

Quest



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THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

Winter feasts must have originated in the caves, if only to boost morale as our ancestors huddled around their fires, awaiting the return of longer days and warmer weather. It is impressive to note that Neolithic people could locate the position (if not the date) of the mid-winter sunrise, as seen by the alignments of passage tombs and stone circles. By that time, agrarian societies would slaughter animals to save feeding them and the ales and/or wines made from the previous harvest would be fully fermented, so the feasting should have been merry, indeed.

Ancient Greeks and Romans had a month-long festival dedicated to Dionysus/Bacchus (the god of wine) that ended with the Winter Solstice (25 December, by their reckoning), which in Rome evolved into Saturnalia. People decorated their homes with greenery and exchanged gifts the social norms were relaxed to permit gambling, general tomfoolery and measured impertinence on the part of slaves. (In some cases, masters and slaves would reverse their roles, though the latter still prepared the feast that the former served them.) Togas were discarded in favour of informal dinner clothes and everyone wore the *pileus* (freedman's hat). Attempts by Augustus Caesar and, later, Caligula, to shorten the festivities were met with massive revolts.

It is not known how or when the early Christians chose 25 December as the date of their Feast of the Nativity – possibly, it was just convenient to use an existing holiday and the Winter Solstice had some symbolic appeal. The Feast of the Annunciation is celebrated on 25 March (i.e., nine months earlier) but there is no record of which date was chosen first. The first official church calendars were determined in the 4th Century but scant detail of those remains. In any case, Christmas (Christ's Mass) came into being and the earliest hymns (in Latin) for the occasion date from that era. The Mass was celebrated in Rome by or before 354 CE, in Constantinople from 379 and in Antioch a year later.

At about the same time, Bishop Nicholas of Myra (in what is now Turkey) died and many legends arose regarding his miracles and generosity to children. In one such story, he dropped a purse of gold coins down a chimney into a young maiden's stocking that was drying before the fire! Nicholas was made a saint and, in 1087, his remains were rescued from invading Seljuk Turks by Italian sailors and re-interred in Bari. Claims of miracles affecting the remains raised great interest and St. Nicholas' Day (06 December) became the time for children to receive gifts, complete with the parades and pageants of other special Feast Days. Almost every European country acquired a version of Santa Claus, though it was northern folklore that transformed him from a bishop in robes to a bearded man in a fur-trimmed suit.

Earlier in the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church had banned gift-giving at Christmas as a pagan practice, but it had to accept St. Nicholas (and the gifts of the Magi) as an excuse to accommodate the public will. Nativity scenes in religious art began in the 10th Century and were popularised across Europe by St. Francis of Assisi (and his Order) in the 1200s, even as Christmas songs drifted from church music to carols that used folk tunes and local languages. In 1377, King Richard II of England hosted a Christmas feast at which 28 oxen and 300 sheep were consumed. The merriment was everywhere on the increase in succeeding centuries until the Protestant Reformation.

The repression did not happen immediately, as Martin Luther encouraged suitably religious Christmas carols and wrote some of his own. However, in German-speaking countries it was thought better that children get their presents on Christmas Day and be told they were from the *Christkindl* (Little Christ Child). Ironically, that was corrupted in English to 'Kris Kringle' and conflated with Santa Claus. Indeed, in England, Christmas indulgence in eating, dancing, singing, sporting and card-playing escalated to the point that Oliver Cromwell placed an outright ban on the festival in 1647. There was rioting in several cities and Canterbury was out of the government's control for weeks.

The Puritan ban came to America with the Pilgrim Fathers and was only repealed in 1681, when Massachusetts came under British rule. However, other Protestant churches in the northern colonies also regarded Christmas as a Catholic practice and did not conduct services. Even after the Revolution, many Americans saw it as a Tory custom, so Christmas Day did not become a federal civil holiday until 1870. As recently as 1931, nine states still required schools to open on Christmas Day. Fundamentalists who want to 'put Christ back into Christmas' have forgotten their own history.

Yet, it was in the US that Santa Claus got his sleigh and reindeer, North Pole abode and workshop of elves, to say nothing of the commercialisation of Christmas. European immigrants had already brought in their Christmas traditions, such as decorated trees, Nativity scenes and, of course, Santa. The UK also underwent a (secular) Christmas revival in the 1800s, with the help of Charles Dickens, whose famous novel portrayed family gatherings, seasonal food and drink, dancing, games, and a festive generosity of spirit. Sir Henry Cole commissioned the first Christmas cards and William B. Sandys published a number of new carols that are still sung today. Non-religious carols such as 'Jingle Bells' were soon to make their appearance.

It is correctly said that there are really two Christmases: the Christian observance of the Nativity and the secular season of gifts and parties that is even celebrated in such non-Christian countries as Japan and Korea. As we have seen, this dichotomy between dour authority and good plain fun has existed, in one form or another, ever since Christmas was first invented.

ANZUUA NEWS

The 2011 Conference in Brisbane over 27–29 August was quite well attended (42 persons), even with representatives from the Marlborough Unitarian Fellowship in Blenheim (on the South Island of New Zealand) and the reconstituted Canberra UU Fellowship. (See p. 12 for full report.)

Rev. Peter Ferguson of the Perth Unitarians was re-elected as President, Peter Crawford of the Sydney Unitarian Church as Vice-President and James Hills of the Brisbane UU Fellowship as Secretary. Peter Abreheart of the Melbourne Unitarian Church is the new Treasurer and Mike McPhee will continue as editor of *Quest*. The 2013 Conference will be held in Auckland, probably earlier in the year.

Andrew Usher, editor of the *Under the Southern Cross* anthology of Antipodean U*U liturgy, conducted a couple of writing sessions at the Conference. However, he needs much more material and asks member groups to hold writers' meetings of their own. Please send to: aeru@bluebottle.com.

James Hills will represent ANZUUA at the ICUU Council Meeting in the Philippines in February (see next page), accompanied by his wife, Renee. Pauline Rooney will be there in her capacity of Vice-President of the ICUU and your editor will attend as a rank-and-file conferee.

It was pointed out that the recent Census in Australia classified Unitarianism as a Christian denomination. ANZUUA has informed the Australian Bureau of Statistics that, despite our Judeo-Christian background, we wish to be identified with the groups classified outside the Christian category.



ICUU NEWS

Council Meeting and Conference

Project Harvest Hope



Plans are well advanced for the first ICUU Council Meeting and Conference to be held outside of North America and Europe. The venue is the South Sea Resort in Dumaguete City, headquarters of the UU Church of the Philippines, on Negros Island, and the dates are 07–12 February 2012.

