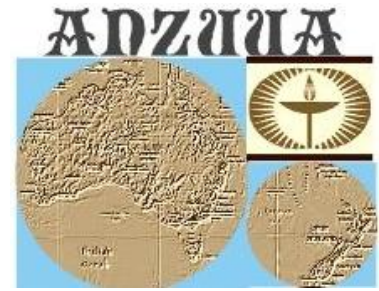




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**Journal of the Australia New Zealand
Unitarian Universalist Association**

Summer 2013



THE DIET OF TORDA

On 13 January, Unitarians in Transylvania commemorate the event in 1568 which marks the foundation of their church, the first national branch of our denomination in the world. While Unitarians already existed in that country, under the leadership of the legendary Ferenc (Francis) Dávid, their church was legitimised when Prince János Zsigmond (John Sigismund) II convened the national Diet (parliament) in the town of Torda and issued his famous declaration:

“Our Royal Majesty, as he had decided at the previous debates within his country about matters of religion, confirms as well at the present Diet that every orator shall preach the gospel by his own (personal) conception, at any place if that community is willing to accept him, or if it isn’t, no one should force him just because their soul is not satisfied with him; but a community can keep such a preacher whose teachings are delightful. And no one, neither superintendents nor others, may hurt a preacher by this or by the previous constitutions; no one may be blamed because of their religion. No one is allowed to threaten others with prison or divest anyone of their office because of their profession: because faith is God’s gift born from hearing and this hearing is conceived by the word of God.”

To understand how such a singular act of tolerance could occur at a time when most of Europe was embroiled in religious warfare between Catholics and Protestants, it should be noted that Transylvania had been separated from Hungary by the Ottoman Emperor, Suleiman the Magnificent – a very different kind of unitarian! While the ethnic Hungarians were mostly Catholics, there was also a sizable minority of Lutheran Saxons in the principality. Though he was under pressure from both sides, Prince John declined to proclaim a state religion for fear of causing dissension among his people.

Francis Dávid had returned to Transylvania, after studying at Protestant universities in Germany, and soon became the Lutheran bishop. However, he resigned in 1559 in support of Calvinism, which he saw as a purer form of biblical Christianity. He sought to reconcile the two factions but was unable to prevent a formal split in 1564, after which he became the Calvinist bishop and court preacher for Prince John. However, Dávid’s biblical and humanistic approach soon brought him to criticise Calvinist dogma, as well. He saw religious reformation as an eternal principle and its successive stages as evolutionary steps toward the perfect truth.

In his preaching, Dávid continued to scrutinise the precepts of Christianity, keeping only those which proved to originate from the Bible and were conceivable by reason. He came to reject the Trinity as a human invention and promulgated the concept of one God, based on Jesus' teachings. With the permission of Prince John Sigismund, who was concerned about the religious tensions in the country, a series of debates were held between 1566 and 1571, mainly between the Nontrinitarians and a united front of Lutherans and Calvinists. Dávid did well in the debates, winning a decision at the Synod of Torda in 1566 that the only basis of the Christian faith was the Apostolic Creed. After other debates around the country, Prince John convened the Diet of Torda in 1568 and proclaimed freedom of religion and conscience for all.

The Unitarians (while not yet using that name) acquired a school in Kolozsvár which, with the support of the prince and the city, Dávid developed into a college of high standing. Transylvania became a refuge for anti-trinitarian and liberal theologians from many countries – already present was Giorgio Blandrata of Italy, who had become the prince's physician. Unitarianism spread quickly in the country and into Hungary, winning over aristocrats, Protestant ministers and even Gáspár Heltai, Dávid's main opponent in the earlier debates. Unfortunately, Prince John Sigismund died in 1571 from injuries sustained when his carriage overturned.

The new prince, Stephen Báthory, was a Catholic and promptly dismissed Dávid and Blandrata from his court. The Unitarian printing house was confiscated and all religious publications were subjected to censorship. In 1572, Báthory proclaimed the Law of Innovation, which forbade any further religious reforms. He became the king of Poland in 1576 and was succeeded in Transylvania by his brother, Kristóf Báthory, who proceeded with the Catholic Counter-Reformation. The Unitarian Church remained a recognised denomination with Dávid as its bishop but it was only allowed to hold synods in Kolozsvár and Torda.

By this time, Dávid was preaching that Jesus was human and, therefore, to be revered but not worshipped. This put him at odds with Blandrata, who held that Jesus could be appealed to in prayer, and the church was in danger of splitting over the issue. However, the Synod held at Torda in 1578 confirmed the principle of free inquiry and declared that no-one was violating the Innovation Law by questioning matters which the Synod had not yet decided. In 1579, Blandrata denounced Dávid to Prince Kristóf, who was happy for the excuse to forbid Dávid from preaching, place him under house arrest and bring his case before the Diet. He was tried at the royal capital of Gyulafehérvár and sentenced to life imprisonment in the fortress of Déva.

Already ill from months of house arrest, Francis Dávid died five months later, having carved the following words into the wall of his cell: *“Neither the sword of popes, nor the cross, nor the image of death – nothing will halt the march of truth. I wrote what I felt and that is what I preached with trusting spirit. I am convinced that after my destruction the teachings of the false prophets will collapse.”*

The date of his death, 15 November 1579, is commemorated as Francis Dávid Day by the Unitarians of Transylvania and Hungary. Today, the ruins of his prison site bear a memorial to him, and Unitarians the world over know his maxim: *We need not think alike to love alike.*

FOOTNOTES

The picture on the front page, entitled 'The Proclamation of the Act on Religious Freedom at the 1568 Session of the Transylvanian Diet', was painted by Aladár Körösi-Kriesch in 1896. In the centre is Francis Dávid addressing the Diet. While the Hungarian painter does not appear to have been a Unitarian, it is known that he had a lifelong affection for Transylvania and its folk art. He founded an artists' colony there in the 1890s and even attached the name of a village near Kolozsvár to his surname.

The painting is on display in the National Museum of Torda, which reopened in 2011 after many years of restoration. That work was expedited by a fundraising campaign run by the ICUU, the UU Partner Church Council and the UU International Office. The museum also has an impressive range of artefacts that go back as far as when the town, then known as Potaissa, was a Roman garrison in the 2nd Century CE.

Not everyone knows that the Magyar (Hungarians) only arrived in Europe early in the 10th Century, one of many migrations from further east that took place after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. In 1000 CE, the Kingdom of Hungary was established under the leadership of Isztván (Stephen) I, a zealous Christian who proceeded to convert his subjects by peaceful means or otherwise. At that same time, the Hungarians spread into Transylvania, though the resulting province was largely autonomous for the next 700 years.



ICUU NEWS

Conferences in Africa

Flood Relief in India

EUU Spring Retreat



We hear from our Kenyan contact, Josphat Mainye, that a conference of Francophone U*Us in Africa was held in Bujumbura, Burundi, over 01–07 August. In addition to delegates from Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville (former French Congo) and Rwanda, there were Anglophones from Kenya, South Africa and Uganda. The conferees held a special Africa U*U Day celebration on 04 August, which will henceforth be commemorated every year on the first Sunday in August.

