



# Quest



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## MARTIN LUTHER AND THE NINETY-FIVE THESES

On 31 October, Protestants the world over will celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Reformation Day, which they see as the birth of their movement. According to traditional lore, Dr. Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses*, a scathing criticism of the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences, to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg on 31 October 1517, precipitating the schism we know as the Protestant Reformation.

The truth is much less dramatic, as Luther merely sent his Theses, titled *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum* (Disputation on the Power of Indulgences), to the Archbishop of Mainz, Albert of Brandenburg (pictured at left), on that day. He wrote the document in his capacity as Professor of Moral Theology at the University of Wittenberg and, while they contained implicit criticisms of indulgences, the Theses were written in very measured academic language and presented as points that should be considered for scholarly debate within the Church.

But first, we must look at the back-story: Martin Luther (pictured at centre) was born in 1483 in Elsleben, Saxony (then part of the Holy Roman Empire) and pursued a Master's degree at the University of Erfurt in 1501–05. He proceeded to study law there but he became more interested in philosophy and theology. He concluded that the former was based on reason and therefore could not lead to an understanding of God, as that came only from Scripture and divine revelation. He then entered the local Augustinian monastery, where he dedicated him-self to almost fanatical fasting, prayer and confession.

Luther was ordained in 1507 and taught at the newly-formed University of Wittenberg even as he studied for three further degrees. He received his Doctor of Theology and professorship in 1512, and was made vicar of Saxony and Thuringia in 1515, overseeing the eleven monasteries in that ecclesiastical province. It was at this point that he became conflicted by the practice of selling indulgences, especially to poor believers.

Indulgences ('kindnesses') were by no means new, as they had been seen in the times of the early Church as a way to spare penitent sinners from spending time in Purgatory. (That is, mortal sins could not be expiated in this way.) This penitence could realised in such forms as repetitious prayers, pilgrimage or good works (including donations to the Church or its charities), and the remission of their sins was drawn from the 'treasury of merit' in Heaven that was the accumulated works and prayers of Christ and the saints. However, by the Middle Ages, these indulgences were being sold both for individuals' sins or those of deceased relatives or friends – admittedly, with the qualification that this might only gain them reduced time in Purgatory.

The Church had long sought to prevent its local fundraisers from making excessive claims about the power of indulgences and the rulers of some states (including Saxony) had banned their sale because it was draining money from their economies. Luther was appalled to learn that his congregants were purchasing indulgences in neighbouring states in the belief that a dead relative's soul could be released from Purgatory immediately. He was compelled to act in 1517 by the marketing of special indulgences from Pope Leo X (pictured at right) to fund the reconstruction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

The central theme of the *Theses* is the difference between genuine repentance and the supposed purchase of forgiveness. Only God could forgive sins and a Christian life is intended to be one of constant penitence. Luther questioned how much is actually known about Purgatory and the condition of souls there, asserting that not even the Pope had any power over how long they remained there. He was extremely critical of the false security that indulgences conveyed and feared that they would only promote sin and discourage genuine charity works, thereby inviting God's wrath.

All of these arguments were cautiously phrased as not necessarily being Luther's own opinions – indeed, some were presented as questions his parishioners had asked. Similarly, his cover letter to the Archbishop conveyed the assumption that he was not aware of what the indulgence preachers were doing. While Luther insisted that he hadn't wanted a public controversy, copies of the *Theses* were circulated among Wittenberg's elite and pamphlet versions were printed in Basel, Switzerland. Several hundred copies of the Latin version were printed in Germany in that year, followed by a German translation.

For all his good intentions, Luther's work was referred by the Archbishop to theologians at the University of Mainz and other advisors, who recommended that he be prohibited from preaching against indulgences. The Curia in Rome was also informed and the Pope perceived him as a threat to his authority. Sylvester Mazzolini was commissioned to write a refutation that could be used in Luther's trial, which totally ignored the issue of indulgences. Luther was summoned to Rome in 1518, so he wrote a paper titled *Explanations of Disputation Concerning the Value of Indulgences* to make it clear that he was not criticising the Pope.

Far from placating anyone, Luther was then attacked from all sides, accused of heresy and summoned by the Pope to defend himself before his Legate, Thomas Cajetan, at Augsburg (instead of in Rome, at the behest of Prince Friedrich III, the Elector of Saxony). Nothing was resolved there, as Luther refused to recant, after which the Pope issued a Papal Bull in 1520 ordering him to do so within 60 days or face excommunication. Luther publicly burned that document at Wittenberg and he was excommunicated on 03 January 1521.

The enforcement of the ban on Luther's writings was left to the secular authorities and he then had to appear before the Diet of Worms, an assembly of the estates of the Holy Roman Empire in the town of Worms on the Rhine and presided over by Emperor Charles V. Again, Luther refused to recant and he was declared an outlaw, subject to arrest and execution. However, Friedrich III had guaranteed Luther safe passage into and out of Worms and he was taken to Wartburg Castle in Thuringia. While there, he translated the New Testament from Greek into German and wrote a number of doctrinal and polemical writings.

It was at this point that Luther realised he had more profound disagreements with Catholic doctrine, such as salvation by faith rather than through the intercession of the Church. He dismissed Confession in favour of direct communication of the individual with God and favoured predestination over the doctrine of free will. He also concluded that Purgatory did not exist (there is no mention of it in the Bible) and that the souls of the dead simply slept until the Last Judgement. When he returned to Wittenberg in 1522 at the request of the town council, he found that Saxony had broken with Rome under yet more radical reformists, whom he had to suppress for the sake of order.

In the process of building a new church structure, Luther made reforms to the Mass that gave the congregants more involvement, such as partaking of the Communion wine, a simplified liturgy in German and hymns that everyone could sing. (Luther was an accomplished hymnodist, as you will see on p. 8.) He also released the clergy, monks and nuns from their vows of celibacy and married a nun, Katharine von Bora in 1526. He wrote a Catechism in question-and-answer form for pastors and teachers in 1529 and also a synopsis for lay people to memorise (but he wanted them to understand it, as well).

Luther confined his official activities to Saxony, merely advising churchmen in other states that adopted his model. In 1534, he and his colleagues completed a translation of the Old Testament, resulting in a complete Bible in German. Luther's health had been deteriorating by that time and he died on 18 February 1546. He was buried beneath the pulpit the Wittenberg's Castle Church and, when Emperor Charles V's troops took over the town a year later, they were ordered not to disturb his grave.