The Conference theme, ‘Sharing Our Faith, Transforming Our World’, has three aspects:

1. **Right relations within a multi-cultural context:** Once we have met one another, what is required for sustained harmonious relations between us in an international community? How do we learn to honorably respect and reconcile our cultural and theological differences? What specific steps might we begin to practice regularly in pursuit of these aims?
2. **Social justice in a global religious context:** What are the most pressing social justice issues each member group faces in our own local, national, or regional settings? What do we have in common in facing some of these challenges? What are the theological foundations for undertaking this work (especially in a theologically diverse movement)? How shall we begin to develop ways to collaborate in our social justice efforts, for the sake of making our efforts more effective?
3. **The international UU community as a whole:** A movement to be recognized, represented and heard? Represented within the United Nations, for example, or within international interfaith organizations? Are there ways we can present a unified voice in order to bring our values more visibly into a wider world?

The keynote speakers are Rev. Dr. Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, Executive Director of the Justice and Peace Center of the Divinity School at Silliman University in Dumaguete City; Dr. Bruce Knotts, Director of the UU United Nations Office; and Rev. Dr. Paul Rasor, Director of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom at Virginia Wesleyan College.

In addition to the Meetings and speakers, there will be workshops on various aspects of the themes and other ICUU matters, Chalice Circles for small group discussion, participatory sessions in creative arts (e.g., dance and music) and demonstrations of worship in the styles of different member groups. Those interested can also join guided tours of Manila and Negros before and after the formal proceedings (more on p. 15). Further details and on-line registration forms can be found on the ICUU website: www.icuu.net.

From the UUA’s webpage for international projects: In partnership with the Székelyudvarhely Community Foundation (SzKA), Project Harvest Hope recently announced the award of 14 grants to Unitarian community organizations in the Homorod Valley of Transylvania. This is the first round of grants to come out of the new Unitarian Community Fund, a donor-advised fund established by Project Harvest Hope in March 2011. The grant application process was managed by SzKA, a community-driven grant maker founded in 2007. SzKA has an impressive record of work with youth and young adults, of environmental activism, and of renewing philanthropic culture in the Homorod valleys. Fourteen Unitarian communities (villages and organizations) were selected from 29 applications for funding. The initial funding was \$40,000. Applicants were required to provide a match, often labor, and to assure sustainability. Involvement of youth was a priority. [Székelyudvarhely is a city in Transylvania whose Romanian name is Odorheiu Secuiesc – the Székely part refers to the ethnic Hungarians who once were the majority population of that region. The reference to Homorod valleys includes the two tributaries of the main river.]

Project Harvest Hope is a UUA body committed to preserving and enhancing the rural lifestyle of the Transylvanian Unitarians. Amazingly, the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California, found that there was a Transylvanian community called Oklánd and entered into a partner church relationship with its congregation. They founded Project Harvest Hope in the early 1990s with the objective of “promoting self-determination, sustainable agriculture and social renewal in our Unitarian homelands.” Its first endeavours were a large flour mill and bakery in Oklánd and a model dairy farm in nearby Karácsonyfalva, both of which are thriving today. For more information, see their website: www.harvesthope.uua.org.

STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE

By Rev. Peter Ferguson

The United Nations Fund for Population Activities recently forecast a world population of 14.2 billion by the year 2100. By 2026, in just 15 years from now, it will surge by another 1.5 billion. (Like adding another China to the world's population). In 1650, the Earth's population was 500 million. We reached 1 billion in 1810; in 1930 it was 2 billion; 4.4 billion in 1980; and we will reach 7 billion at the end of September 2011. There are more people in the world today than there has ever been at any time in the past.

The spectre of the future is with us now in overcrowded living conditions, shortages of food, widespread famines, depletion of natural resources and life threatening pollution. In the face of these threats to human wellbeing, environmental scientists are warning us not only about climate change but also that it is time for greater population control. As teeming mega-cities gobble up some of the best of the world's arable land, we ask are we on the verge of overrunning the earth's capacity?

Despite the threats to our environment, here in Australia our major political parties are nevertheless calling for an increase in population to maintain economic growth and provide greater military security. Surely, we should be doing the opposite and putting the brakes on? The population explosion can only be slowed through education and the determination of the nation states to invest in family planning.

Already the Earth is showing serious consequences from this rapid population increase combined with excessive consumption of its limited resources. As long ago as 1989, the global fishing industry reported a dwindling of fish catches from the oceans. Diminishing fossil fuels, forests, arable lands and wildlife are the facts of our times. Pollution is a worldwide phenomenon with no places free from contaminated air, water or soil. This is not a way-out view but what organisations such as the UN and Red Cross are regularly reporting.

The focus of this talk is on Australia and New Zealand. For several reasons, New Zealand does not appear to have the same problems of a burgeoning population as Australia does. So for this part of the address I shall focus on Australia's fast growing population which is being driven upwards, not only by a higher birth rate with a Federal Government baby bonus, but also by the perceived need for more immigrants to power the economy. Right now there is a hot debate about whether or not Australia should be heading for a population of 35 million by 2050.

In fact, we're in the biggest immigration surge since European colonization began in 1788. Since 1964, our population has doubled from 11½ million to nearly 23 million. We are the driest of the habitable continents. The total water run-off for the whole of Australia is less than that of the Mississippi River alone. Professor Ehrlich of Stanford University makes this scary point in his book, *The Population Bomb*, where he points out that Australia should have a shrinking population. Australia's already in deep trouble, way beyond its carrying capacity.

While current Australian refugee policies are a trainwreck, we should nevertheless welcome refugees into this country with open-hearted generosity. Compared with overall immigration, the number coming here on humanitarian grounds is very small – about 14 thousand annually. This compares with an immigration rate of around 130,000 for settlers arriving through normal channels.

It is a false ideology that believes we need ever-larger populations for economic wellbeing, especially as it is incomplete and ignores the plight of the other animals and the environment. In his book, *The Future Eater*, Tim Flannery argues that we are already overpopulated and around ten million people, or less than half the current population, would be optimal for Australia. The effect of overpopulation already impacts in a devastating way on the non-human animals, the vegetation and the physical environment.

So let us have a look at the current situation in Australia and New Zealand. There are 427 endangered species of birds, mammals and reptiles in Australia: the highest number of any of the continents. Australia has a shocking extinction record. We account for 40% of all global extinction over the past 200 years. The causes are many and varied, such as habitat destruction. For our amusement, we brought the fox, the rabbit, the cat and the dog (excluding cattle and sheep dogs). For food we introduced goats and pigs. For transport we brought in camels, donkeys and horses. Today we have millions of rabbits, foxes, feral cats and wild dogs. Entire native species have been driven to extinction by introduced predators.