The conference was led by the ICUU's Executive Secretary, Rev. Steve Dick, and its Program Director, Rev. Jill McAllister (who led the ANZUUA Growth Conference in Brisbane in 2010). Two days were devoted to pastoral training and they later conducted a similar session in Nairobi for leaders of the UU Council (Kenya), which is the new name of the KUUC.

From the UUA's International Office: In June 2013, the North Indian state of Uttarakhand suffered from devastating floods and landslides due to massive rainfall, resulting in the country's worst natural disaster since the 2004 tsunami. The Unitarian Universalist Association's Holdeen India Program (UUHIP) has been working since 1984 to support pioneering civil society leaders and organizations in India seeking to build a more just and equitable society.

One of the UUHIP's close partners in India, the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), is deeply engaged in supporting a fair and just recovery for all of Uttarakhand's residents. This pioneering humanitarian organization, active across India and in neighboring countries, has been a powerful voice for ensuring that the most impoverished communities are at the center of disaster relief and recovery. In July 2013, generous donors contributed over \$7,500 to the UUA's India Flood Relief Fund supporting AIDMI's work in Uttarakhand.

In the aftermath of the disaster in Uttarkhand, AIDMI has developed a compelling case for 'a new deal' in disaster relief, as part of a dialogue with the agencies that will be directly involved in supporting relief in Uttarakhand – including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand, United Nations, and several NGO's.

[The UUHIP was established from a bequest by Jonathan Holdeen, a businessman and attorney. Partners have used its funds to organise unions and cooperatives; advocate for land, water and forest rights, and for higher minimum wages; and to campaign against untouchability, bonded labour and child labour.]

We have received an invitation to the Spring Retreat of the European Unitarian Universalists, which will be held on 11–13 April 2014 at Le Bois du Lys (The Forest of the Lily) International Accommodation Centre near Paris. The keynote speaker will be Rev. Chris Buice of the Tennessee Valley UU Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, who will talk about 'The Spirit: *un certain je ne sais quoi* (a certain I-don't-know-what)'. There will be workshops led by various participants, which in the past have ranged from religious and social action topics to nature walks to yoga, dance or Tai Chi to a serious study of Belgian beers.

For the young people, the Saturday will be devoted to a comprehensive age-appropriate Religious Education program. Saturday evening is usually reserved for a talent show, where participants sing, dance, play musical instruments, present skits and other activities (such a karate demonstration). A religious service led by Rev. Buice will be held on the Sunday morning, before the closing ceremony and final lunch together.

This Retreat is hosted by the UU Fellowship of Paris, one of the seven EUU branches in Belgium, France, Germany (2), the Netherlands and Switzerland (2). The venue is on the edge of the Fontainebleau Forest, just south of the city with many exceptional historical and cultural heritage sites nearby. To learn more about the European Unitarian Universalists, visit their website: www.europeanuu.org. Registration for the Retreat will open early next year.

CARNARVON GORGE

By Jane Brooks

In June 2013, we did the Carnarvon Gorge walking holiday with AUSWALK, but this trip included two other National Parks in Queensland. We were picked up by our two guides in Brisbane and, on the first day of the trip, they drove our 15-member group to Bunya Mountains National Park in a small bus. The trip took about five hours and it was mid-afternoon by the time we arrived, so we only had time for a short walk through the rainforest called the Chute 3 Walk. It was misty and drizzly and quite dark in the forest, so we didn't take photographs. The track was not difficult, but we took care because it was made slippery by the drizzle. It was good to have a leg-stretch after the bus trip.

In the evening, we had dinner at a restaurant called 'Puzzles', which was about a five-minute walk from our accommodation. We were amazed at how good this small boutique restaurant was! – the food was really delicious. Bunya Mountains NP is too far from Brisbane for a day trip but, apparently, people like visiting on weekends and having an overnight stay. But you would need a long weekend to be able to do a serious bush-walk. There are campgrounds in this national park but we enjoyed very comfortable accommodation in two-storey chalets! Each chalet had two bedrooms upstairs, each with a queen bed and ensuite. Downstairs in the chalet was a room with bunk beds, a laundry with washer and drier (we really needed that drier!), a big sitting area with a slow combustion wood heater, and a kitchen. We didn't need to self-cater, fortunately, as our meals were all pre-arranged by AUSWALK except for lunches during bus trips.

The next day we walked a total of 18 km on Bunya Mountains tracks. The trails were easy and there was a variety of scenery with rain forest, waterfalls and vistas. The Bunya Pine is a conifer unique to this area and it has a unique shape distinguishing it from other pines. Once you have seen one, you'll always recognize another. Around lunchtime, it began to rain. Fortunately we had finished eating the packed lunches prepared for us by the time the rain really set in. It rained heavily for the next few hours. Not even the highest-tech rain jackets will keep you dry in that kind of rain! That's why we really needed the clothes drier! The bathrooms had heaters, too, and that was a good thing because a lot of bushwalking clothes have care labels saying "do not tumble dry". Our packs needed drying, as well, but we had 'dry sacks' inside to keep our things dry. That evening, we ate in the tea-rooms that were next door to the chalet area. Again we were very pleasantly surprised at the quality of the food available; it was the standard of a good restaurant.

The following day, we left the misty mountains and headed for Cania Gorge National Park. On the way we passed through Kingaroy, which is famous – or perhaps I should say 'infamous' – as the hometown of the peanut farmer, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who was Premier of Queensland in the 1980s. His wife, Flo, is still alive at 92 but I don't know if she still bakes pumpkin scones! We didn't stop to look for any but we did buy some raw peanuts in their shells grown on local farms in the next town, where we stopped at a roadhouse for a morning tea/refuelling/toilet break.

We arrived at Cania Gorge National Park about mid-afternoon after about 5–6 hours travelling, so again we only had time for a short walk. We did a loop walk to Fern Tree Pool, passing through forests of Spotted Gums on the way to the pool, and returning to the starting point via a steep but very scenic descent. The weather was a lot drier there but it was very cold at night. Our accommodation consisted of a spacious cabin with a main bedroom, a room with a pair of double bunks and a combined sitting room/kitchen. That room had a reverse-cycle air conditioner but the bedrooms were unheated. The double bed was too small for both of us, so I slept in the bunkroom. It was very convenient to be able to spread my gear over the three empty bunks. Fortunately, spare blankets were provided, because I needed six thicknesses of blanket plus thermal underwear to be warm enough in bed! The communal eating area, where breakfasts and dinner on the first night were provided, was a huge shed which was open at both ends. There was a large open fire but, unless you were a few feet from it, it was very cold in the big shed. The owners of the campsite provided a roast dinner on the first night but it was bland food. They only cooked a dinner for guests twice a week, so on the second night our guides cooked a barbecue for us. Their budget didn't allow for the best quality chops but the sausages were good!

On the second day, there were a couple of walking options. One was a 25 km walk, while the other was about 16 km and included exploring nearby caves. Both options included Dripping Rock and The Overhang, which were spectacular features. Clive and I chose the long option because we thought exploring caves might involve a lot of stooping and rock scrambling. The long walk was along a forested ridge top to a

lookout over Cania Dam and return. It was over very easy terrain but, for about 8 km in each direction, the scenery didn't vary. Those who chose the shorter option came part of the way on the ridge, then retraced their steps and explored some features of the gorge. The guide who led the shorter option then had more time to prepare for the barbecue. As it turned out, there wasn't any rock scrambling or stooping involved with the caves, so that would have been the more interesting option. However, by doing the long option, we did have a spectacular view from a lookout over Cania Dam. We enjoyed packed lunches, prepared for us by our guides, at the lookout before walking 11 km back to our starting point.