## ICUU NEWS

### Cape Town Sesquicentenary

#### New Publications



On the weekend of 05–06 August, the Cape Town Unitarians celebrated their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There was a luncheon on the Saturday at a private venue and the Sunday service was led by Rev. Charles Van Den Broeder, President of the UK General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

The congregation was founded in 1867 by Rev. Dawid Faure of the Dutch Reformed Church. Though native-born, he absorbed sufficient liberal views while training for the ministry in the Netherlands that he was rejected by his own church on his return. His adherents encouraged him to found the Free Protestant Church, which he led until his retirement in 1897. The congregation met in a rented hall of an insurance company's office until 1890, when they acquired a warehouse and rebuilt it into a very attractive church – the oldest Unitarian church in Africa.



Rev. Faure was succeeded by Rev. Ramsden Balmforth, from England, who conducted a thriving ministry until 1937 and brought the church into the Unitarian fold in 1921. Later ministers were William and Wilma Constable (1937–41), Donald Livingstone (1941–49), Magnus Ratter (1949–60 and 1971–76), Victor Carpenter (1962–67), Eugene Widrick (1968–71), Leon Fay (1977–79), Robert Steyn (1979–97), Gordon Oliver (1997–2008) and Roux Malan (2008–16).

As of this year, Rev. Malan is the Community Minister and Rev. Oliver is Acting Minister. It should be added that Rev. Oliver was the President of the ICUU in 2003–07. (More about him on pp. 10.)

An exciting new book, *A Ménage à Trois: The UUA, GAUFCC and IARF and the Birth of the ICUU*, has just been made available. The ICUU's announcement reads: "Now presenting Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed's book exploring for the first time the origins and history of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. In his dynamic and thoughtful writing, Morrison-Reed tells the story of how ICUU began, who the key players were and the central issues the newly formed organization tried to address." The entire text can be accessed from the home page of the ICUU website: [www.icuu.net](http://www.icuu.net).

Rev. Dr. Morrison-Reed was ordained as a UU minister in 1979. And served for 26 years as co-minister with his wife, Donna, in Rochester, New York, and in Toronto, Canada. His graduate thesis, *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination*, was published in 1984 and is still in print. Now retired from full-time ministry, he has been working with the Meadville-Lombard Theological School to organise and build the library's archive of materials relating to African-American involvement in Universalism, Unitarianism and UUism, also teaching at the School on his research. An African-American himself, Rev. Dr. Morrison-Reed has written and edited a number of other books, as well as contributing to the on-line UU World magazine ([www.uuworld.org](http://www.uuworld.org)).

Rev. Lawrence Sudbury, minister of the Italian Unitarian Communion, has produced a book titled *Almost Always from a Virtual Pulpit*, which he describes as follows: "Twelve recent Unitarian\*Universalist sermons to try to better understand what U\*U is in Italy today, which is the meaning to live a liberal and a-dogmatic spirituality in our times in which such a big slice of our society is increasingly adapting to values being so far from a faith that focuses on the human being with his quest for Transcendence, his free will and his inviolable dignity, on openness to dialogue and listening and on an invincible hope in a more loving world with social justice for all."

The book can be obtained in paperback form or as an e-book from: <http://www.lulu.com/shop/lawrence-mf-sudbury/almost-always-from-a-virtual-pulpit/paperback/product-23277940.html>. Rev. Sudbury was born in the UK but has lived in Italy from a young age. He holds numerous degrees and was ordained by the United New Testament International Church, but he converted to Unitarianism in 2010.

## SEX AND CELIBACY

### A First Century perspective on issues of celibacy, its use and abuse, in the Twenty-First Century

By Prof. William Loader<sup>1</sup>

[Abstracted from an Address to the Perth Unitarians on 04 June 2017.]

Celibacy is a choice which people make. It may seem to be a straightforward choice and a simple notion, as put by the Oxford and Webster dictionaries, which define it as

“Abstaining from marriage and sexual relations, typically for religious reasons.”<sup>2</sup>

“the state of not being married” “abstention from sexual intercourse” and “abstention by vow from marriage *priestly celibacy*”<sup>3</sup>

In reality it is a good deal more complex, already in the First Century, the area of my competence, but also in the Twenty-First, where I don’t claim any expertise but where I shall also make a few observations in conclusion.

In the early Second Century BCE Jewish writing, *The Book of Jubilees*, preserved in full in Ethiopic, but also found in substantial fragments 1500 years earlier in the caves of the Dead Sea, we have a typical reference to celibacy when it paraphrases and reworks the story of Adam and Eve. The author refashions Genesis’ rationale for making woman from the need for the man to have a companion to the fact that Adam saw the animals joining in sexual relations and both he and God saw this as something desirable and good also for himself (3:1-7), so very positive about sexual union. Accordingly, God created Eve and brought Adam to her and they engaged in sexual intercourse. They were then placed in a garden deemed to be a sanctuary, indeed the holiest place on earth (3:12; 4:26; 8:19), an interesting take on the Garden of Eden. There they desisted from sexual relations. As in many religions and cultures, so in Israel, sexual relations have no place in holy space. Celibacy rules. This in no way implies a negative attitude towards sexuality. It is a matter of time and place. Only after they leave the garden do they then engage in sexual relations again and this time also to bring forth offspring (4:1), which was not the focus before then.

Holy places required celibacy, a complex notion relating in part to the deeming of bodily fluids as out of place and contaminating, not in a moral but in a ritual, cultic, sense. This is why people needed ritual cleansing before entering the temple and those who served there needed to be celibate when on roster. Similarly among the Essenes of the Dead Sea Scrolls those who entered or stayed in their sacred site needed to be celibate and that requirement ceased when they left or if they lived in the wider community.<sup>4</sup> Some extreme groups extended the holy space from the temple precincts to the whole of Jerusalem,<sup>5</sup> no sex in the city, and also required abstinence from sexual relations on the sabbath, holy time.<sup>6</sup> For the same reason Exodus tells us that the Israelites were instructed to be celibate for three days before they approached Mt Sinai (19:15).<sup>7</sup> The same logic informs Paul’s instruction that married couples could abstain from sexual intercourse in order to spend a period of time in prayer (1 Cor 7:5).<sup>8</sup> That tradition lived on with ministers not having sex on Saturday night before preaching, a sacral not a moral issue.

Generally Jewish tradition of those ancient times had a very positive attitude towards sexual relations as part of God’s creation and their depictions of future utopia included abundance not only among plants and animals but also among humans: high levels of fertility for all.<sup>9</sup> Some, however, came to see the ideal future as a holy state. Had *Jubilees*, for instance, contained an image of future hope as return to paradise, the Garden of Eden, it would have required celibacy.<sup>10</sup> The view of future hope as entering a holy sanctuary became common among the first Christians. Mark reports Jesus as saying: “When they rise from the dead they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be like the angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25). That wasn’t about weddings. It was about celibacy in holy space. The Book of Revelation assumes that the age to come will be a holy state, a temple, to which the 144,000 who have been celibate in this life will enter first, followed by the rest of us (14:4-5; 7:1-8).