As a result of habitat destruction, Western Australia's Carnaby's black cockatoo, once widespread through southern WA, has declined by more than 50% since 1969. The estimated ten million hare wallabies (they look like the European hare), once common over Australia, have severely declined. The few remaining live in the tropical woodlands of Queensland and a few exist on the islands off WA. Marine turtle populations are also declining, with many being perilously close to extinction due to human activities.

On the downside, the European wasp is spreading rapidly through southeast Australia – it preys on native insects, some of which are important in pollinating native plants and crops. Exotic plants now account for about 15% of all Australian flora, causing habitat change which then threatens the now homeless native animals.

The really big elephant in the room, however, is the accelerating rate of climate change. We are already seeing the effects of climate change through more frequent and hotter fires. Scientists have observed that cane toads benefit from the warmer and wetter conditions that now prevail in the Top End. Warming air temperatures over the Southern Ocean have coincided with a decrease in the numbers of the wandering albatross which breed in Australian and New Zealand waters. Combined with the added pressure of accumulated global warming, many turtle populations are unlikely to avoid extinction long enough to adapt to the changed circumstances.

While it is true that weather and climate patterns have changed before, the phenomena we are experiencing now are so rapid that the biodiverse Earth cannot keep up with the changes in temperature and climate. Human impact on the Great Barrier Reef, together with climate change, is causing great concern to marine scientists. The Great Barrier Reef is the largest World Heritage area. Under international law, we have a legal obligation to protect the Reef, which is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Bleaching has begun to increase in frequency and severity. Scientists from the Australia Institute of Marine Science have demonstrated that there is a major causal relationship between farming and the damage to the Great Barrier Reef.

In New Zealand, the situation is equally dire. Endangered species include the iconic kiwi, along with a host of native songbirds, shorebirds, reptiles and amphibians. Introduced species such as feral cats, rats, stoats, deer, goats and Australian possums have all shared in the destruction of this beautiful ecosystem. The fragility has been further aggravated by the clear-felling of vast areas of native forest.

Summing up, then, the top human causes of extinction are the result of increased human population, the introduction of other animals, the destruction and fragmentation of habitat and climate change. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources estimates that the rapid loss of species due to modern human involvement is 500 times higher than the natural extinction rate, with the exception of the dinosaur extinction 65 million years ago.

Biodiversity is essential if we are to keep our ecosystems healthy. Each species performs a different function within its ecosystem. Some species, e.g. birds, bees, wasps, butterflies, allow pollination to take place, some recycle nutrients (dung beetles), some aerate the soil like earthworms. Species react with one another and rely on each other. We are all a part of the interdependent network of life.

Can we prevent extinctions? We can, if, a big if – if more of us become aware of the problem and, being aware, take action. Sadly, the fact that human beings are rampant across the Earth has been like giving Dracula a free run of the blood bank. What could be more hopeless than placing the Earth in the charge of this exceptionally destructive species?

Desmond Morris' best selling book, *The Naked Ape*, predicts that as the population increases there will be very little space left for the other animals. "We are", he writes, "still very much a simple biological phenomenon. Despite our grandiose ideas and lofty concepts, we are still humble animals, subject to all the laws of animal behaviour." Morris believes that the human population will eventually collapse as the dominant species: "We tend to suffer from a strange complacency that this can never happen, that there is something special about us that we are somehow above biological control. But many exciting species have died out in the past and we are no exception. Sooner or later we shall go, and make way for someone else."

So what can save us? In my view, our only hope is to change the way we think about ourselves, the other animals and the Earth we live in. Traditionally religion has been the channel through which we expressed our

beliefs. But which one of all the competing creeds? The leading contemporary religions are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Humanism, if we count it as a religion – these all teach that a great gulf exists between humans and the other animals. For instance, the Abrahamic religions teach that only humans are made in the image of God, while Buddhism and Hinduism understand reincarnation into a non-human life-form as a downward and retrograde movement.

The demand of the Bible for a high birth rate clearly influences the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Orthodox Judaism. The ancient commandment to Adam and Eve was, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.*” (Genesis 1: 28) The Bible sees a teeming population as a great blessing. Abraham and his descendants are destined to be “*As numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand that is on the seashore.*” (Genesis 22: 17) When these religions first emerged, of course, the human population was very small, and for the very survival of the human race, there was a need to encourage multiple births.

Although wrenched from its historical context, the Catholic Church still uses these texts to justify their prohibition of all artificial means of birth control. Fundamentalist Christians follow the same Biblical line to increase their numbers. The Quiverfull Movement in the USA, Australia and New Zealand does not permit any birth control and leaves family planning in God’s hands! Women become maternal missionaries, giving birth to as many children as possible. Their goal is a Christian revival through demographic means; i.e., by having more children than their political enemies. Their proof text is from Psalm 137: “*Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man: so are the children of the youth. Happy is the man who hath his quiver full of them.*”

When it comes to increasing and multiplying, Islam is not very different. “What Muslims should do is to try to have as many children as they can because this is the command of the Prophet, who said: Marry the one who is loving and fertile, for I will be proud of your great numbers before the nations. A woman should only use the contraceptive pill if she is ill and cannot cope with a pregnancy every year, or she is physically unfit. The husband should give his permission, because the husband has the right to have children.” (Sheikh Muhammad Al-Munajjid)

In my view all these religious groups cynically misuse their Scriptures to promote narrow expansionist goals. All three faiths believe that we are different from the other animals in terms of quality and destiny – animals don’t have souls, which is a license to kill! Surely, in this day and age, with 7 billion people we should not be encouraging bigger families!

So where do we go from here? The picture I’ve painted is a gloomy one, but I’m not in the business of providing illusions – that’s the work of magicians! I’m not a magician and believe that it is better to be disillusioned than to live in a fool’s paradise. In regard to the religious quest, for those of us who love Mother Earth and are aware of the interconnectedness of all life, the major religions with their anthropocentric worldview offer us nothing to which we can commit our lives.

But all is not lost, there is another way of thinking, and I am indebted to Derek McCullough for sparking my interest in the oldest religion of them all and its sense of belonging to the Earth and the other animals. It is called animism. A contemporary definition is given by Graham Harvey of the Open University at Milton Keynes as “... the attempt to live respectfully as members of the diverse community of living persons only some of whom are human.” As long ago as 1837, Charles Darwin enunciated this truth: “If we choose to let conjecture run wild, then animals, our fellow brethren in pain, diseases, death, suffering and famine – our slaves in the most laborious works, our companions in our amusements – they may partake our origin in one common ancestor – we may be all netted together.”