The next day we set off for Carnarvon Gorge. Again, this involved a 5-6 hour bus trip. The travelling around between three widely dispersed National Parks meant there were only three full days of walking on this trip, but there is no other way to visit these places. Anyway, it was an opportunity to see rural Queensland, which we found quite interesting. Most of the houses in the little country towns we passed through were wooden and up on stilts – the classical Queenslander style. We arrived at Carnarvon Gorge later than expected because of a navigational error and couldn't complete all of the three short walks planned for the late afternoon. We completed one to Balloon Cave and attempted another, but the water level in the creek made us turn back.

There is a beautiful wilderness resort near Carnarvon Gorge, located about 3 km from the walking trails. The cabins have canvas walls with mesh windows, which have covers you can either zip up or leave open to get air. Ours had a double and two single beds, electricity, a gas heater, and an ensuite in a module accessible from the tent through a wooden door. This resort had a comfortable restaurant with delicious food. Most of the time on this trip, we had three-course dinners and we ate so much that, by the end of the week, I was turning down desserts that had been paid for. The meals were just too big! The most delightful thing about this resort was that, when you stepped out of your cabin to go to the restaurant, there would be numerous kangaroos and wallabies loitering about, nibbling at the lawn. We could see joeys getting in and out of their mothers' pouches, just a few feet away from us.

We had all of the next day for exploring Carnarvon Gorge. The main walking track runs through the wide floor of the gorge, as does Carnarvon Creek. Again, we split into two groups – the long option was 20 km return along the floor of the gorge, with about 5 km of side-trips, and would require about 40 creek crossings. The shorter walk was about 13 km and would require around 20 crossings. This time we chose the shorter option. We all walked the first 5 km into the gorge, as far as the Aboriginal Art Gallery, but those on the long option continued another 4 or 5 km. To get to the Art Gallery, we climbed some steps up through a narrow gap in the rock wall, and came to an extensive display of Aboriginal rock art. As well as paintings, there were engravings, some of which were confronting. However, we had been to the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart, so these depictions of private female anatomy did not have so much shock value for us! To get there, we had to cross the creek ten times on the stepping-stones provided. This wasn't too difficult, but one had to take care because some stones wobbled when you stepped on them and a few were slightly underwater. Those doing the long option told us that, past the Art Gallery, the crossings are harder with smaller stones farther apart and more of them wet.

As we retraced our steps back along the gorge, we saw some spectacular sights on side-trips. We climbed up steps and ladders and walked through a crevice, then emerged into the Amphitheatre. It was like standing at the bottom of a huge well with natural rock walls. There are amazing acoustics in there! It would be a wonderful place for a choir to perform in, if the choristers and audience could all get into there. We also visited Ward's Canyon with its living fossil plant species, the King Fern. The Moss Garden is a huge natural water filter, where water seeps down through porous sandstone and out over an impervious layer of shale. The continuous flow of crystal-clear water into a pool has given rise to a natural garden of mosses and ferns. All through the floor of the gorge was a forest of Spotted Gums. It was a thrill to see so many of these trees – we saw one huge one that was about 6 feet in diameter; i.e., the height of Clive.

The next day we all did a challenging climb up to Boolimba Bluff, for a view over the gorge. There was a 300 m stretch that involved about 600 steps one-way and several ladders. There was a warning sign saying this section was only for the physically fit. We all considered ourselves to be in that category, so up we went. The steps were all clearly defined and none were too tall for me. The ladders were all well constructed and so I felt safe. I found this much easier than negotiating slippery tree roots, rocks and hidden steps like we had encountered on Lord Howe Island. It took a lot of effort to get to the top of the climb, but the view was well worth it. We all felt we had earned the delicious hot lunch we enjoyed in the restaurant before the afternoon bus trip to Roma.

Clive and I were very impressed with Carnarvon Gorge. Neither of us had heard of any of the three National Parks we visited in Queensland before AUSWALK recommended this walk to us. Carnarvon Gorge, in particular, is a real gem. I suppose it isn't as well known as other Australian tourist icons because, unlike others with airports close by, it involves a lot of driving. The nearest airport is at Roma and, if you were going to Carnarvon Gorge independently, you would have to hire a car for the four-hour drive with 44 km on an unsealed road subject to flooding. Even for us, when water levels were not high, we did have to cross two fords over which some water was flowing on the way into the park. We feel very grateful that Carnarvon Gorge exists, AUSWALK provided the opportunity for us to visit it, and we are still fit enough to do the walking required for exploring what the gorge has to offer. We certainly would never have visited the Bunya Mountains, or Cania Gorge as well, if this trip had not been made possible through AUSWALK.

On the way to Roma, we saw cotton fields with ripe cotton crops, and along the sides of the road lay lots of white cotton balls that had blown off trucks. The last day of our trip consisted of a long all-day road trip, but I want to mention this because we stopped for lunch at yet another good quality restaurant, high up at a very scenic place called Picnic Point in Toowoomba. We were surprised by the size and beauty of this large country town, which is hilly and situated at high altitude. We were shown the streets the inland tsunami had torn through a couple of years ago; there was no nearby watercourse – the water flow was run-off from a deluge. The water went to the closest lowest point, which was a street running along a dip between two hills! The rainfall was very copious and fell in a short time, creating the devastating volume of run-off.

During this trip we experienced the vegetation of the Gondwana era, with the delight of the sound and sight of the gurgling, babbling streams of crystal-clear sparkling water that we loved so much when we walked in New Zealand. We also had the satisfaction of being able to complete all the walks we wanted to do without any injuries. We came home feeling grateful for this opportunity to see such a beautiful part of Australia, in the company of a congenial group of fellow bushwalkers from around the country and with the leadership of the two very capable and pleasant-natured women who guided us and drove our bus. We can thoroughly recommend this trip!

[Jane and Clive Brooks are members the Adelaide Unitarian Church and avid travellers, as those who read her article on their boat trip to Antarctica in the Spring 2012 issue will know. Anyone feeling similarly adventurous should have a look at AUSWALK's offerings on their website: www.auswalk.com.au.]

ANZUUA NEWS

As of the Business Meeting held at the 2013 ANZUUA Conference (see pp. 14/15), the members of the new Executive are as follows: former Treasurer, Peter Abrehart of Melbourne UC, is the new President, taking over from Rev. Peter Ferguson of the Perth Unitarians; Jane Brooks of Adelaide UC is Vice-President, replacing Peter Crawford of Sydney UC; James Hills of Brisbane UUF was re-elected as Secretary; and Henri van Roon of Auckland UC is the new Treasurer.

Following the (outgoing) Treasurer's Report, it was proposed that the ANZUUA Council frame a budget for each biennium, with provisions for funding the next Conference and assisting representatives to the ICUU Council Meeting. Funds were also needed for a major upgrade of the ANZUUA website and it would be good if certain small new groups could be helped to establish themselves.