Seeing the future as sexless was a logical extension of seeing it in cultic terms as sacred time and place. It also belonged to the notion of resurrected life as not a crude resuscitation of corpses or resurrected flesh and blood, but as becoming embodied in a spiritual body, like the embodied angels and the materializing and dematerializing Jesus of the Easter stories. It did not, in itself, imply anything negative about sexuality, but

inevitably this would follow as some thought about it. Paul found that people in Corinth had made the connection and seemed to be requiring that believers abandon their marriages and sexual relations and all become celibate like him. Perhaps the myth of a future where male and female distinctions would disappear and all become like the original Adam played a role. Paul had to fight a rear-guard action in 1 Corinthians 7, insisting that marriage was something positive and that people should engage in sexual relations, that it was not sin, nor was it sin to marry. If they want to spend periods in prayer and for that purpose be celibate, a concession he is prepared to make, that should not do that for too long (7:5). The need to defend marriage against this imposition of celibacy is to be found also in the very differently oriented Gospel according to Matthew, which portrays Jesus as insisting that celibacy is only for those called to it, not for all (19:10-12; similarly Paul in 1 Cor 7:7).

These countermoves by both Paul and Jesus are interesting because they both chose celibacy and no wonder others thought that they should, too. With both Jesus and Paul, and probably also John the Baptist, we are dealing with people who opted out of the standard pattern for men. The standard pattern was that they build up sufficient resources to be able to marry at around age 30, a pattern common to Jewish, Greek and Roman society. It is not by chance that it was at this age that Jesus made a different choice. It was unusual, but by no means odd, for some people, usually men, to feel a call from God to embark on a non-family lifestyle in order to be active as a prophet or join a religious group.<sup>10</sup> Possibly Jesus was responding to criticism when he spoke about three kinds of eunuchs: those impotent from birth; those rendered impotent by castration; and those who chose celibacy for the kingdom of God – like himself (Matt 19:12). There was probably a mix of influences at work: holy work meant frequently entering God's holy presence and so keeping oneself ritually pure, as did Moses according to Philo;<sup>11</sup> the prophetic challenge meant separation from social norms; and perhaps the more modern notion that being unencumbered might mean having more energy to do God's work.

To opt out of what were society's norms was confronting. Households were the key to the economy and survival. Secure marriages were in the interests of all household members, both for the present and for the future when offspring would continue the household's agriculture or crafts and would care for surviving elderly members. Households were networked into a system of wealthy patrons on whom they depended, who were in turn beholden to large landholders and ultimately to Rome's puppet governors. Jesus' itinerant band dislocated some of its followers from the system and declared an alternative empire/kingdom to Rome's (Mark 1:15-20). This challenged family values. New priorities were to inform the lives of both itinerants, some of whom remained married, and those who stayed at home.

The new movement did not however challenge marriage itself. In Jewish, Greek and Roman law adultery was forbidden and mandated divorce. Marriages were arranged, the young controlled (no dating), and virginity mandated to avert the shame of unwanted pregnancies and damaged reputation which would make it harder for fathers to marry off their daughters. Unlike among Jews, for Greeks and Romans, males had more room for sexual experimentation, a double standard, but the ideal, for very obvious reasons in a precontraceptive age was celibacy in singleness. So in the romantic tale, *Joseph and Aseneth*, Joseph insists they not sleep together before the wedding night (21:1). And to widowers and widows who find celibacy hard, Paul commends their getting married, and assures them that to do so is not a sin (1 Cor 7:8-9). Thus Paul was aware of the dangers of celibacy, whether among the unmarried or married. In 1 Corinthians 7 he is worried about the latter abstaining, even for the pious reason of periods of prayer, because, he opines, the men are likely to seek prostitutes, something he warned against in the preceding chapter (7:5).

Paul, however, also shows some shaping from popular Greco-Roman philosophies of his day, though avoids their extremes. One extreme position, promoted by the neo-Pythagoreans was that sexual relations are best avoided, or if necessary for propagation, to be engaged in mechanically, not for pleasure, a view espoused also by Plato (*Laws* 838E-839A). This was all part of a tendency among philosophers to alert people to the dangers of passions, not just sexual passions, but also others like anger, sadness, joy, appetite. The mature man – and it was largely a male discussion – does not get carried away by his passions. And for some that really did mean abstinence. Sexual intercourse should be only for procreation, not fulfilment of desire.<sup>13</sup> Plato fantasizes about an ideal state where marriage has no place and reproduction is managed, a kind of controlled breeding program. Sexual intercourse is acceptable only for propagation of the species, as many argued and is still argued as a main reason for opposing contraception, not to speak of same sex marriage. Accordingly, people worried about the legitimacy of having sex when their wives were menstruating, pregnant, infertile or post-menopausal. Semen might run out and the species not survive, also a reason why they disapproved of masturbation.



Plato,<sup>14</sup> and the first century Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, opted for a concession: people past the age could still use sexual intercourse as a way of expressing companionship, as long as it was not flamboyant and excessive (*Spec.* 3.35). But celibacy was hovering everywhere as an ideal. As tombstones still tell us, widows who remained unmarried, called *univerae*, wives of one man, were especially worthy of praise, Anna the prophetess, in Luke's birth narrative a prime example (2:36-37). There were great efforts to depict Jesus' mother Mary as otherwise celibate, despite many counterindications and with no basis in the earliest documents, which assume Jesus had brothers and sisters.

From the second century people on began to misread Jesus' challenge to men about predatory behaviour, looking at someone's else wife in order to have her (Matt 5:28) and his daring imagery of plucking out one's eyes, or cutting off one's hands or feet (5:29). The Greek also allowed a reading which said: any man looking at any woman and having a sexual response to her has committed adultery with her already in his heart (and is to be condemned). Then human sexual response is already a sin. Oh the torment for the men! Some castrated themselves. Oh the danger women posed to them! They must be covered up and controlled. Men should either be safely married or remain celibate. The latter was obviously the more noble way to go and so one could see two levels of discipleship. It took at least another 1000 years before this converted into the requirement that priests be celibate.

People often criticize Paul for an alleged negative attitude towards marriage. He certainly does not see it as a high priority, partly because he expects that history would wrap up in his lifetime and partly because he believed that marriages would then cease to exist. Like any other Jew, however, he assumes that marriage belongs to the divine order of creation in this world and so is good. He also knows about spouses loving each other and that sexual intercourse belongs in that context (1 Cor 7:3-4, 33-34). Controversially, however, he also depicts marriage as a protective measure against men misbehaving (7:5). He assumes that at least for some men, not giving expression to their sexual desires, is dangerous because sexual desire is so strong; it will want to find a way. Paul's is a wisdom worth heeding wherever people put themselves under pressure to be celibate. He was concerned specifically about prostitution, not an unusual option at the time for men waiting to be 30, but also for married men. He would also have condemned other forms of sexual gratification, not least the pederasty of his time. Of course, like Jews of his time he condemned much more, including consensual same sex relations among men and women (Rom 1:24-28), and would have also condemned masturbation as self gratification and waste of limited resources.