Until ten or twenty thousand years ago, humans did not see themselves as being very different from the other animals among which they lived. In many traditional cultures, hunter-gatherers saw their prey as equals. Animals were even worshipped in many traditional cultures. Anthropologists and geneticists know that this feeling of belonging and sharing a common destiny with other living things is embedded in the human psyche.

Unitarians have an understanding that the world would be a better place if humans could celebrate their relationships with all of life. One of the strengths and joys of contemporary Unitarianism is its ability to adapt to changing times and ideas. Unlike the major religions, we are not crystallised in the doctrines and creeds of long ago. Perhaps we could be compared with the English fleet which in 1588 won a great victory

over the Spanish Armada with its huge galleons. The British ships were smaller and more manoeuvrable. In our case, small is beautiful. Like the English fleet, it gives us flexibility. We can change our minds when new information comes our way. For example, the word 'Unitarian' once described our belief in the oneness of God. Today it is our belief in the unitary nature of life itself.

As the hymnwriter put it: "New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth. They must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth." To get this message out and to take action upon it is a matter of life and death for many of our non-human friends and in the long run for our own survival. This Conference has as its theme 'Standing on the Side of Love' and, certainly, this interdependent web of life is central to Unitarianism.

We are in competition with other religions and ways of thinking. Perhaps the time has come when we should see ourselves not simply as religious liberals but as agents of change, providing leadership and working with like-minded people to recover that lost sense of identity that we once shared with the other animals. A faith for the future must be large enough to carry the wisdom that has come to us from the past. It must be the most inclusive and most compassionate. It must be reality-based, compelling and commanding.

This year we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Michael Servetus. We honour his memory if we too can live out this faith with the same determination and courage. As we look now at the dawn of the human race and the sense of belonging that our hunter-gatherer ancestors shared with Mother Earth and all the other living creatures, it seems that the wheel has come the full circle. For our spiritual wellbeing we need to recover that sense of belonging that has been lost through our sophistication and pride. The words of T. S. Eliot take on an evocatively familiar meaning:

What we call a beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. [...]

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

[This is the text of Rev. Ferguson's address at the Worship Service conducted at the ANZUUA Conference in Brisbane. Just to explain some of the references, Sheikh Muhammad al-Munajjid is an imam and lecturer who established the first Islamic website in Saudi Arabia. It can now be read in eight languages and he also has several radio and television programs in the region. The hymnwriter cited was James Russell Lowell, whose 'Once to Every Man and Nation' featured in the Service. The last quotation is two excerpts from Eliot's poem, 'Little Gidding', which is the final section of a larger work titled 'Four Quartets'.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What's a novel? – Well, you see, it's kind of a long story.

Do you ever wonder what eternity means? – All the time.

What does ambiguous mean? – Could mean anything, I guess.

What is perception? – What's it to you?

What does condescending mean? – Sit down and I'll explain it to you in simple terms you can understand.

Are you an agnostic? – I don't believe so.

So you think God is a paradox? – Well, he is and he isn't.

What does paranoid mean? – Why do you ask? Say, who sent you anyway?

WHAT WAS JESUS' ETHNICITY?

Three proofs that Jesus was Black:

1. He called everyone 'brother' or 'sister'.
2. He liked Gospel.
3. He couldn't get a fair trial.

Three proofs that Jesus was Jewish:

1. He went into his father's business.
2. He lived at home until he was 33.
3. He was sure his mother was a virgin and his mother was sure he was God.

Three proofs that Jesus was Italian:

1. He talked with his hands.
2. He had wine with his meals.
3. He worked in the building trades.

Three proofs that Jesus was a Californian:

1. He never cut his hair.
2. He walked around barefoot all the time.
3. He started a new religion.

Three proofs that Jesus was a Puerto Rican:

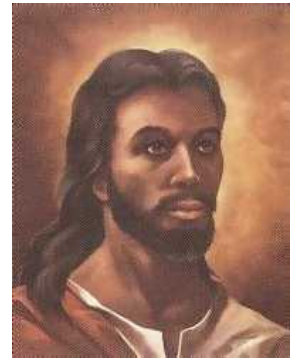
1. His first name was Jesus.
2. He was bilingual.
3. He was always in trouble with the law.

Three proofs that Jesus was Irish:

1. He never got married.
2. He was always telling stories.
3. His last request was for a drink.

But the most compelling evidence of all – three proofs that Jesus was a woman:

1. He fed a crowd at a moment's notice when there was no food.
2. He kept trying to get a message across to a bunch of men who just didn't get it.
3. And even when he was dead, he had to get up because there was work to do.



[Our thanks to James Hills for reminding us of this classic on the first occasion that a *Quest* has come out in time for Christmas. Versions of this have been on the Internet for at least fifteen years but none of those listings gives any indication of its provenance. We'll close with some 'Christmas corn' from the American humorist and wordsmith, Richard Lederer, whose website (www.verbivore.com) is well worth a visit.]

James Fenimore Cooper wrote about the life of Santa Claus. Naturally he titled it *The Deer Sleigher*.

Santa's elves are subordinate Clauses. ... And anytime he wishes, Santa can give them the sack.

He loves sliding down chimneys because it soots him. ... Since Santa has to go up and down a wide variety of chimneys on Christmas, should he have a yearly flue shot?

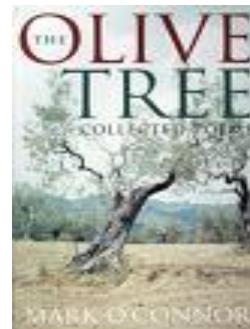
THE FRUIT SALAD JUNGLE (PNG)



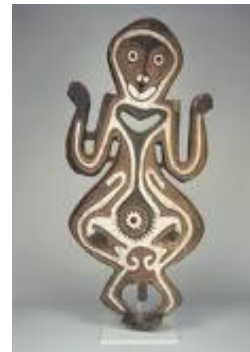
—A patter of bright-fleshed berries
dropped by hornbills and bowerbirds
to the cassowaries' floor. Trunks
like giant hop-poles swathed in ropy green.
A leaf falls, a sinking boat, interminably.
We are walking in this high forest,
dissolving mountain, part
of the bow wave pushed up
by the Australian juggernaut slewing into Asia.
All human time lodges in that collision.
A land of languages, where each stream
has its grammar and its bird of paradise.
Half the nouns of the human race
lie hidden in these valleys.



In this propped looking glass
the barren continent turns lush,
and our wisps of cloud-forest
become solid counties, mists weighted with orchid spores.
Patrol land, where the hardy spirits went
—making it easier not to be knocked on the head—
the mercenaries, misfits, and missionaries;
land of good-humoured paybacks; and kiaps,
land of the well-kept skull-rack, where farming began,
of kaukau and conspicuous consumption of pig,
of 'rascals', and aedes mosquitos, and taipan
and the nameless killers.