Pauline Rooney, the current ICUU Vice-President, reported that the ICUU badly needed financial support from those national bodies that could afford it. It was agreed to pledge \$2000, to be raised by special collections in the member groups. A collection taken in the meeting totalled \$323.90 in various currencies.

The 2015 ANZUUA Conference will be hosted by the Melbourne Unitarian Church.

The new Council held its first meeting on 04 November, at which Henri van Roon was nominated to be the ANZUUA representative at the ICUU Council Meeting in New York City. Henri also wants to approach the UU United Nations Office there about holding an international environmental conference in our region next year. This concept had originally been proposed by Rev. Peter Ferguson during his term as President.

It was also agreed to allocate funds for professional assistance with the website and supportive visits by Rev. Ferguson and Pastor Rob MacPherson to emerging congregations.

PLACING GLOBAL CHANGE ON THE AUSTRALIAN ELECTION AGENDA

16 Essays and 12 Questions, published by Australia 21

By John Maindonald

The minimum summer Arctic sea ice has dropped to around a fifth of what it was in 1980. Stick a pH strip in the ocean now and it comes out a different color than 40 years ago. Extreme weather events have been on the increase, driven in large part by an increase in ocean temperature. Predictions for what may happen by the middle or end of the century get more severe with each succeeding scientific paper. A warming climate, rising sea levels, and increasingly severe extreme weather events will add to more direct damage to the natural environment. A 4 to 5 degrees Centigrade global temperature increase by 2100, which now seems entirely possible, would have catastrophic effects for the human population. There are threats to food and fuel security, and to public health. None of these very serious medium to long term dangers are likely to get much attention from the major parties in the upcoming election – certainly not unless these issues are pressed upon them.

Every trick in the book has been used by elements of the fossil fuel lobby and their allies in the media to discredit the science. The contest has had some of the elements of pitting dogma against science. For many who see their interests as aligned with those of the fossil fuel industry, the threat to those interests has translated directly into a dogmatic denial of the scientific evidence. A steely determination to look on the bright side of life perhaps explains why so many members of the wider public have been willing to follow along with the denialist claims.

So how do we get these important issues – more important for our children and grandchildren than for us, on the political agenda? The booklet, *Placing Global Change on the Australian Election Agenda*, with 16 short essays commissioned by the non-profit think group Australia21, is a valiant attempt to do just that. In addition to direct and indirect effects of climate change, essays consider the global financial system, food and security, global ecosystems, chemical and antibiotic overuse, defence and foreign policy, and issues of social dynamics.

Contributors are public intellectuals who are concerned about where Australia, and the wider world society of which Australia is part, is headed. They include Paul Barratt, who is a former secretary to the Department of Defence; Ian Dunlop, who is a former industry oil executive; climate scientist Graham Pearman; and social researcher Richard Eckersley. I found Eckersley's essay on *The psychosocial dynamics of the global emergency* particularly interesting. He comments on the push-pull factors that influence behaviour:

The 'push' towards disengagement comes from frightening global possibilities as we strive to maintain our own personal wellbeing and satisfaction with our lives. The 'pull' comes from a cultural shift towards personal lifestyle choices and the pursuit of personal goals and pleasure.

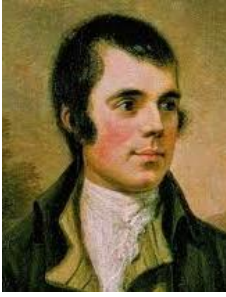
The booklet has twelve questions for voters and political candidates. These are questions that ought to be out there and a key part of the public discussion. I will finish with Question 12 as an example:

Is Australia preparing its younger population adequately for the likely risks ahead as climate change and resource scarcity challenge the conventional wisdom of endless economic growth?

Copies of the booklet can be downloaded from: http://australia21.org.au/news_item.php?id=21#a. Note also Michelle Grattan's piece in *The Conversation*, which reports on Prof. Ross Garnaut's speech at the launch of this document. Garnaut's speech gave a different slant on economic growth from that implied by Question 12: <http://theconversation.com/garnaut-reconciles-economic-growth-and-conservation-15269>.

[This item was meant to see print before the Australian elections in September but it was not received in time for the Spring edition. However, all of these issues are still current and the new government's position on them seems to be less than encouraging. Dr. John Maindonald is a former president of ANZUUA, originally from Auckland, and founder of the Canberra UU Fellowship. He worked for many years in the Institute of Mathematical Science at the Australian National University, where he still has a room. The CUUF meets fortnightly at the ANU Chaplaincy, so anyone planning a trip to Canberra should check their website (<http://cuuf.wordpress.com>) and spend a Sunday morning with them.]

ADDRESS TO THE TOOTHACHE



*My curse upon your venom'd stang,
That shoots my tortur'd gooms along,
An' thro' my luggies monie a twang
Wi' gnawing vengeance,
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,
Like racking engines!*

*A' down my beard the slavers trickle,
I throw the wee stools o'er the mickle,
While round the fire the gidgets keckle
To see me loup,
An' raving mad, I wish a heckle
Were i' their doup!*

*When fevers burn, or ague freezes,
Rheumatics gnaw, or colic squeezes,
Our neebors sympathize to ease us
Wi' pitying moan;
But thee! – thou hell o' a' diseases,
They mock our groan!*



*Of a' the num'rous human dools –
Ill-hairsts, daft bargains, cutty-stools,
Or worthy frien's laid i' the mools,
Sad sight to see!
The tricks o' knaves, or fash o' fools –
Thou bear'st the gree!*

*Whare'er that place be priests ca' Hell,
Whare a' the tones o' misery yell,
An' ranked plagues their numbers tell
In dreadfu' raw,
Thou, Toothache, surely bear'st the bell
Among them a'!*



*O thou grim, mischief-making chiel,
That gars the notes o' discord squeal,
Till humankind aft dance a reel
In gore a shoe-thick,
Gie a' the faes o' Scotland's weal
A towmond's toothache.*

*My curse upon your venom'd sting,
That shoots along my tortured gums,
And through my ear gives many a twinge
With gnawing vengeance,
Tearing my nerves with bitter pain,
Like racking engines!*

*All down my beard the drools trickle,
I throw the little stools over the large one,
While round the fire the children cackle
To see me leap,
And raving mad, I wish a heckling comb*
Were in their backside!*

*When fevers burn, or ague freezes,
Rheumatics gnaw, or colic squeezes,
Our neighbours sympathise to ease us
With pitying moan;
But you! – you hell of all diseases,
They mock our groan!*

*Of all the numerous human woes –
Bad harvests, stupid bargains, punishment
stools,
Or worthy friends laid in the crumbling earth,
Sad sight to see!
The tricks of knaves, or annoyance of fools –
You bear the prize!*

*Wherever that place be priests call Hell,
Where all the tones of misery yell,
And ranked plagues their numbers tell
In dreadful row,
You, Toothache, surely bear the bell
Among them all!*

*Oh, you grim, mischief-making chap,
That makes the notes of discord squeal,
Till humankind often dance a reel
In a shoe's thickness of gore,
Give all the foes of Scotland's well-being
A twelve months' toothache.*

* A device for preparing flax, shaped like a round brush with sharp-pointed metal pins instead of bristles.