Idealizing celibacy was in some ways like idealizing the practice of fasting. You don't permanently fast; nor were many practices of celibacy permanent. Rome's Vestal Virgins, for instance, retired after 30 years. Celibacy was for special times and places. It was not Jewish but Greco-Roman influences which advocated a different kind of celibacy which then came to influence the church and was based on negative news about sexual desire.

Is there a link between celibacy and sexual abuse? There is no necessary connection. Most sexual abuse occurs in family contexts and has nothing to do with celibacy. Many who embrace celibacy live healthy and wholesome balanced lives. For others it may well be that embracing celibacy unnaturally suppresses natural urges which then go underground and surface in behaviours which are exploitive and abusive. Requiring of them celibacy is then unhealthy and dangerous. It is all the more so where sexual self pleasuring is removed as an option for release of sexual tension. If predatory behaviour reflects in part an unhealthy response to lack of belonging and affection, then we also need to recognise that the matter can be made worse by responding to predators with hate. Control and rehabilitation need to be the priority.

The discussion of celibacy, such as when conservative believers require it of gay people, exposes how ambiguous the term can be. Is celibacy just not marrying or not having sexual intercourse, as the dictionaries suggest? Then one might imagine a celibate engaging in sexual relations up to the point of penetration or being penetrated. How real is that? Or is orgasm the issue? It would be more consistent to redefine celibacy as committing oneself not to give expression to one's sexual desires. That then becomes problematic, because so much of what we do and say has a sexual component, of which we are sometimes unaware. In my view a healthier approach is to affirm our sexuality and take responsibility for how we express it and never to do so at the expense of others. Celibacy should be a choice and never more than that.

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- <sup>1</sup> For more detailed discussion see William Loader, *Making Sense of Sex: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013) and reference there to my five volume work which it summarises.
- <sup>2</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definitions/celebate/> (accessed 290517)
- <sup>3</sup> Webster: <https://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/celebrity> (accessed 290517)
- <sup>4</sup> Damascus Document 7.4b-9a / 19.1-5a; Community Rule 8.4b-7a; 9.5-6. See also Josephus *Jewish Wars* 2.160; Pliny *sina ulla femina*, “without any women” (*Natural History* 5.17); Philo, though he explains that Essenes preferred not to include women because, he claims, they cause too much dissent and lack self control (*Hypothetica*. 11.14). He writes similarly of the exclusively male Therapeutai and female Therapeutrides groups monastic groups.
- <sup>5</sup> So the Temple Scroll 45.6-12; CD 12.1-2.
- <sup>6</sup> *Jub.* 50:8; see also CD 11.5; 4QD<sup>f</sup>/4Q271 5 i.1-2; CD 12.4; 4QD<sup>e</sup>/4Q270 2 i.18-19; 4QHalakhah A/4Q251.
- <sup>7</sup> Similarly 1 Sam 21:5-6; 2 Sam 11:11-13; and the *Rule of the Congregation*, which applies the same to the holy assembly of the people, requiring abstention in advance (1QS 2:3-11; 1QSa/1Q28a 2.4-9; CD 15.15-16; and similarly 4QD<sup>a</sup>/4Q266 8 i.6-9).
- <sup>8</sup> Similarly *Testament of Naphtali* 8:2-3
- <sup>9</sup> E.g. 1QS/1S28 4.6b-8; CD 2.11b-12a; 4QInstr<sup>e</sup>/4Q423 3 1-5 / 1QInstr/1Q26 2 2-4; 11QT<sup>a</sup>/11Q19 59.12; Philo *Praem.* 98-105.
- <sup>10</sup> *Jub.* 23:28; *The Book of Jewish Antiquities (LAB)* 19:12-13; 26:13; 33:5. Cf. also “Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it” (Mark 10:15).
- <sup>11</sup> E.g. Jer 16:1-4; Luke 12:36; Acts 21:9; 2 *Enoch* 71:1-20.
- <sup>12</sup> Philo *Mos.* 2.68-69.
- <sup>13</sup> A common Greco-Roman philosophical view, it is also assumed in *1 Enoch* 15:5-6 and in Luke’s rewriting of Mark 12:25 (20:34-36). Philo cannot deny pleasure as part of God’s creation and so argues that it increases chances of conception.
- <sup>14</sup> (*Leg.* 784E3-785A3, 783E4-7, 784B1-3)

## REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

*Adelaide UC* had a coming-of-age service on 28 May for two boys from the Sunday Club church school, which was seen as a Rite of Passage from childhood to becoming teenagers on their way to adulthood. The boys will still be involved with the Club, but as role models and teachers for the younger children, and they are welcome to join the adult service, as well. The Club also held a Winter Camp at the historic Shady Grove Chapel on the theme of ‘Christmas in July’, which was great fun for all.

In addition to Rev. Rob MacPherson’s usual services, they had a Leaf Meditation and a café-style workshop in which they shared reflections on times of struggle and what got them through tough times. Their president, Jenny Dyster, spoke about American Unitarian history and the strong involvement they had in establishing the Red Cross in America, promoting Universal Suffrage and seeking to end racial discrimination.

In May, they were also represented at the South Australian Interfaith forum on marriage equality, and their Social Justice Coordinator, David Freesmith, has invited members of the congregation to express interest in becoming an LGBTQIA Welcoming Congregation. An alternative worship session, *Lectio Divina*, is held weekly and a 14-week introduction to Buddhism will begin in mid-September.

*Auckland UC* heard their minister, Rev. Clay Nelson, speak on such topics as ‘Big Data and the End of Free Will’, ‘To Whom Can Non-Theists Pray?’, ‘Passing the Flame’ (at which six new members were welcomed), ‘When is Breaking the Law a Moral Imperative?’, and ‘Preaching a Feminist Gospel’. The guest speaker in both months was their member, David Hines, speaking on ‘Four Reasons Not to Give Up on Politics’ and ‘Good Outcomes from Broken Homes?’. Videos, podcasts and texts of these and previous sermons are available on their website [www.aucklandunitarian.org.nz](http://www.aucklandunitarian.org.nz).

Rev. Nelson’s 13-part Adult Religious Education course on Creative Conflict is continuing. They now have a community pantry, built and installed by members outside the church, in which the community is invited to put non-perishable food items for those in need. This has received considerable attention in various media.

Members of the congregation are involved in a social media movement to press candidates in the upcoming election to commit to an increase in New Zealand’s refugee intake. They also remain active in the campaign for gender pay equality.