Where our birds sport in winter
eccentric crows build bowers,
or take butterfly wings.
Here banana and taro began;
here breadfruit still grows in jungles
and juice of wild cane is sucked.
Here the fig bears its knobbled fruits right off the trunk.
In the fruit salad jungle
berries washed to the river make edible rafts,
smorgasbords for the fruit-eating catfish
that carry the seed.



Mark O'Connor

As the International Year of Forests comes to a close, we again turn to *The Olive Tree: Collected Poems 1972–2000* (Hale & Iremonger, Alexandria, 2000), by the renowned Australian poet who spoke at the 2009 ANZUUA Conference. Mark O'Connor has published sixteen books of verse as well as works on the environment and literary criticism. He has taught English at several universities and now lives in Canberra, where he is editor of the Oxford University Press' *Two Centuries of Australian Poetry*. He is a frequent voice on a range of ABC Radio programs and has his own website: www.australianpoet.com/about.html.

The setting of the poem is the geologically young Central Range of New Guinea, which was formed by the ongoing collision between the Australia-New Guinea sub-plate and the Eurasian plate. The 7 million inhabitants of PNG have over 820 languages, 12% of the world's total. The Pidgin word, 'kiap' (thought to be derived from *Kapitan*), refers to colonial officials who combined the duties of patrolman, administrator and magistrate in remote areas. Skull-racks, while artistically crafted (see bottom right picture), go back to the bygone days of headhunting. The *kaukau* is a sweet potato, grown in many parts of the country as a staple food, as is the unrelated taro. The 'rascals' (*raskol* in Pidgin) are members of urban youth gangs.

PERTH UNITARIANS' RETREAT (07–09 October 2011)

By Kathy Nielssen



This year, only seven of our group attended the Retreat in New Norcia, approximately two hours' drive north of Perth. Leaving the city via the Roe Highway was quite a harrowing experience, as I found from taking the first leg of the journey. Driving alongside huge semi-trailers rocketing along at 110 k.p.h. is an endurance test requiring the courage and cleverness of Odysseus. From the driver's seat of a Honda Concerto, the large spinning wheels are at eye level. Large trucks are supposed to use the middle lanes, so you intrepidly choose the outside left lane and sit on 110 k.p.h. – but these leviathans whoosh by at even greater speeds, leaving your car wobbling in the vacuum slipstream created between these vehicular monsters.

Then finally you spy your exit point, Great Northern Highway, rushing up at you. But it's not on the left-hand side of the road where you're speeding along – oh no, it's on the right-hand side lane! So you gather up all your determination, increase speed to match these monsters and indicate that you're going to crash through their sound barriers and attempt the next exit point, all the while hoping that they can see your small car way down there on the road.

Well, a gap appeared and over the lanes we sailed, more with great determination than controlled skill, but we made it. We manoeuvred onto the Great Northern Highway in the knowledge that all we now had to do was head north, with comparatively less traffic and only a few large trucks. My driving companion took over for the next hour while I vegetated back into a calmer frame of mind.

Two hours later we reached the peaceful estate of New Norcia and booked into our rooms in the monastery guesthouse. We had a welcoming cup of tea in the treed quadrangle of wild flowers, blossoming shrubs and birdsong. My Spanish companion gave a sad little sigh and said "There's only one thing missing." I was puzzled, being by now completely relaxed and happy in our surroundings with the warmth of the day still infused in this peaceful setting. I felt strangely responsible I had brought her all this distance with the promise of a 'Little piece of Catalonia'. "There's no terracotta tiles on the roofs!"

I glanced around us and, on all sides, galvanized roofing stared defiantly back at me, dashing all idyllic sensations of antiquity and jarring me back into antipodean reality. I dragged her off to the chapel to attend Vespers with the monks, musing that a little Latin chanting might somehow mollify her for the lack of terracotta tiles. Everyone is welcome to join the monks, who live a life of work and prayer conforming to the Rule of St Benedict.

The monastery is the heart and soul of New Norcia. From the very first years of the monastery in the 1840s, the structured life of monasticism has been at the centre of life in the town. In the first intake of students in 1908 was Jane Emily Miles, an Honours Music student at 10 years of age. Her daughter, a close friend of mine, has just published a book titled *An Upwardly Mobile Friar*, which we presented to one of the monks in residence who was our host for the weekend, Dom Chris (Christopher Power), with whom the seven of us later had an informative and interesting discussion in the seclusion of the inner sanctum.

The monks employ about 80 people to run the town and there are now less than 10 monks in residence. New Norcia produces bread for consumption on the estate and sells the bread at the local Gulf Service Station roadhouse and, museum shop. The New Norcia recipes are now baked and sold at various outlets around Perth. Their processing plant for cold pressed virgin olive oil was closed down by the health authorities and it is now processed at a nearby town just outside of Bindoon. New Norcia's massive stone grinding wheels are at rest now and the monks are hoping to get a modern new small plant in the future. New Norcia's olive

grove is 150-160 years old and more than 600 olive trees are harvested annually. The olive groves form a picturesque backdrop to the beautiful monastery and its outbuildings. Their olive oil picked up a Gold Medal Award for 2010.

Their grapes are now grown in Bindoon and made into wine at the Jane Brook winery in the Swan Valley. The bottled wines (New Norcia Abbey Shiraz, Cabernet Merlot and Chardonnay) then journey back to New Norcia to mature in the ancient cool wine cellars under the monastery. Next we come to their famous Abbey Ale. The Lion Nathan Brewery processes Abbey Ale under license from an old recipe of the Benedictine and Trapist monks. Last year, the ale won a gold medal in the 'Beer Olympics' in Pennsylvania in the US and also got the Belgium Best White Ale award. It's now sold Australia-wide and is being marketed overseas.

During our numerous walks around the estate we were accompanied by the elusive fragrance of orange blossom and finally spotted the huge orchard out back of the monastery in the monks' private area. Therein are growing fruits for consumption on the estate, oranges, lemons, tangelo, mandarins and also an area which is "anti-aviary" (bird-free wire covering) for grapes, stone fruit and figs. One of the monks is successfully growing vegetables after attending a permaculture course last year.

We had a very relaxing retreat doing lots of walking along the olive tree road, beside the canola fields yellowing into bloom, and also tracking around the fences of a few paddocks, where magpies dive-bombed us as we made our way to check on a baby kangaroo which one of our number had released from a tangle of wire fence. Unfortunately the poor creature later died. We ambled around the graveyard reading headstones feeling sadness at the young age of the indigenous Taylor family deaths and also the loss of young children. On the Sunday we attended mass in the cathedral and also watched the blessing of the Taylor family plaque which was installed in honour of the family's long standing involvement with New Norcia.