This is to commemorate Robbie Burns' Birthday on 25 January 1759; the text is from the excellent website of The World Burns Club (www.worldburnsclub.com). It would have been preferable to have a poem dealing with Burns' religious views, but they were all too long and difficult to understand. Those interested in that should see the website for such poems as 'Address to the Deil' (Devil), 'Epistle to a Young Friend', 'Holy Willie's Prayer', 'The Holy Fair' and 'The Kirk's Alarm'.

Burns never joined a church but, as an active Freemason, he rejected Calvinism and believed in religious freedom. He is honoured by Scottish Unitarians for this and he had connections with the English Unitarians, Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsay. His understanding of Christianity was in keeping with Universalism, though he had doubts about the existence of God, the divinity of Jesus and the notion of an afterlife. He totally rejected the doctrine of Original Sin and advocated a religion based on this world. This is seen in his earthy poetry and his use of the Scots vernacular. How sad that he only lived to the age of 37.

Az Öröm Imádsága

*Bethlehemi fényes csillag
Beragyogta a világot,
Legyen érte a jó Isten
Általunk is áldott.*

*Szálljon hozzá ajkainkról
Az öröm imádsága,
Hogy ma jószág és szeretet
Jött el a világba.*

*Békesség és egyetértés
Dobogtassák meg szívünket,
S töltsék be e szent ünnepen
Gyarló földi életünket.*

*Áldással és boldogsággal
Teljen meg az egész élet,
S vigye el a tiszta szívet
Jézus bölcs jéhez.*

A Joyful Prayer

Bethlehem's bright star
Shone upon the world,
Let us bless God's goodness
For this gift.

Let a joyful prayer rise to Him
From our lips,
For today goodness and love
Have come into the world.

Let peace and understanding
Lift our hearts,
And fill our lives
On this holy day.

Let blessedness and gladness
Fill our lives,
And lead us with pure hearts
To the wisdom of Jesus.

[The Hungarian text was posted on the *Unitárius Portál* (www.unitarius.net) website by Rev. Sándor Léta of the Béla Bartók Unitarian Church in Budapest. The Hungarian author is not named but the English translation is by Michael Burp of the American UUA.]

WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

If I had the power to produce exactly what I want for Christmas, I would have all the kings and emperors resign and allow the people to govern themselves.

I would have all the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, and clergy admit that they know nothing about theology, nothing about hell or heaven, nothing about the destiny of the human race, nothing about devils or ghosts, gods or angels.

I would have them tell their "flocks" to think for themselves and do all in their power to increase the sum of human happiness.

I would like to see all editors of newspapers and magazines agree to print the truth and nothing but the truth, to avoid all slander and misrepresentation, and to let the private affairs of people alone.

I would like to see corporal punishment done away with. Cruelty hardens and degrades; kindness reforms and ennobles.

I would like to see a fair division of profits between capital and labor, so that the toiler could save enough to mingle a little June with the December of his life.

I would like to see the whole world set free – free from injustice – free from superstition.

This will do for this Christmas. Next Christmas, I may want more.

[Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll (1833–1899) was a Civil War veteran and a famous lawyer, politician, orator and freethinker. His father, John, was a Congregationalist minister with Abolitionist leanings whose radical views caused the family to move frequently. Robert served as Attorney-General of Illinois and, in his legal practice, was involved in some controversial trials. Ingersoll gave speeches on a variety of topics all over the US, particularly promoting agnosticism – though he avowed respect for both the Unitarians and the Universalists. This piece was written in 1897 and is included in the 12-volume collection of his speeches, *Dresden Editions*, which was published after his death.]

SOMETHING OR NOTHING

By Stephen Vallance

When I was in the Solomon Islands in May, a book had been left in the room which didn't look as if it had been read at all. It was titled *Why Does the World Exist?* by an author called Jim Holt. I read, or at least scanned, the first 60 of 300 pages before giving up. It was an esoteric, almost egotistical, book dealing with what the author's opinion was, and what a significant number of philosophers, scientists and the like had written, on the subject of why there was 'something' and not 'nothing' and what there might have been before the 'big bang', the present concept of the start of the universe.

It included the philosophical question of how do we know there is something and not nothing. How do we know we actually exist and aren't figments of our imagination. Well, it made me think that these are simply supercilious arguments of provocative individuals. As far as I'm concerned, if I can appreciate the world around me then both I and it exist. If I can communicate with you and you with me, and we each understand each other, then we all exist and are not part of something ethereal. So, 60 pages of reading about whether there was or wasn't anything was enough for me. As far as I am concerned, there is something and that something has been going on for a long time, so that the significant question is: What are we going to do about it?

Thirteen billion and a whole lot of millions of years after the big bang, we now know we are a tiny part of an immense creation of incalculable galaxies, stars and planets and a whole lot of intergalactic debris. We are part of a solar system which developed some five billion years ago and that life on this planet first appeared about 450 million years ago. It took that long for the climate of the planet to moderate to enable life and, since then, the climate and the planet have continued to change. The planet's crust moves over its mantle, so landmasses have changed and still are changing. Oceans and seas have formed and disappeared. The planet has suffered massive volcanic eruptions and has been bombarded by meteorites, which have consequently affected the planet's atmosphere and temperature. Plant and animal life has developed; species have come and gone, gradually or on occasion catastrophically. Species have adapted to the changes in climate and, over the past few million years, humanoids have developed resulting in us, homo sapiens, who have possibly only developed into something like what we now are in the last 100,000 years and we are almost certainly still evolving.

All animals have social structures and interdependence on other life, plant or animal, on the planet either synergistically or predatorily. Also many plant species have developed which are dependent on animals for their propagation and survival and, for some, food. The social structures of animals are various. Some are communal, some mainly solitary. Some are relatively pacific; others are aggressive, both to other species and their own. Competition for territory and procreation are common to most animals and humans are no different. Where humans do appear to be different is that we seem to have insight that other animals don't have and an ability to manipulate our environment much more significantly than any other animal species. This has progressed to the extraordinarily complex social structures of our large cities.

From what evidence we have, early human existence was probably very similar to that of other animals; i.e., concerned primarily with continuing the species, hunting, food gathering, eating, procreating, protecting and fostering the young to provide the next generation. Archaeological digs have shown that humans made tools and ornaments, such as bead necklaces, over 100,000 years ago. Cave art from several parts of the world, including Australia, has shown that at least within the last 40,000 years humans have had time for and interest in other, recreational activities. It is probably only in the past 10,000 or so years that humans became so numerous as to live in more than relatively small family or tribal units. Human population increased only very slowly until the last couple of centuries. With no understanding of the nature of disease, most children died before maturity and life expectancy was relatively short. Only since we learnt about hygiene and infective organisms has the population 'explosion' occurred.

It is only in this very recent past that we have come to any realistic understanding of our environment and to have a reasonable grasp of the immensity and complexity both of life on earth and the universe of which we are a part. Anyone who did history at school will have been taught about scientific and technical advances which have occurred through the ages with names of importance such as Pythagoras, Hippocrates, da Vinci, Galileo, Newton, Darwin, etc. However, when I was working for my MD thesis some 30 years ago, I read an article that stated "that (at that time) 90% of all the scientists who had ever lived were alive today". If we

consider the massive expansion of universities and acceleration in technical and scientific advances that have occurred in the past 100 or even 50 years compared to previous millennia, it is difficult to refute the accuracy of that statement.