*Brisbane UU Fellowship* have had some unusual services recently, starting in late June with Elaine Weaver’s entertaining ‘Pray is a 4-Letter Word’, in which she related her changing understanding of the word since she was born the child of two preachers’ kids in the US. The service at their Retreat and its other activities were enhanced by Rev. Rob MacPherson’s presence (see the report on p. 16).

(Continued on p. 15.)

## A MIGHTY FORTRESS



A mighty fortress, twenty-five,\*  
The bulwark of our failings;  
Our fragile faith it keeps alive  
By means of many mailings.  
A packet ev'ry day  
Keeps troubles all away;  
All strain, stress, strife and storm  
Are faced with letters form-  
The printed page prevailing!

A mighty Fortress is our God,  
A Bulwark never failing;  
Our Helper He amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing:  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great,  
And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

It stands amidst the earthly powers  
On Beacon Street, unbending.  
Its spirit and its strength are ours,  
If money we keep sending.  
Let goods and gifts all flow  
To Boston for the show;  
If pledges we all pay,  
Long live the UUA –  
An empire never ending!

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth [of Hosts] His Name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.



Christopher Raible

\* The headquarters of the Unitarian Universalist Association in Boston was at 25 Beacon Street until 2014. Built by the American Unitarian Association in 1927 across the street from the State House of Massachusetts, it is also adjacent to the Mayor of Boston's official residence.



Only two blocks away is King's Chapel, the first church in the US to embrace the Unitarian theology in 1795. Boston was a major UU centre when '25' was built, with 16 Unitarian and six Universalist churches in the city.

The new headquarters at 24 Farnsworth Street was purchased in 2013 and the UUA took up occupancy the next year.

And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo! his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,  
No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through Him who with us sideth:  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still,  
His Kingdom is forever.

Martin Luther

'A Mighty Fortress is Our God' is surely the most famous of Martin Luther's many hymns. He wrote that one, including the music, in about 1530, using words from Psalm 46. Like 'Fairest Lord Jesus', it has had many different musical arrangements, translations and adaptations of words. He also wrote 'We All Believe in One True God', a musical expression of the Apostle's Creed, and two hymns based on the Lord's Prayer.

While Catholic services prior to that would have had chants and possibly choir singing, Luther's hymns were communal and usually accompanied by a lute. (There were few organs in those days.) After all the strife and warfare that accompanied the Protestant Reformation, it is clear that the Catholic Church eventually adopted hymns of that sort, as well as abandoning the Latin Mass only in recent decades.

Rev. Christopher Raible's works from his book, *Hymns for the Celebration of Strife* (1990) – a play on the UUA's *Hymns for the Celebration of Life* – have featured in our pages before. Some of those were later used in a fundraising songbook, *Singing the Green: Songs for Fun and Money from your UUA Annual Program Fund Committee*. Rev. Raible is Minister Emeritus of the UU Congregation of Jamestown, New York, and one of three minister children of Rev. Robert Raible.



## MARTIN LUTHER

Upon the door of Wittenberg the sound of banging could be heard  
A monk did stand before the church and Martin was his name.  
A fire burning in his heart, reform was now about to start  
as Luther nailed the theses, upon the church that day.

1517 was the year, October 31st so dear  
upon a day he knew that all would see...  
...that compromise which had become,  
the great undoing of more than some.

The Wicked Church had worked its way corrupt.  
Selling grace for bits of gold, "buy salvation" men were told!  
A penny in the coffer rings, another soul from purgatory springs!  
And Luther was outraged.

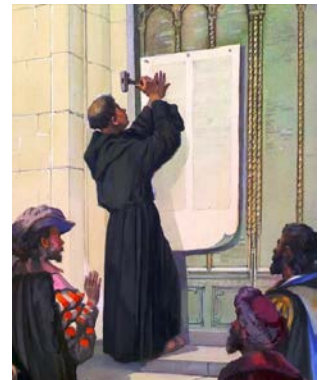
Leaders of the blind they are, and from the gates of heaven far  
Their lives did show but evils now so mixed.  
Pope and priest did wish him ill, and hoped their power would be theirs still  
The wild boar was loosed in the vineyard of the Lord.

But Luther's mouth could not be shut, his pen and ink cried out with much  
Justified by faith, and faith alone.  
I shall not, cannot, will not ever, recant such things there are none better!  
By grace we're saved and this – by Christ's own work.

No man saves his soul to heaven, it's done by Jesus Christ now given,  
that men may live with God eternally.  
A man must be now born again, the Spirit's work we know not when,  
elected from the world, and sealed by God's decree.

What truths were told to men so lost, God's mercy given at great cost  
that selfish men may see the truth of grace.  
The Pope and king did try to win, but in the end there's death for sin  
and Luther was not silenced.

He taught and preached for years to come, Reformation had begun,  
and still today is held by some, may all God's children love what God had done!



Dr. C. Matthew McMahon

This was found entirely by accident but it is worth including, if only to remind us that some Christians still adhere to the Lutheran tradition. Dr. McMahon has been ordained in Congregational, Baptist, Reformed Baptist and Reformed Presbyterian churches in the US between 1991 and 2005, and has studied for degrees up to doctoral level at religious colleges in Florida between 1989 and 2009.

Recalling that the Unitarians in the US split from the Congregationalist Church, originally founded by the Puritans in Massachusetts, it is interesting to note that his website is: <http://www.apuritansmind.com>.

## ANZUUA NEWS

The organisers of the Biennial Conference in Adelaide on 20–22 October need all registrations to have been received before 15 September (see the previous issue for details). Registration forms can be printed from the ANZUUA website, so please do not delay if you plan to attend.

In other news, the Executive Director of the ICUU, Rev. Sara Ascher, wants to visit our region next year. With luck, she will have three Sundays on which to lead services.

## REPORTS ON MEETINGS FAR AND NEAR

By Rev. Rob MacPherson

### ‘Faith without Borders’



From 2–6 June, I was a guest at the very first EUT (European Unitarians Together) Conference, held in the German city of Ulm. This was organised by two different groups: (1) the European UUs, largely American expatriates who have formed fellowships in various European cities and draw on North American UU traditions; and (2) *Unitarier*, the national body of indigenous German Unitarian groups whose roots go back to the anti-Trinitarians of the Reformation. Founded as the Religious Community of Free Protestants in 1876, it has been called *Unitarier – Religionsgemeinschaft freien Glaubens* (Religious Community of Free Faith) since 2015.

As you might imagine, the intent of such a conference (like the intent of the EU itself) is to lower and bridge the borders created by history and tribe, and work toward a common good. The conference theme was ‘Bridges not Walls’ and the organisers had invited representatives from all over the world to increase that aim of global Unitarian outreach toward greater unity—the UUA, the UK General Assembly, the ICUU and ANZUUA (represented by yours truly) were all in attendance.