New Norcia also took part in the native settlement plan run by the government from 1915-1940, which was prompted into action by protests from non-indigenous people in the south of Western Australia about the presence of Aboriginal camps on the edges of towns. These settlements were considered to be a means of integrating children of mixed descent into the non-Indigenous society. The Aborigines were physically separated from their families on the settlements and received a European education. The girls were trained in domestic work and the boys in stock work and then sent out to approved work situations.

We were told the story of Rose, an 11 year old orphan who was placed in the New Norcia home for Aboriginal girls. Rose left the New Norcia mission when she was 14 to work in service as a housemaid. She had no choice of where she would be sent, no other options, as was the case with all indigenous girls. The position of 'housemaid' entailed the hazards we now come to realize as endemic to domestic service in every country and every culture, which may include physical and mental abuse.

There were also two aboriginal boarding schools; St Mary's for boys and St Joseph's for girls, which closed in the early 1970's. The non-indigenous schools ran from 1908 until 1972, when both schools became co-educational and finally closed at the end of 1991. The Museum and Art Gallery contain works by Australian and overseas artists, and displays describing the history of the area. In 1986, twenty-six paintings were stolen by two robbers. Several weeks later, all but one of the stolen paintings was returned – badly damaged, but they were eventually repaired.

Today, New Norcia survives on tourism and the production of bread, wine, ale and olive oil. Some 700,000 people visit the town each year. One of St. Benedict's rules, when he founded the Benedictines in Italy over 1500 years ago, was that everyone arriving at the monastery gates should be greeted as "if it were God himself who had knocked".

[Kathy Nielssen is Secretary of the Perth Unitarians and also their representative to the ANZUUA Council. The pictures are of the monastery, the bell tower of its church and the Retreat group – Dom Chris on the left and our venerable president, Rev. Peter Ferguson on the right.

New Norica was founded in 1847 by two Spanish Benedictines, Rosendo Salvado and Joseph Serra, and named after the Italian home town of their Order. The Abbey Church of the Holy Trinity contains Salvado's tomb and also two large pipe organs. All of the Abbots prior to 1971 were Spaniards and the last Spanish monk there died in 2010 at the age of 99.]

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2011 ANZUUA CONFERENCE

By Renee Hills

ANZUUA Conference delegates are Unitarians, famous for their propensity for vigorous, in depth and sometimes passionate debate. Add the fact that, Unitarians from interstate and across the Tasman Sea usually see each other only every second year and you have an important, valued gathering that is much, much more than the succinct Oxford Dictionary definition: “*a meeting for discussion*”. This year’s Conference in Brisbane was no exception and, in fact, took a different shape from normal.

It all began two years ago with the decision at the impressive Sydney Conference that Brisbane would host the 2011 gathering. Our Fellowship members felt slightly overwhelmed at the enormity of the task ahead. However, hosting of the ICUU Growth Conference in 2010 affirmed that Mercy Place in Bardon was an appropriate venue and our focus turned to social justice issues and action as a possible Conference theme.

The UUA’s *Standing on the Side of Love* campaign in the US (www.standingonthesideoflove.org) attracted our attention. Our initial thought was that we would like to help each group represented at the Conference to identify a social justice issue relevant to their environment and to develop some strategies to respond to that issue. Our theme became *Standing on the Side of Justice and Compassion* and we decided to invite the SOLS campaign manager, Dan Furmansky, to open our conference.

An unintended major departure from traditional conference formats occurred when our keynote opening speaker was unable to attend in person. Instead Dan Furmansky came into our space via a Skype video call, conveying his passion, enthusiasm and organisational skills in an informative and personable way as he described the workings of the SOSL campaign. Delegates were able to comment, ask questions and receive immediate feedback thanks to Skype and the screen and speakers provided by James Hills.

James and I had seen psychologist Ian Plowman quickly and efficiently elicit direction and goals in an inclusive and affirming way in two different community group meetings in the previous year. We were intrigued with his approach and thought it could be used to help our ANZUUA conferees develop a focus for their own congregations. James met with Ian, who offered his services gratis, and a promising, streamlined Conference program began to emerge.

We used the Open Space (www.openspaceworld.org/news/world-story) process to select topics of group interest and Ian Plowman’s *Meetings Without Discussions* (MWD) to quickly get group ideas out and produce action plans. It was challenging for some of us to work with the intent, the pace and concentration of the process which Ian taught us on the first day of the conference. Suffice to say we all became very familiar over the weekend with masking tape name badges, sheets of butcher’s paper, large texta pens, egg timers, pipe cleaners and talking balls. The result was an egalitarian, democratic process which was generally effective in giving everyone a voice and identifying issues important to the whole group. Ultimately, groups of conferees from across Australia and New Zealand developed action plans on those social and environmental issues identified by the process as most important to the whole conference.

Along the way there were many conversations both within and outside of the MWD process (thank you Warren, Mercy House caretaker, for your patience as our animated after dinner conversations carried on for hours). Many ideas were stimulated and shared; many friendships were formed and renewed; many references and connections were made to our principles.

The Sunday morning Worship Service was conducted by Rev. Peter Ferguson, whose erudite homily (see pp. 3/6) was well received. Reports from all the congregations presented after the service illustrated our diversity and our shared values. Other interesting meetings during the conference were led by James Hills, who presented on the Kiva microfinance organisation, and Pauline Rooney, who spoke on ministerial and lay training developments within ICUU. The Business Meeting was held on the Monday morning.

We have received much positive feedback on the value of the Conference. It is up to each one of us as individuals and the ANZUUA committee in general to ensure that in some way we use the inspiration and impetus of the conference to help make our world a better place.

[James and Renee Hills were the convenors of the Conference.]

NEWS FROM ADELAIDE

As of 16 October, Rob MacPherson has been appointed Pastor for 12 months, following the retirement of the Rev. Jo Lane. He has been conducting a 10-week Adult Religious Education course titled 'Build Your Own Theology'. There are nine participants and the course will be offered again in the New Year due to popular demand. Rob has commented that the participants are "bravely excavating their own life experience to find the bricks and mortar of the building".

Rev. Jo Lane is a South Australian who originally had a career as a fully qualified nurse, before being inspired to become a Unitarian minister. This involved moving to the UK with her husband, Rory, to study at the Unitarian College, Manchester. After her ordination, Jo served as a minister for six years with a congregation in London before returning to South Australia with Rory and two very young daughters. She was the minister at Adelaide Unitarian Church for the past five years.