Accepting that there is something (and not nothing), primitive humans started to explore that something of which we were a part. Understandably much was beyond comprehension, but obviously there were some who sought explanations for things that happened. Things that occurred which could not be explained were considered to be caused by supernatural forces. There are many stories of the creation of earth and life on it from around the world including the 2 biblical accounts. All presume the planet to be formed with no appreciation of its instability. Catastrophic occurrences such as earthquakes, storms and droughts were considered to be caused by these supernatural forces or gods being angry and good things a result of them being pleased. A significant variety of mythical gods eventuated from those originating in Asia to those of Africa, Europe and America.

Religions involving large populations could only develop as humans developed communities, so not significantly until the last 10,000 years or so. There were religions in Asia which crystallised into Hinduism about 3,500 years ago, with Buddha living about 3000 years ago. Judaism has a reasonably long history, though it is difficult to precisely date its true origin. Christianity and Islam developed later as offshoots of Judaism. All these religions (and nearly all other religions that have existed) have required obeisance in the form of prayer or sacrifice to God or gods to appease the wrath of these considered supernatural powers. Jesus did promote the concept of a loving rather than wrathful God. Probably all religions have produced holy men and priests who have promoted their religions and frequently gained great power over their followers and great influence in the societies within which they lived. This state of affairs still continues.

When the concept of life after death and/or reincarnation surfaced is uncertain. It was certainly part of ancient Asian religions and that of ancient Egypt. However, it is a major aspect of most religions and its promise is used as a powerful tool to hold followers to the 'fold'. There are great similarities in the Graeco-Roman Elysian Fields, the Judaeo-Christian Heaven and the Islamic Paradise. The counter-threat of Purgatory, Hell and Hades has also been used as a powerful threat to maintain conformity. Reincarnation is a feature primarily of the eastern religions with birth into a wealthy family being considered the reward for a previously good life and birth into poverty the consequence of previous misdemeanours. This provided a very convenient excuse for the maintenance of the caste system in India.

In addition to the various theistic concepts of religion, ethical and moral values developed and were promoted by many of the world's religions. The prophets of all religions have been philosophers, teaching aspects of appropriate human behaviour within the societies in which they lived. The 'Laws' of the Old Testament, the wisdom of Buddha and Confucius, the parables of Jesus, provide commendable answers to questions of how humans should interact. While these standards were frequently promoted as part of the requirements for adherents to attain 'everlasting life', they have also provided a framework for communities to exist peaceably. By modern standards, many of these ancient laws such as those laid down in the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament, common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam) are outdated and/or inappropriate; for example, those that related to slavery and the treatment of slaves. However many are still, variably, the basis of modern legal systems. Humans continue to prove that they/we are commonly aggressive and self-centred, and it is necessary that, if we are to live together in large communities, we accept codes of conduct. A further and very important aspect of religious organizations is the commendable emotional and physical support they have, and still do, provide to individuals and communities experiencing hardship.

The problem for orthodox and longstanding religions is that over the last 500 years we have gradually discovered rational rather than supernatural explanations for structural and climatic occurrences that affect our planet. The nature of the universe is no longer mystical though still difficult for many of us to comprehend. We have been able to combat disease, which has resulted in the recent rapid expansion of human population. This latter is a major problem for other life on the planet, not helped by religious premises that decry birth control.

It is perhaps interesting that, while in nearly all secular aspects of our lives we are taught to search for a rational and evidential basis for what occurs in our environment or professional practice, most religions resist such thought and require or promote adherence to dogma even when there is much evidence to refute their doctrines. This is understandable for to accept many aspects of modern knowledge would undermine the authority of these religious organizations and their leaders. There is also a significant reticence against

overtly criticising those who self-righteously profess religious opinions – for example, politicians and others who promote ‘Christian values’ – as if these were different from the human standards most of us hold independently of any religious prerogative. Indeed, who is the better human, one whose conduct is exemplary and expects that this will achieve a place in heaven or one who lives by the same code of conduct with no such expectation but because it seems to be the appropriate way to live?

Attendance at Churches was a significant norm until well into the last century. But as the majority of humans, certainly in the western world, have found that increasing knowledge is incompatible with orthodox religious doctrine and concepts of God, they have abandoned churchgoing and religion. There are many who would promote that there is no place for religion of any kind.

As Unitarians, we consider ourselves a religious movement which does embrace increasing knowledge. Many of us are humanists or atheists and consider that this is not incompatible with religion. There are also theists, spiritualists, pagans – in fact, no one is or should be unwelcome, though there are those we are aware would find a more appropriate spiritual home in other organizations (at least for now). We were reminded by one of our American visitors some years ago that the word religion comes from the Latin word ‘ligere’ – to bind or to tie, hence ‘ligature’ in surgery. Religion is therefore a binding concept. It doesn’t need God, but it does need community and community needs people to work through their differences to live together and support each other.

To Unitarians, values are more important than beliefs, though we would encourage belief to be open to question, not clothed in dogma, accepting that our own individual life experiences will give each of us different belief structures which should be respected. One thing we cannot promise or proselytise is eternal life or resurrection, however ‘good’ our lives. This does not exclude those who do accept such a belief. Life can be good. There are things, places, situations – art and music, for instance – that affect the way we feel, that ‘spiritually uplift’ our souls, or whatever we term our ‘inner being’, and which are good to share. Life can also be hard with the need for not only physical but emotional support from others. These also are to me an aspect of religion and the community it embraces.

Human life has become very complex, especially for those who live in large cities. It seems to be becoming more so. This is not restricted to the maintenance of infrastructures for large conurbations but the increasing international commerce which seems to have become essential for our routine lives. We have expectations, fuelled by the advertising industry, which are unrealistic for many. Having originally been hunter-gatherers, then farmers, for our food, most of us now work at some kind of employment to enable us to buy the product of those who continue to farm. Individuals or family groups were self-sufficient but now we are significantly dependent on others.

Human life in the western world is now significantly more than the need to continue the species at least at an individual level. Our ‘needs’ extend beyond our requirements for food and shelter but to the ‘wants’ of obtaining all the possessions that make our present-day lives so comfortable. Our leisure is almost as important to us as the need to stay alive. The waste of food and other resources which occur in many of our larger cities would resolve the poverty of the poorer countries if it could be transported to where it was needed. The expectations of many of us, promoted by advertising and political promises, fuels this waste. The multiple interactions between individuals and groups (or companies) which enable modern day living are critical but, sadly, open to abuse. There have always been those who have accumulated unnecessary wealth far in excess of their requirements at the expense of others who barely have enough to exist. The opportunity for this behaviour increases as our life and the organisation of our societies become more complex. The need for promotion of values therefore continues to be significant.