The two keynote speakers lifted the bar very high indeed. Professor Manuela Kalsky, whose research focuses on multiple religious belonging, offered an insight into her fascinating international project called ‘The New We’. Her aim is to create a space (both virtually and physically) where religious diversity is not a threat but rather a part of a democratic process of dealing with each other – making our differences fruitful by using the variety of talents people have. UUA heavyweight, Rev. Dr. Bill Schultz, former UUA president and head of the UU Service Committee, gave one of the best talks I ever heard on reasons to hold fast to hope for justice in our current troubled times.

I offered two workshops: ‘Models of Religious Pluralism’ (very much in keeping with Prof. Kalsky’s theme), and ‘The Future of Church – Change for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ (an earlier version of which can be seen as a video on our church’s Facebook site). Both were well attended and well received, and the latter was so enthusiastically endorsed that it is being distributed through the EUU-Unitarier networks.

Ministers present were connected to pastoral charges, too, for those attendees who lack pastoral support in their home fellowships/churches. So, I have become a pastoral caregiver at long-distance to a UU in Europe. We had some face-to-face time at the conference and continue our pastoral relationship via email and Skype. Faith without borders, indeed!

I want to thank the EUT organisers for inviting me—our association began years ago when they contacted me about how UUism is inflected in the Southern Hemisphere (different seasons and cultural reference points, etc.). They were most welcoming and genuinely interested in other perspectives. I also want to thank my own church for supporting the professional development of all its ministers through a biennial provision of international conference support. The funds deployed in this event will, I am certain, produce a rich harvest of thought, inspiration and, most importantly, international UU connections over the coming years.

[Pictured from left to right are: Rev. MacPherson at the Opening Service; Prof. Manuela Kalsky addressing the Conference in front of a bridge made of blocks representing the various Unitarian organisations present; and Prof. Karsten Urban of the University of Ulm, one of the German organisers. A more detailed article on the preparations for the EUT Conference appeared in the ‘ICUU News’ column of the previous issue.]

## Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfast

On 09 August, in my role as Vice-President of ANZUUA, I attended the second Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfast at the National Press Club in Canberra, hosted by the Australian Catholic University. Some 24 of the nation's 140+ faith traditions were represented on the day.

Key speakers that day included Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten, and Greens leader Richard Di Natali. Featured was an eye-opening presentation by Dr. Conrad Hackett of the Pew research centre in Washington, DC, about the changing demographics of religious affiliation in Australia and the world. Interestingly, the three parliamentarians all came from a Catholic background.

The PM gave a warm and upbeat speech on the success multiculturalism has been in Australia, and reminded us, sitting amongst faith traditions not our own, that in his view we are closest to God when we reach out to those who are not related to us, not like us, and share our different perspectives in mutual respect. Mr. Shorten, less boosterish, went straight for the hot-button topic of the plebiscite and declared his support for marriage equality and the theology of inclusion it represents.

This was, as Sir Humphrey used to say, “a courageous decision” given the Catholic hosts, his own tradition and the many represented traditions which doctrinally proscribe same-sex marriage. Interestingly, only the Roman Catholic prayer included a plug for keeping the “traditional marriage relationship”. A variety of Buddhist, Islamic and Christian sects were also offered prayer representations. My own contribution was as follows:

*Spirit of Life and of Living, known by many names and beyond all naming, known in many ways and beyond our knowing:*

*You already know the inmost prayers of our hearts before we find words to utter them;  
You know we rise this morning as we rise every morning, searching our hearts, our headlines, and our  
hashtags for one guiding ray of your light in the breaking dawn, that we might lead with clarity and  
with wisdom those you have put in our charge;  
You know how faithfully we would do your will in this world, for you know the height of our highest  
thoughts, the depth of our deepest feelings, and the nobility of our noblest aspirations, and you see when  
we fail even to meet the mark we set for ourselves;  
O hear, beneath these fumbling words amidst forks and faces and smartphones, our genuine longing for  
the light of wisdom and discernment in governance.*

*The lamps we see by may be different – Catholic and Jew, Muslim and Buddhist, Christian and Rational  
Humanist – but your light is the same everywhere and always:*

*Yours is the light of universal compassion, shining like the sun, not on some of us, but on the sum of us;  
Yours is the light of justice, a spotlight focused on our solemn duty to those we most have marginalized;  
Your is the light of life's renewal, the dancing morning star of hope and forgiveness and reconciliation.*

*O you who illuminate the world, illuminate our different lamps with the one pure light of your grace.  
This we pray in the name of all that we hold sacred, holy, right, good, and true. So may it be.*

Despite the expense, I feel it is essential our Unitarian and UU churches and fellowships be represented at such events, so that we are part of the Interfaith conversation in this country, rather than outside it. Consciously keeping to the fringes and shadows is what cults do, and we are not a cult. We stand for a proud and long-standing tradition of religion free of dogma.

Our relatively small size belies our churches' impact on the social and cultural development of this country, and we were by no means the most obscure tradition present on the day. If we continue to think small, small in size and impact we will continue to be. At the very least, key Parliamentarians and religious leaders will have registered the word ‘Unitarian’ in their lexicons – something that would not have been the case had we not turned up. It is, of course, important that we *continue* showing up and being part of the national and local interfaith dialogue in the years to come.

[Rev. Rob MacPherson is the minister of the Adelaide Unitarian Church but he attended the function at his own expense. His prayer was not read at the Breakfast but it was collected with others in an official book.]

## UNITARIANS IN AFRICA

By Mike McPhee

The first article on p. 3 provides a unique opportunity to use some material that I collated for a presentation at my church a few years ago, though I have had to update some of it. This will be related in the historical order in which the various Unitarian groups in Africa were founded.

Starting where we left off, the Republic of South Africa has a population of 49 million, of which 79% are black, 9% white, 9% 'coloured' and 3% Indian. Some 80% are Christian, 1.5% Muslim, 1.3% Hindu and an amazing 15% profess to have no religion. The Unitarian Church of South Africa has four congregations in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and West Somerset (close to Cape Town).



Rev. Gordon Oliver studied for the ministry after he retired from a career in industry and local government in 2000. He was a member of the Cape Town City Council from 1980 to 1995, serving as Deputy Mayor (1987–89) and Mayor (1989–91). He completed an Honours degree in Theology and an MA in Religious Studies and was ordained in 2002. (Thus, he was a lay minister during his first five years at the Cape Town church.) Rev. Oliver is the current chairman of the Unitarian Church of South Africa and has also chaired the Cape Town Inter-Faith Initiative in recent years. He has written two books, *Holy Bible, Human Bible* (2006) and *Ministry Without Madness* (2015), and is currently working on a third.