On Sunday afternoon, 25 September, the 'Stream of Life' committee staged a variety concert in our Meeting House to raise funds for Oxfam's East African Famine Appeal. The concert was presented by the Cantamus Choir, conducted by Richard Hornung. Margaret Lambert, who has just completed a term as our President, was the accompanist for the choir and other musicians. While the attendance was not as great as we had hoped, support financially was very generous and very much appreciated. Those who attended found it a very enjoyable afternoon with a wide variety of musical items ranging from the popular classical to individual jazz and comedy. With the addition of several raffled prizes to ticket sales and donations, and after covering expenses, the money raised and forwarded to Oxfam was \$700.

[Our thanks to Jane Brooks, AUC's representative to ANZUUA, and Daphne Trelaor, chair of the Stream of Life committee, for this information. Their church is also celebrating 40 years in its Meeting House in the suburb of Norwood, construction of which was completed early in 1971. (The original bluestone church in the city was built in 1857.)]

REPORTS FROM OTHER MEMBER GROUPS

Auckland UC has had a huge turn-out for their new Visiting Minister, Rev. Bill Darlinson from Dublin. He has given some very interesting services to date, podcasts of which can be accessed on their website: www.unitarian.org.nz/auckland/Past_sermons.html. They have had many such ministers over the years, usually while on sabbatical leave, for whom they provide airfares, accommodation and a vehicle.

Brisbane UU Fellowship recently held their AGM. The Chalice Circle meetings have been suspended for the rest of this year and the group is looking at other activities, including more regular social events to include a wider group of people from the BUUF community.

Canberra UU Fellowship now meet in the ANU's University Chaplaincy at 10:30 a.m. on the first and third Sunday of each month. They are always happy to receive visitors and their program can be viewed at: www.cuuf.wordpress.com.

Rev. Derek McCullough of the Christchurch Unitarians has been elected president of that city's Interfaith Council, supported by every faith group except the Anglicans. An American member couple, having lived through the earthquakes, returned to the US to find their house burned to the ground. Derek, whose house was ruined by the second quake, is rebuilding with his own design of solar and other ecological features.

Melbourne UC had its AGM recently. Prof. Mike Salvaris will be speaking soon on the Australian National Development Index, better known as the Wellness Index, that is being put together. The church has been asked to affiliate with the project and it may be worthwhile for others to consider this.

Perth Unitarians had Graeme Gower, from the Centre for Indigenous Studies at Edith Cowan University, speak on indigenous incarceration and the associated detrimental impact. This issue has now been taken up by the Chief of Police and the congregation is hoping some good will come out of it.

Sydney UC has had a good response to its new computer projector and screen – more than half of its recent services have included PowerPoint presentations.

EUU FALL RETREAT – from A to Z

By Rev. Derek McCullough

A is for arrivals. They start on Friday at about noon – from Norway in the north, Portugal in the south, United Kingdom in the west and Romania in the east, and all points in between, over 120 people start arriving for their biannual fix of UU nourishment. There were also visitors from the USA and Abu Dhabi.

B is for Bar. The bar in the basement was the scene of the late night wind-downs and singalongs. Serving good German beers and Rhine wines (what else!), the bar was a popular place to finish the day.

C is for Children. This year there were 17 children, from toddlers to teenagers. Led by Julianne, they followed the overall theme of ‘A Sense of Place’ by exploring nature and the environment.

D is for D. McCullough. At most gatherings I attend, I am usually the only McCullough in the room. At Oberwesel, not only was I not the only McCullough but, when Dierdre McCullough arrived from Bann, Germany, I wasn’t even the only D. McCullough present.

E is for Earthquake. The theme of ‘A Sense of Place’ was chosen before the earthquakes shook Christchurch, but they added an extra dimension to the theme. To give people an idea of what it is like to experience an earthquake, we simulated one by making as much crashing noise as we could for 45 seconds.

F is for Friends. One of the features of the Retreat is the reunion of friends who meet only twice a year. Along with the new friends that are met, it creates a wonderful warm environment that enhances the rest of the weekend.

G is for Generosity. From the minute I arrived at my hosts Tina and Logan’s house in Munich to the reception I received at the Retreat, a hallmark of the trip was the generosity that I experienced. Thank you!

H is for Hostel. The Retreat is held in a youth hostel that doubles as a conference centre. This allowed everything to be held on site, which creates a strong sense of community, and having a swimming pool was a bonus.

I is for Interfaith. The workshop that I led was on Interfaith dialogue, and it was interesting to hear of the different experiences that people have had with other faiths, both good and bad.

J is for Joys (and Concerns). Rather than being part of the Sunday service, the sharing of Joys and Concerns is held on Friday night as a separate service. This works well as it allows a decent amount of time for sharing and brings people up to date with each other.

K is for Keynote Speaker. The theme of my keynote talks was ‘A Sense of Place’, and looked at how our spirituality is affected by where we live and how we relate to that place, not only physically, but culturally, socially and theologically, as well.

L is for Laughter. Whether it was the poetic announcements from John, or Dallis’s deadpan delivery, the sound of laughter was a constant companion during the weekend.

M is for Meditation. For the first time at these retreats, Saturday morning began with a morning meditation session. Given the gusto of the late night singalong the night before (see B), a good turnout suggested that this might be a regular feature of future retreats.

N is for Next Year. The next Retreat is in Rolduc, The Netherlands, on 20–22 April. I suggest that anyone planning a trip to Europe next year would be wise to consider timing it to include this weekend – you will not be disappointed.

O is for Oberwesel. This delightful little town is just downriver from Bingen, of Hildegard fame, and just upriver from Lorelei, of sirens fame.

P is for Performers. An undoubted highlight was the talent of the musical performers that attended the Retreat. Whether it was the morning meditation, the late night singalong or the Sunday service, the quality of the musical performances was outstanding.

Q is for Quality. Not only the music mentioned above, but everything about the weekend oozed quality, from the organisation, the workshops and the discussions.

R is for Rhine. The Retreat venue overlooks the magnificent Rhine River, which was bathed in sunshine or swathed in fog, but always busy.

S is for Singing. I am not only referring to the aforementioned singalongs, but the choir, with only one practice, was exceptional. There will be a clip of them on YouTube in due course.

T is for Talent Show. The Saturday night entertainment was a talent show by participants and was great. (See P and Q.)

U is for ‘Under The Southern Cross’. Both the meditation service and the Sunday service featured material that could be in the anthology that ANZUUA is putting together. It bodes well for the project that I was inundated with requests for a copy once it is published.

V is for Valuable. A nice touch was the presentation on Saturday night of an ICUU Hall of Fame award to Gevene Hertz for all her valuable work for the ICUU.