So we obviously have or are a part of something. We live, either through accident or design, on an amazing but changing planet. We live in complex communities which place demands both on the planet and the people who live in them. Not only is the planet on which we live unstable and changing, the universe in which we exist is similarly so. The societies in which we live are changing and unstable. We see major disruption and antisocial behaviour threatening these communities. We consider ourselves to be an intelligent species, but are we intelligent enough to resolve the disharmonies that occur within societies? We know that it is primarily the division in our societies, significantly due to the differences in wealth and belief, that drives antagonism. Does religion have a place in resolving this, when it so frequently is, and has been, the cause of conflict? What is the role of religion when one no longer has belief in God, heaven and life after death?

For many years I have defined religion as the ‘philosophy of living’ and this remains, whether one believes in a deity or not. Do we need the promise of eternal life to treat each other well? To do unto others as one would have done unto oneself remains sound advice, whatever one’s theistic belief. Religious worship, while used for indoctrination, has also provided time out from ‘secular’ activity and industry to consider other aspects of life and living. This time out to reflect on our past (recent or distant) experiences and how we live and how we might modify how we live remains relevant. Doing so with others broadens our exposure and can provide us with unconsidered alternatives to self-derived thoughts and options.

It is appropriate to regularly take time out to reassess our lives. The majority of humans appear to be selfish or at least self-interested animals, which is understandable. But, for most of us living in our society, we do not need to be. Commercial interests are encouraging our society to want increasingly more at ever-increasing speed. Can this be sustained and should we not take time to consider what is really important for our future and what isn’t?

There is, and always will, be great diversities between humans living both in the same and different parts of the world. There are, however, basic values which can enable us to co-exist. Truth is a changing concept. ‘Truths’ have come and gone as human knowledge has expanded and we need to remain open to new concepts and new truths. ‘Right’ (depending on how it is defined) is also not fixed, as it may be different in different situations. We continually hear of ‘rights’ being claimed, but the only ‘rights’ we can truly claim are the ones we (or society) can afford or those we achieve by diligent work. We should consider our responsibilities more than rights for societies to progress. Tolerance is paramount, being aware that it does have limits.

Therefore, to co-exist in this increasingly complicated world we need a framework of values and tolerance. We are part of an ever-changing something which offers us increasing options, but we do need to consider what we really need, what we can afford and what is sustainable. We need to have something that can support us through setbacks and give us emotional support in times of distress, but can also share in our joys and triumphs. It needs to be real and relevant and to me this is the role of religion. It is why Unitarianism is still relevant to me, because it provides for all these things without being judgemental and continues to adapt while ensuring that it promotes the basic values that enable human co-existence and, from a human perspective, planetary survival. We are part of something and it can be extraordinarily good. It may not be permanent as we see it today and we have the potential to destroy it. We also have the opportunity to maintain and protect it. Religion, in the broadest inclusive, communal sense should facilitate this.

[This is the text of an address to the Marlborough Unitarian Fellowship on Sunday, 01 September 2013. The author is the son of the late Rev. Elspeth Vallance, the retired English minister who founded the Fellowship in Blenheim, New Zealand, exactly 25 years ago.]

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

Adelaide UC’s ‘Ruggers’ have assembled 90 rugs over four years, each made from 28 knitted squares. Most of the rugs were sent overseas through an organisation known as ‘Wrap With Love’ but some have been given to homeless centres in Adelaide. Also, ten women have volunteered to cook meals once a month for homeless people at the St. Vincent de Paul Centre. The Bush Care Group at their Shady Grove Chapel was recently given an inaugural Environmental Award from the Mt. Barker District Council – Runner-Up in the Community Section – in recognition of their work caring for the native plant life on their grounds.

Brisbane UUF now have a worship support group that has compiled a protocol of procedures for opening and setting up their meeting space. Following their Annual Retreat in July, which featured a video of Karen Armstrong and her work, a book club was formed to discuss her book: *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. The club’s first meeting, in a community bookshop, was promoted to the general public in local publications with a view to creating an inclusive outreach activity. BUUF continues to raise funds for KIVA micro-loans and have now lent a total of \$7,100 in 260 different loans in 21 countries, all from an initial input of \$1,813.

Christchurch UUs suffered a reduction in numbers after the earthquake but they have maintained their active program of services and special events. Their sunrise Winter Solstice celebration was co-hosted with the local Interfaith Society. The recent speaking tour by Chris Stedman, author of *Faith*, generated great public interest, not least when he addressed the Marlborough UF in Blenheim. (*Continued on p.16.*)



ANZUUA 2013 Conference

Auckland, New Zealand

26-28 October

What a great weekend we had with the 2013 ANZUUA Conference! The conference, hosted by the Auckland Unitarian Church was a very enjoyable, informative, and community building event. The feedback from everyone who attended (Australia, New Zealand, the USA and UK) was that it was a very successful conference (a “terrific” event) and the Auckland congregation’s hospitality was very much appreciated. Over 50 Unitarians registered, representing Unitarian congregations in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney (two groups), Brisbane, Christchurch, Blenheim and Auckland. People from Napier (on the North Island) and Pennsylvania also attended.

Delegates started arriving in Auckland on Friday, with many taking up the opportunity of the ‘bonus’ Lay Ministry Training Workshop led by Rev. Dr. Matt Tittle and Pastor Rob MacPherson. This was held at the Auckland Unitarian Church, a lovely 112-year-old historic building located on Ponsonby Road in Auckland City. On Friday evening, delegates gathered for an informal get-together and dinner in one of the many restaurants in the area.

Saturday’s venue was Ferndale House in Mt. Albert, a beautiful old historic building surrounded by park-like grounds, where delegates enjoyed tea and lunch breaks in the sunshine. The conference was opened on Saturday morning by Betsy Marshall (Management Chair, AUC) and Rev. Peter Ferguson (ANZUUA President), followed by a short worship ceremony led by Rev. Dr. Matt Tittle.

Rev. Dr Bill Darlison’s keynote address, ‘21st Century Dissent’, framed our investigation by enquiring what new truths we will seek and what orthodoxies we will reject as Unitarian Universalists continue to evolve. Bill is the current President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (UK). His address outlined how far Unitarians had come from early days with charges of heresy and blasphemy, to the current situation where we have become respectable and almost conventional. Bill challenged us to keep our minds open and remain suspicious of dogma in whatever form it presented itself, and to honour our forebears, “who were ready to suffer persecution rather than surrender their intellectual freedom to prevailing orthodoxy”. He finished by reminding us how we, as Unitarians, “have a duty to reflect deeply on our own lives; to question everything, particularly those things, which, in the words of Walt Whitman, insult the soul. This is our tradition, and our on-going task; this is Unitarianism.”

Rev. Eric Cherry, Director, International Office UUA (USA) spoke next on ‘Interdependence – A Spiritual Path and a Cultural Shift in Togetherness’. This theme recurred throughout the conference, highlighting how working with other ANZUUA communities as well as drawing on the resources available from abroad, will help our aim of a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Eric asked us “who will we be interdependent with, what is expected, how will we manage pain/conflict; and where are we going?” His talk was very informative and thought provoking – ending with suggestions that we create a culture – rather than rely on a bureaucracy; identify people who embrace ‘interdependence’ as a religious path and empower them; test limits; follow an impulse to share; and explore creative solutions to shared struggles such as sharing staff, online worship and expertise in areas of congregational life. Eric’s final challenge was for us to take that Leap of Faith.

