strident when considering health. He sees the duty of the State to put in place effective and fair health provision as being an absolute one. The importance of public health lies in its reflection of social solidarity. So often health policy is poorly implemented, Welby says, because of poor liaison between government departments. We saw this recently with the initially inadequate distribution of PPE to health and care workers.

Housing, Welby argues, is another example of where policy has lost sight of the underlying values on which it should be based – housing should be a base for thriving communities. The tradition of building social housing as a major role for local authorities was lost with the introduction of tenants' right to buy their council house and the private sector has not filled the gap. Housing associations, however,

have become central to the creation of new communities. They can be closer to the community than local authorities and can be effective forces of subsidiarity and solidarity. However, some housing associations would have to change considerably to operate in this more community focused way. Welby says nothing about the role that major landowners such as the Church Commissioners could play in encouraging use of their land for community purposes. However, he does support the use of the taxation and planning systems to discourage housing as a store of wealth and to encourage the development of community.

Welby's business background makes him well qualified to discuss the role of economics and finance. He pulls no punches, stating that "austerity is a theory for the rich and a reality of suffering for the poor". He accepts that the economy will always default to a market approach but points out that pure markets are never efficient in their distribution of resources, though regulation needs to be used proportionately to risk. He is critical of the rise to dominance of financial services, transformed "from servant to master". Since Welby was writing some financial institutions have moved from London to mainland Europe as the result of Brexit. More unexpectedly, we have seen state intervention to support individuals and businesses through the pandemic on a scale never seen before, despite the government being a Conservative one. It will be difficult for a government that has stressed that "we are all in this together" to revert to traditional market-led policies once the crisis is over.

Discussing "the world around us" Welby supports Robin Cook's plea for an ethical foreign policy, not just on the grounds that it is right but also that in the long term it will be in Britain's interests. Foreign aid and fair trade can help defuse tensions in developing countries which

might lead to mass movement of people and encourage terrorism.

This discussion leads into a forceful consideration of the problems raised by mass migration, though he accepts that it is easier to state what should not be done than what should be done. Welby states simply that “It has never been possible to solve (immigration) by barring the doors, nor is it feasible or wise to leave them open to all comers”. However, Welby accepts that integration, by for example immigrants’ achieving a workable command of English, is vital. He understands the fears of the existing inhabitants, particularly in deprived areas, for the impact of immigration on jobs, education, housing and other local services. Such areas must be supported if existing residents are to have the confidence to show the “generous openheartedness” to newcomers that is epitomised in the story of Ruth.

Turning to the environment and climate change, Welby, after weighing the evidence, concludes that climate change is substantially man made. He considers whether we owe a greater duty to those yet unborn to take drastic steps to limit global warming or to the current generation for whom the way out of poverty may seem to be continued economic growth using non-reusable resources. He concludes that the balance is in favour of the unborn, given that many green measures can also create new opportunities for the present generation. Welby here does mention the role of ethical investment policies as adopted by major landholders such as the Church Commissioners.

In the last two chapters Welby considers who will bring such change about. He states firmly that the common good is not just a matter for the government or the market but “the sum of innumerable small acts by every participant in society”. This becomes more apparent in a time of crisis such as the pandemic. Again Welby presses the case for

subsidiarity, and in particular for intermediate institutions such as charities and faith groups. It remains to be seen how many such bodies will be left standing once the pandemic is over.

Finally, Welby considers the role of churches and faith groups. Welby sees them as “healthy disrupters”, a source of value based, constructive criticism. However, he gives most of the credit to churches, although there is a brief mention of Judaism and Islam.

In his final chapter Welby concludes that “there has to be some kind of narrative of the UK, and of the way in which values are understood, that captures the imagination and anchors what is said and done in a coherent pattern”. This, he says, is the greatest challenge. So while Welby’s description of how to get to a new Britain seems more powerful on a re-reading, the need for a Blakean vision of the new Jerusalem remains unmet. Perhaps this is where the role of literature, music and the creative arts comes in!