W is for Workshops. There was a choice of 13 different topics for the 90-minute workshop sessions covering a wide range of subjects. From All Things Shining to Yoga, making a choice was difficult (see Q).

X is for (e)xcellent. (See P,Q,S,T and N.)

Y is for Youth. A feature of many UU congregations around the world is our aging congregations. What was inspiring about this Retreat was the relative youth of the participants.

Z is for Zoom. You know you are in Germany when you are travelling on the autobahn at a stately 150 kph and the driver changes lanes so that a Masarati can zoom past like we were standing still!

[Our thanks to Derek for his most ingenious format – we'll have some follow-up in the next issue.]

MORE ABOUT THE PHILIPPINES

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines has 2000 members and 30 congregations, mostly on the island of Negros but also in Manila. It was founded as the Universalist Church of the Philippines by Rev. Toribio S. Quimada, who was excommunicated by the Universal Church of Christ in 1954 for using materials provided by the (then) Universalist Church of America.

Starting with the nine UCC congregations that he led on Negros, Quimada founded the UCP in 1955 and travelled all over the island, spreading the gospel of a unitary God and universal salvation. After the merger that created the UUA in 1961, his church was renamed the UUCP in 1985. He was murdered in 1988 during fighting between government forces and rebels of the New People's Army, after which the UUCP was led by his daughter, Rev. Rebecca Quimada-Sienes. A protracted investigation has failed to identify the persons or parties responsible for that dreadful crime.

Negros is in the central island group known as the Visayas and the UUCP's headquarters is in Dumaguete City, capital of East Negros province. In addition to being the major seaport of that province and a popular tourist destination, Dumaguete is a centre of learning, with four universities and a number of colleges and schools. The student population is about 30,000 – almost one-quarter of the city's inhabitants.

While the UUCP focuses on liberal Christianity, it also claims great success in faith healing. It also has a guesthouse for visitors to Dumaguete City and is building a dormitory for female college students there – more information from their website: www.uuphilippines.org. This church has a colourful history with many interesting stories, which we mean to tell in future issues.

The pre-Conference tour of Manila will operate from the Lotus Garden Hotel over the weekend of 03–06 February. The Saturday will feature guided tours of the Ayala Museum in Makati City, the historic walled district of Intramuros and Fort Santiago. Visits to UU congregations in Taguig City and Quezon City are scheduled for the Sunday. (Makati, Taguig and Quezon Cities are all municipalities of Metro Manila.)

There will be two post-Conference tours on 12–13 February (again, a weekend). The northbound tour goes first to the Nataban congregation in San Carlos City, 200 km from Dumaguete, where Rev. Quimada first preached the Universalist message. It will proceed to Canlaon City, at the foot of the eponymous volcano, where a whole UU community lives in the village of Aquino, which is also home to the UUCP Learning School. Participants will stay overnight in San Carlos City.

The southbound tour will go 90 km to the congregation at Nagbinlod in the municipality of Santa Catalina. This was where Rev. Quimada lived before his untimely death and it was the headquarters of the UUCP while he was there. After a visit to his gravesite and a ceremony there, the tour will proceed further south to the large Banaybanay congregation near Bayawan City. Participants will stay overnight in Bayawan.

These tours, and much of the local groundwork for the Council Meeting and Conference, have been organised by Rev. Nihal Attanayake, who is a Member-at-Large of the ICUU Executive Committee. Rev. Attanayake was ordained as an Anglican priest in his native Sri Lanka but he came to want a free liberal religion. He went to the Philippines to do a Master of Theology degree, after which he returned and took a parish in Colombo. Increasingly conflicted, he resigned and went again to the Philippines to work with Ecumenical and Interfaith groups. That brought him into contact with the UUCP in 2000 and he found what he had been looking for. He became the minister in Dumaguete City the next year, joined the UUCP headquarters in 2005 and served as President in 2008/9.

SEASON'S GREETINGS (SORT OF!)

Please accept with no obligation, implied or implicit, our best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low-stress, non-addictive, gender neutral celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practiced within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/secular persuasions and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all.

We also wish you a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated recognition of the onset of the generally accepted calendar year 2000, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions to society have helped make America great (not to imply that America is necessarily greater than any other country or is the only 'America' in the Western Hemisphere), and without regard to the race, creed, colour, age, physical ability, religious faith, choice of computer platform or sexual preference of the wishee.

(By accepting this greeting, you are accepting these terms: This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It is freely transferable with no alteration to the original greeting. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for her/himself or others, and is void where prohibited by law, and is revocable at the sole discretion of the wisher. This wish is warranted to perform as expected within the usual application of good tidings for a period of one year, or until the issuance of a subsequent holiday greeting, whichever comes first, and warranty is limited to replacement of this wish or issuance of a new wish at the sole discretion of the wisher.)

[This little gem was obtained from the UU Ministers Association, which has its own mailing list just for the circulation of humour that can be used to spice up their services. However, its provenance – like much of what bounces around in cyberspace – is unknown except for its presumptive origin in 1999. It was supposedly written by a lawyer who, if not a UU, certainly should have been.]

KIVA PRESENTATION ON-LINE

James Hills of Brisbane has put his PowerPoint presentation (see p. 9) on the 'Net at: www.kiva.fastmail.fm. He adds that it is "in a zipped form that can be downloaded. Note that it is 680MB, so will take some time to download – depending on your network speed."

"It is a self contained Prezi presentation – when unzipped, you run the executable file called Prezi and use the right and left arrows to go through the presentation. You can select a different starting point – e.g., the beginning of one of the videos – if you want, and run from there. If you need more information on Prezi, you can find it at: www.prezi.com."

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As of the previous *Quest*, I am starting to like having 16-page issues and I'm willing to maintain that volume in future if I get sufficient material from the member groups. Please keep sending your articles, poems, jokes or anything else to me at: michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au. Meanwhile, I will be taking copies of this one to the ICUU Conference, where I hope to meet some fellow editors and compare notes with them.

Just a couple few footnotes that I didn't have space for on the pages – the one humour piece whose origin I do know is 'Questions and Answers' (p. 7), which were responses to a contest in *The Times* of London. With the article from Adelaide (p. 13), there was a longer article on their 'Stream of Life' program in the Summer 2010 issue. Further to that, 'Building Your Own Theology' is a long-standing UUA initiative designed by Rev. Dr. Richard. S. Gilbert – search 'BYOT' on: www.uuabookstore.org for more information.

As always, the intention is that *Quest* be made available to the general membership of the ANZUUA groups and my offer stands to provide folded-and-stapled copies to any congregation that request them. Alternately, groups can circulate the electronic files when they are sent and/or refer their members to the ANZUUA website when a new issue is released.