The oldest Fellowship is in Johannesburg, founded in the 1950s by Rev. Donald Livingstone of the UK. He was assisted in this endeavour by Rev. Margaret Barr, also British, who worked for almost 37 years with the Khasi Hills Unitarians in India. Rev. Livingstone later took an academic position at the University of the Witwatersrand, while his wife, Mary, was prominent in the anti-apartheid 'Black Sash' women's movement.

The Durban Unitarian Fellowship was formed in about 1992 by Rev. Graham Brayshaw, a former Presbyterian minister on the administrative staff of what is now the Durban University of Technology. The group held its meetings in the university chapel and, later, at another chapel in the city centre. Since Rev. Brayshaw's departure in about 1997, they have met in a variety of places.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa – its 170 million people comprise one-quarter of the population of Africa. Almost equal numbers are Christians and Muslims, while a few adhere to traditional animistic religions.

The Unitarian Brotherhood Church (*Ijo Isokan Gbogbo Eda*), was founded in 1917 by an ex-Anglican Bishop, Adeniran Adediji Isola. This congregation offered a religion based on liberal Christianity which also included services and hymns in the Yoruba language and traditional music (native drums). The actual church, which also has a primary school, was built in 1939.



The First Unitarian Church of Nigeria was founded in Lagos in 1994 by Rev. Olatunji Matimoju "to propagate a gospel of freedom and service". Today, it is led by his sons, Rev. Adeyenka (right) and Olufemi (left). The FUCN was formed by members of the Brotherhood Church and, as a result of deaths in the latter's senior leadership, the Matimoju brothers are now in charge of both. They have since established a formal union with a single Nigerian membership in the ICUU.



The Republic of Kenya has a diverse population of 43 million people in at least 42 different ethnic groups. The main religions are Christianity (83%), Islam (11%) and traditional (2%); there are also 133,000 Quakers and 50,000 Hindus. In 2012, Kenya had the fastest growing UU movement in the world – 12 congregations with a total membership of 476 adults and 348 youth or children.

The Kenya UU Council was formed in 2009, when two regional groups merged under the ICUU's auspices. One group was founded in 2001 by Rev. Patrick Mangara, a former Seventh Day Adventist minister, and had a cluster of congregations in the Kisii region near Lake Victoria. The other had its headquarters in Nairobi and other congregations in the Rift Valley and points north on the central plateau. Unfortunately, the merger didn't last and the Nairobi-led component is now the official Kenyan member of the ICUU.



The long-standing leaders of the eastern Kenyan UUs are the President, Benard Macharia of Nairobi, and the Secretary, Josphat Mainye of Kitangela (southwest of the capital in the Rift Valley). Both have attended the biennial ICUU Council Meetings and Josphat took part in this year's international ministerial training course in the US with Renee Hills of the Brisbane UUF. (Please see the Autumn 2017 issue for that; also Josphat's article in the Winter 2012 edition.)

The ICUU has held three leadership training seminars in Nairobi, the first of which, in 2008, involved 60 participants from Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. It was led by the President of the ICUU, Rev. Brian Keily of Canada, Rev. David Usher of the UK (originally from Adelaide and the first ICUU President) and the aforementioned Rev. Gordon Oliver. The second, in 2013, was just for the Kenyan community and was led by the ICUU's Executive Director, Rev. Steve Dick, and its Program Director, Rev. Jill McAllister (who organised the 2008 conference). The third, in 2015, was led by Rev. Dick and Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana of Burundi (see below), with ministers from Canada and the US also attending.



Our Kenyan confreres are very short of meeting houses, so most of their congregations hold their services outdoors. Here is an animated service of the Nairobi group, which was attended by the Executive Secretary of the ICUU, Rev. John Clifford of the UK General Assembly, and Rev. Jill McAllister of the UUA. On the right is a more typical meeting of the congregation in Nakuru, to the west of the capital. (Rev. Clifford addressed the last ANZUUA Conference in Melbourne in his capacity as President of the General Assembly; Rev. McAllister led our Growth Workshop in Brisbane in 2010.)

The Kenyan Unitarians are socially active in their various communities, particularly through their women's and youth groups. Unemployment is a major problem in Kenya, so their youth engage in such volunteer services as garbage collecting while also developing small industries like artwork and handicrafts to sustain themselves.



The Republic of Uganda has a population of 36 million, with so many ethnicities that the largest makes up only 17% of the total and none of the others exceeds 10%. By religion, 84% are Christian and 12% are Muslim.



The Unitarian Universalist Association of Uganda was founded in 2004 by Rev. Mark Kiyimba, a former Evangelical minister. He is well-known to the UUA, due to his speaking tours there and the UUAU's strong public stand against severe anti-homosexual laws that have been enacted in recent times. The UU Church of Kampala was established in the capital in the same year.

There is also a fellowship in the town of Masaka, where the New Life Children's Home was set up in 2006 to care for AIDS orphans and others whose families did not have the means to care for them. The New Life Primary School in the adjacent village of Kitofaali has an enrolment of over 500 students.

The Republic of Burundi is a very small country and one of the five poorest in the world. Despite its size and recurrent bouts of internecine strife between Tutsis and Hutus, it has a population of 9 million. By religion, they are 75% Christian (mostly Catholic), 5% Muslim and 20% that follow traditional religions.



The Assembly of Christian Unitarians of Burundi was founded in 2003 by Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana, a former Dominican Brother in the Catholic Church. It has a single congregation, the Unitarian Church of Burundi, in the capital city of Bujumbura, whose church was built with funds donated by the UUA.

Rev. Ndagijimana was elected as a Member-at-Large of the ICUU's Executive Council in 2012 and became its Vice-President two years later. Sadly, political turmoil in 2015 caused many of his congregation to leave the country and Rev. Ndagijimana obtained refugee status in Canada after spending time in prison.

While not a great deal is known about them, small Unitarian groups have been formed recently in such other French-speaking countries as Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Togo, with support from the Fraternal Assembly of Christian Unitarians in France. Its Secretary-General, retired sociologist Dr. Jean-Claude Barbier, has made a personal project of sponsoring these groups.

The Unitarian Congregation of Rwanda is in the capital, Kigali, and has a long-standing association with their Burundian confreres, some of whom have taken refuge there. At Dr. Barbier's expense, annual ministerial training seminars were held alternately in Bujumbura and Kigali prior to 2015. In addition to members from the Francophone countries, the session in Burundi in August 2013 had attendees from Kenya, South Africa and Uganda. The conferees decided to hold a special Africa U\*U Day celebration on 04 August, which is now commemorated each year on the first Sunday in August.