Nick Saunders

Book Suggestions

The Wonderbox by Roman Krznaric

Here is a book for private reading as well as for discussion. The author, who is described as a cultural thinker and founding faculty member of The School of Life in London, begins his Preface with the question, "How should we live? This ancient question has a modern urgency. In the affluent West, society is changing faster than we can adjust to it...Yet there is one realm where few have sought inspiration for our dilemmas about how to live: history. I believe that the future of the art of living can be found by gazing into the past."

In a series of chapters with these titles: Nurturing Relationships, Making a Living, Discovering the World, Breaking Conventions, he explores such topics as Love, Family, Empathy, Work, Time, Money, Senses, Travel, Nature, Belief, Creativity and Deathstyle.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It is truly a Wonderbox of stories, packed with clever and interesting ideas, always with an eye to the past while searching for inspiration to help us with the problems of today.

I can imagine a group of Unitarians gathering together on a weekly basis, to share their thoughts on each successive chapter, and thus spend many happy and profitable hours. The author has been described by the Observer as one of Britain's leading lifestyle philosophers, and you have my assurance as well that you will find yourself in good company.

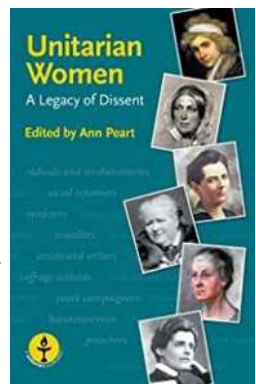
Profile Books Ltd c 2011, 212 ISBN 978 1 84668 394 7

Nick Morrice

Unitarian Women: A Legacy of Dissent

Edited by Ann Peart

This informative and engaging book about Unitarian women over the last 250 years is a true treasure trove of tales. Delivering a brief of writing about those 'who made a difference to their world', the focus is on portraying pioneering women who had to push boundaries and who lived outside norms and traditions. The Editor, Ann Peart, and a small group of contributors portray the life



and work of nine individuals in dedicated chapters, and also offer in-depth stories of groups of women and their individual members, from small friendship groups to more established groups and societies. With the main focus being on England, the final section also introduces Unitarian women from Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Some familiar names like Elizabeth Gaskell and Mary Wollstonecraft are among those featured, but the majority of women depicted will probably be much less known to most readers.

Whilst some of the more theological aspects of the women's stories as dissenters will be more accessible to those with a good understanding of Unitarian history, not having this background knowledge should not negatively affect the enjoyment of this book. This is because the way in which each woman and her achievements is portrayed goes way beyond just their faith and role as Unitarians. The authors weave a rich tapestry where they, and thus the reader, meet every single woman in her social, economic, and personal life. This helps the reader to truly understand what motivated them, which challenges they met and how they managed to overcome them.

Because more than two centuries are covered, the individual stories give insight into a varied range of lives and circumstances and this allows us to observe how some aspects of Unitarian women's lives changed, and others remained over time. For example, many of the women portrayed were born into Unitarian circles and yet for many carving out their involvement was much harder than for their fathers, brothers or other male family members. The story of Harriet Martineau, who is the first woman portrayed in the second section on 'Widening Circles' is a good example. Many will know her brother James Martineau as an influential minister and writer, but the journey of his sister to recognition as a writer and pioneer sociologist was

much more challenging and less straightforward.

Many of the women featured in the book had to carve out their roles around limitations of marriage, economic pressures and the rules and conventions of their times regarding a woman's duty. In some cases challenges become opportunities, for example when the need to earn a living led women to write to make money. It is impressive how many of the women managed to create a vibrant network of connections, maintained by letter writing as well as travel. Often it was a waiting game though, as for Mary Rees Bevan who is introduced in the short chapter on Wales, who only took to theological study aged 80 after being widowed twice and became a Unitarian, inspiring her son and his entire congregation to follow.

In part three and four of the book the width and breath of Unitarian women's activities come to life with many stories focusing on educational and social reform, suffrage and public service as well as peace campaigns. A chapter on The Unitarian Women's League and one on women ministers round off the collection nicely.