Following a delicious New Zealand-themed lunch, Muditanandi (Clare Feeney) and David Hines recognised our religious pluralism with their unique perspectives on being a 21st Century Buddhist and an Atheist Christian, respectively. Muditanandi is with the Triratna Buddhist Community, and she spoke of living as a Buddhist in the western world, exploring the question of whether it could be done. David Hines, from the NZ Association of Rationalists and Humanists, spoke of coming out as a Christian Atheist, providing yet more food for thought. The four speakers provided superbly delivered and informative addresses which generated much debate, enthusiasm and encouragement – the spirited discussion between everyone during the tea and lunch breaks, as well as at the dinner was testament to this. We were fortunate to have people of this calibre addressing the conference.

Three workshops were held during the afternoon: Singing With Spirit, where new hymns from the anthology *A Southern Chalice* were taught, along with songs to get everyone moving and swinging; Leadership Development, which focused on being healthy leaders in a healthy congregational system; and Circle Groups, which explained how these discussion groups can provide an intimate feeling of fellowship within a larger church community. Each workshop was very well attended. Saturday concluded with a semi-formal Conference Dinner, held at Ferndale House, which was attended by almost 70 people – a thoroughly enjoyable occasion.

The special Sunday service at the Auckland Unitarian Church was developed and led by the participants in Friday's Lay Ministry Training workshop, with the help of Matt, Rob and the Singing With Spirit workshop participants. To hear a full house of Unitarians singing was an unforgettable experience! After the service, the Auckland congregation provided a superb lunch – again, a huge opportunity to meet Unitarians from other churches and fellowships. The church was full, with over 70 people attending the service and lunch. Following lunch, the panel discussion with Bill Darlison and Eric Cherry was again very informative, with the interdependence theme running through: how we can help each other and grow our Unitarian communities.

Monday's ANZUUA biennial General Meeting, which wrapped up the conference, began with an address by the outgoing ANZUUA President, Rev. Peter Ferguson. Reports from the member churches and fellowships, election of officers and general business followed.

For our Auckland Unitarian community, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to host the 2013 Biennial ANZUUA Conference; and to provide the platform for Unitarians from our Australasian region to meet and grow with one another. The conference brought a rich diversity of views and approaches to the Unitarian Universalist principle of affirming and promoting a "free and responsible search for truth and meaning"; and bodes well for the future of ANZUUA and for all Unitarians. Throughout the conference, the willingness of all Unitarians to help, when needed, was very much appreciated.

[Presented by the Auckland Unitarian Church's Conference Planning Committee: Brenda Bendall, Rev. Dr. Matt Tittle, Henri van Roon, Gary Bendall and Betsy Marshall. They and their caterers for the various meals were repeatedly applauded during the Conference. Just in case anyone doesn't know, Rev. Dr. Tittle of the US is the Visiting Minister at Auckland UC and Pastor Rob MacPherson is with Adelaide UC.]

AMAZING ANAGRAMS

These were sent by my friends at the Glasgow Unitarian Church, with the comment that whoever came up with these must be a formidable Scrabble player. (However, they did not provide the Robbie Burns item on p. 9 – that goes back to a Burns Birthday party held at the Sydney Unitarian Church in 2008.)

PRESBYTERIAN = BEST IN PRAYER

ASTRONOMER = MOON STARER

DESPERATION = A ROPE DOES IT

THE MORSE CODE = HERE COME DOTS

DORMITORY = DIRTY ROOM

SLOT MACHINES = CASH LOST IN ME

THE EARTHQUAKES = THAT QUEER SHAKE

ELEVEN PLUS TWO = TWELVE PLUS ONE

And, for the Grand Finale:

MOTHER-IN-LAW = WOMAN HITLER

REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS (cont'd)

Melbourne UC are seeking changes to practices in their building that will create a 'zero emissions footprint'. Their concerts, two per year, have raised many thousands of dollars for charitable organisations. A recent address by a Carmelite nun from Syria drew a big crowd, as did the early launch of a book on the history of the church. Rev. Peter Ferguson will be the guest speaker at their 161st anniversary celebration in December.

Perth Unitarians held their Annual Retreat in September at the Benedictine Monastery in New Norcia. They are particularly interested in environmental matters, such as the recent address by a German speaker, Volker Oschmann of the Ministry for the Environment, on the closure of nuclear generators in his country. They are also developing liaison between 'fracking' interests and affected farmers.

Sydney UC continue to make good use of their computer theatre system, which has made possible a number of musical and video presentations. A Buddhist member, Walter Mason, launched his second book on travel in Southeast Asia – *Destination: Cambodia* – at the church in September. Since the ICUU Council Meeting and Conference in the Philippines last year, they have been donating to a village church for improvements to their little building (including a footpath from the dirt road) and for their children's school supplies.

Spirit of Life UF have had a variety of speakers on religions as various as paganism and the Mormon faith; also a lay religious education teacher from a Turkish mosque that gave them a far greater understanding of Islam. A representative was sent to this year's Common Dreams conference in Canberra with pamphlets promoting our denomination. They continue to interact with the Centre for Progressive Religious Thought. Rev. Geoff Usher, who is also a qualified celebrant, is now their Associate Minister.

[This column is longer than usual because of the reports from the various congregations submitted to the Business Meeting at the ANZUUA Conference. These necessarily covered their activities over the two years since the 2011 Conference in Brisbane.]

PILGRIMAGE TO THE PHILIPPINES

The UU Partner Church Council's travel service will conduct another tour of the Philippines next year, this time consisting of three sections that participants can choose from. The 'pre-trip' (07–10 March) features guided tours of Manila, including the historic *Intramuros* quarter, and visits to local UUCP congregations. The main trip (10–17 March) takes place on the island of Negros, where the UUCP has its headquarters in the college town of Dumaguete City. Attendees will be taken to see a number of village congregations, many of which are in scenic locations. The 'post-trip' (18–21 March) is whatever participants want it to be – those with partner churches on Negros may wish to spend time with them while others can see more of the island and/or its neighbours. The organisers will do their best to meet such requests, and it should be mentioned that Negros has some beautiful beaches and reefs for diving.

Anyone interested should check the Partner Church Council's website (www.uupcc.org) for prices and more details. Those prices cover all accommodation, meals, transportation, entertainment and plane fares between Manila and Dumaguete City, and those of us who were there in 2012 can assure you that you will find no fault with any of those aspects. You'll get plenty of 'bang for your buck' there and your guide will be Rev. Rebecca Quimada-Sienes, president of the UUCP and daughter of its founder, so you will be in very good hands. Do not delay, as the deadline for registration is 03 January.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I didn't bother to mention in the 'ANZUUA News' that I was re-elected as your editor at the Conference. I was happy to accept, as – rightly or wrongly – this is the most important thing I'm doing, these days. All I want is to be sure that the publication gets to as many people as possible, including the small groups that we hope will become members of ANZUUA before too much longer.

As always, my thanks to the various contributors, especially the Auckland people who produced their report on the Conference in such short order. The Autumn instalment will come out at the beginning of March and I always like to have plenty of material in hand well in advance of the deadline. So, please send any input you have to: michael.mcphree@optusnet.com.au.