## **(Reports from Member Groups, *cont'd.*)**

The July service was attended by the Imam and a dozen male members of Brisbane's Ahmadiyya Muslims, a peace loving, community minded sect that is ostracised by the wider Muslim community. The Imam spoke at length about their version of Islam and there was great connection and discussion afterwards. Despite the absence of their women, the experience has encouraged the BUUF to think about inviting other faith groups to meet with them later in the year.

In August, James Hills presented *The Power of Voice*, using a video of Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout, Music Director of the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor, Michigan. The second service in that month was 'Hope do we Cope?', led by Lynn Kelly and Lisa Constantino.

In June, Renee Hills was the coordinator and convenor of the first public event of the newly formed multi-faith action group, Australian Religious Response to Climate Change. The gathering featured members of six different faiths outlining their responses to climate change at Speaker's Corner, outside Parliament House. About 50 people attended and the group was pleased with this inaugural action, which can be seen on: <https://www.facebook.com/doingjusticeqld/videos/1899665236947909/>.

*Christchurch Unitarians* held their Annual General Meeting after the service on 09 July. They have decided to change their meetings from monthly to quarterly.

*First UU Melbourne Fellowship* heard Marilyn Jacksch speak on 'How Will Capitalism End?' in June, based on the book of the same title by Wolfgang Streeck. The author argues that flat growth, spiralling debt and grotesque inequality will lead to the rise of oligarchs and populists from both the left and the right, and capitalism will ultimately implode. At the July meeting, they had Zoe from Amnesty International speaking about that organisation's work and how FUUMF could become involved in letter writing campaigns.

In the light of the recent events in Charlottesville, Mimi Farrar-Dixon's presentation at their August meeting was timely. Titled 'The Sorrows and Tragedies of Racism', her address was a reflection on Peggy McIntosh's article, 'Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack' (of white privilege). They continue to run the Cakes for the Queen of Heaven workshops on the first Saturday of each month.

*Melbourne UC* had their usual gamut of guest speakers – in June, they heard Cr. Helen Davidson, Mayor of the Moreland City Council on 'Gambling and Family Violence'; Owen Bennett, President of the Australian Unemployed Workers Union on 'The Employment Crisis'; Helen Gwilliam, presenter and member of the Committee of Management of 3CR Radio on the station's fundraising Radiothon; and writer, Dr. Graham Dunkley on 'The Strange (Near) Death of Globalisation'.

In July, their chairperson, Peter Abrehart, spoke on 'Peace is Everyone's Business'; writer, editor and broadcaster Jeff Sparrow on 'The Life of Paul Robeson'; Lesley Vick, President of Dying with Dignity Victoria on 'Legislating for Choice'; and Rev. Ralph Catts, Minister of the Hull (UK) Unitarian Church on 'Unitarianism and Social Justice'. The service on 23 July was devoted to a Winter Concert that raised \$1000 for the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation.

In August, they heard Prof. Richard Tanter, Senior Research Associate at the University of Melbourne's School of Political and Social Studies, on 'Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day'; Lew Wheeler of Fair Go For Pensioners on 'Tackling Poverty in Australia'; MUC's Honorary Secretary, Marion Harper, on 'Reaction, Reformism, Revolution – the Three R's'; and Gerry McLoughlin, Secretary of the Inner Melbourne Planning Alliance on 'Public Transport'.

*Perth Unitarians* heard Dr. Richard Smith speak on 'Is not the Lord's Prayer a Universalist Prayer?' in June after Prof. William Loader's address two weeks earlier (see pp. 4/7). The speakers in July were Rev. Peter Ferguson on 'What were Shakespeare's Religious Beliefs?' (his father was secretly a Roman Catholic) and Leo Leriche on 'The Neanderthals – their religious beliefs and humane treatment of the elderly'.

In August, Rev. Ferguson spoke again on 'Planning Your Own Funeral – make it easier for your family and friends' and John Winterflood asked: 'Why has Historic Christianity been Preoccupied with Jesus' Blood?' Their Annual Retreat at the New Norcia Benedictine Monastery will take place on 01–03 September.

*Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship* heard a series of talks in this quarter, all of which could be said to have an ethical dimension; one (on education) was distinctly political; three were both spiritual and related to life choices (obsessions, diversity, forgiveness); one could be described as literary/spiritual (on Christopher Isherwood); and two were related to philosophy (Plato and existentialism).

They are looking forward on 17 September to an unusual presentation – replete with gum leaves – by Rev. Rex Hunt, who has now joined their Fellowship, on ‘Celebrating Earth and Wonder in Early Spring’.

*Sydney UC*’s program in this quarter had some continuing themes, including a second Music Service in August on Franz Schubert’s last work (‘*Schwanengesang*’) and PowerPoint presentations on Vietnam and the Unitarians of Central Canada. There were also talks on ‘Growth: The False God of the Modern West’, and ‘Post-Marxism: The Culture of Critical Discourse’. In July, retired philosophy professor Ted Sadler spoke of ‘Enemies of Universalism’, by which he meant all political philosophies that divide humanity into mutually antagonistic cohorts.

Their AGM was held on Sunday, 30 July, at which the Executive was re-elected and a new member joined the Committee. It was also reported that considerable progress has been made with a number of maintenance issues – after some months of plumbing problems, the leaks have been fixed and a plasterer has restored the ceiling in the Chapel to its former state.

### BUUF ANNUAL RETREAT



The Brisbane UU Fellowship’s Annual Retreat to Springbrook Mountain on 07–09 July was a stand-out success this year, with higher attendance and inspiring activities and worship events led by Rev. Rob MacPherson. The Friday afternoon and evening trek up the mountain was a little more challenging than usual, as we had to use an alternative route (the usual road was severely damaged by Cyclone Debbie and may be several years in repair). Dense fog settled with the onset of darkness and I think Rob wondered where on earth his driver was taking him as they wound through the tight mountain curves on a barely visible road.

After dinner and while enjoying the warmth of the huge wood-burner, Rob led us through our first *Lectio Divina* experience, using a meditation on Philip Larkin’s *The Trees*. *Lectio Divina* requires repeated reading, listening and reflecting on the meaning of the verses in a stepped process developed by Benedictine monks. It was a perfect introduction to our Retreat theme – the 7<sup>th</sup> Principle.

Rob shared a visual version of this on Saturday morning with a collection of beautiful images he termed *Pictio Divina*. Many of these highlighted the interconnected web of life on both a micro and macro level. This was followed by a forest walk, where, as a group, we noticed the beauty in detail and settled our bodies firmly in nature as we made our way slowly down to the top of a waterfall that tumbles hundreds of metres over an escarpment.

Scheduled free time early Saturday afternoon allowed everyone to appreciate the natural beauty of our surrounds, including the ‘Best of All Lookouts’ with its amazingly clear views of the Gold Coast and the Northern Rivers area of NSW.

[Information supplied by Renee Hills, President of the BUUF; pictures by James Hills.]