What is the strength of the book - the richness of stories and details of the Unitarian women's lives - is maybe also its weakness. After a while details of life stories start to blend into each other and at the end it becomes hard to remember who was who or to be able to find those stories again that had left a real impression. It was very often those small moving details of challenges overcome and of achievements that filled me with admiration and also inspiration. It's hard to walk away from the book without feeling that there are lessons to be learned about determination, resolve, and a healthy dose of creativity in following your dreams and interests and achieving your goals.

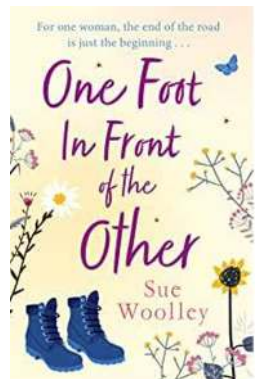
I would definitely recommend the book to all those interested in the history of Unitarianism in Britain and the role of women within, but also those with a more general interest in women's history from the 18th century onwards and how women managed to carve out a role for themselves in the more public space. Whilst an engaging read in one go, it would also work as more of a gradual read, leaving time to reflect and 'stay with' each woman and her period.

Monika Strell

Monika is an interfaith minister based in Sutherland, Scotland.

One Foot in Front of the Other by Sue Woolley

Here is a novel which many of us had been keenly awaiting. We are used to reading non-fiction books written by Sue, but this is her first work of fiction. Sue has again researched this as well as we have become used to. However, reviewing a work of fiction, written by someone who has been known and admired for several years, hasn't made the task easy.



It is all too easy to wonder how much is autobiographical and falling into the trap that something new is being learned about the author, but this would be a mistake. Only some parts have drawn on experience, which is a testament to the creativity and imagination which have worked on experience and new ideas and perceptions to make a gripping novel.

Through deep personal issues, which anyone might face as they go through life, Claire, the principal character, confronts them all with great courage, in spite of the dips and doubts which draws the reader

into this story and makes Claire seem to be someone you feel you know. Questions of bereavement, loneliness, alcohol dependency, spirituality, guilt, new relationships and relations, alongside many smaller difficulties of everyday life, are confronted and worked through. Friends, acquaintances, and relations of Claire are like people we as readers have met in our own lives.

Initially we learned about Claire from the third person narrator but for me the novel really took off when more and more dialogue and interactions were introduced. Careful commentary and dialogue took us deep into the psyche and behaviour of this principal character and how she faced life and emotions rationally, weighing up the pros and cons of each situation. She also recognized the importance of sharing difficulties with others and listening carefully to what they had to say. This isn't a romance but could be seen as romantic realism. We don't have to wait for a happy ending where the man gets his woman, and they live happily ever after, but rather we watch the joys and difficulties of real life and real relationships developing. Yet, as we read on the book's cover, this is a life-affirming novel and one I hope many of you will be reading already or will now be encouraged to read. I am always thrilled at anyone's success on their first novel and even more so when it is a Unitarian. Congratulations Sue.

The book is published by Headline Publishing Group and can be purchased from Amazon at £7.78.

Joan Wilkinson

The background of the page is a soft, light blue winter scene. It features snow-covered evergreen trees, with some branches in the foreground and others in the distance. Numerous white snowflakes are scattered throughout the scene, some appearing to be falling. The overall atmosphere is calm and serene.

Two Asks

Winter, weave your spell
of visual silence;
transform our landscape
of green absence.
Sprinkle crushed crystals of sugar:
let them twinkle,
as silver as a hand of small change,
as quiet as a sleeping star,
a dreaming poet.

Winter, be generous of gifts;
wrap them in memories;
deliver them with grace.
Your precious windfall:
long, dark evenings;
curtains drawn by five;
time to journey within.
As snow softly settles,
flake by perfect flake,
peace accumulates:
we drift
in the direction of dreams.

Liz Brownhill

National Unitarian Fellowship

Affiliated to the General Assembly of
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