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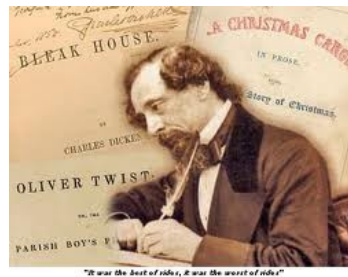


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Unitarian Universalist Association

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Autumn 2012



## CHARLES DICKENS BICENTENARY

This year looks like having more than the usual number of anniversaries, starting with the bicentennial of Charles Dickens' birth on 07 February 1812. While he was brought up in the Church of England, he had many Unitarian associates in his adult life and joined our denomination in the 1840s. Moreover, the themes of social justice in his writing and the causes he supported were consistent with – if not in advance of – the Unitarianism of his times.

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in Portsea (now Portsmouth), Hampshire, son of a naval payroll clerk, John Dickens. His mother, Elizabeth, was his first teacher and a dramatic storyteller. Growing up in Chatham, Kent, he attended a private school until his overspending father was sent to a debtors' prison in 1824. He then worked ten-hour days in a London blacking (shoe polish) warehouse until John was released, after which he spent a few years at the Wellington House Academy and left in 1829.

Dickens then worked as a legal clerk and taught himself shorthand, after which he became a reporter in the courts and, later, in Parliament. His first satirical essays, under the penname of 'Boz' (rhymes with 'nose'), were published in various magazines from 1834 and some of those were collected in his first book, *Sketches of Boz*, in 1836. His work brought him into contact with two radical Unitarian writers, John Forster and Rev. William Johnson Fox – Forster later became his literary executor and biographer. Also in 1836, he married Catherine Hogarth and they settled in the London suburb of Bloomsbury.

For the next three years, Dickens was editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, a literary magazine, in which his first three novels appeared in serial form. While others had done this with completed works, he was printing instalments as the books progressed. To this day, they contain periodic 'cliffhangers' that mark the ends of the original instalments – these were to induce readers to buy the next issue. Those novels were *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, all of which were well received. In 1840/1, he published a short-lived weekly, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, in which *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* appeared.

In 1842, Dickens and his wife travelled to the US and Canada, a trip which included a month of lectures in New York City. He met fellow writers, Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and encountered the Unitarian works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Ellery Channing. While he was wary of Transcendentalism, he so approved of their tolerance and humanitarianism that he started attending Unitarian services when he returned to London. His reflections on the trip were later written up in *American Notes*, a satirical travelogue.

Dickens became an active member of the Little Portland Street chapel, during which time he wrote his legendary *A Christmas Carol* in 1843. That powerful story, laced with social criticism, is said to have re-defined Christmas as a season of goodwill and generosity. He wrote four more Christmas books between 1844 and 1848, most of which time his family lived in Italy and France. Two more serialised novels were published in that era, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1943/4) and *Dombey and Son* (1946/8). Back in England, his semi-autobiographical *David Copperfield* appeared in 1849/50.

From 1850 to 1859, Dickens was co-owner and editor of the weekly *Household News* magazine, which featured works by Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau (both Unitarians) Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Wilkie Collins and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorritt* appeared in serial form during that time. The magazine also carried articles about kindergartens, literacy, sanitation, prisons and the right of workers to organise.

Dickens had also been involved in amateur theatrical productions since 1842, even doing some acting, and he used the proceeds to help found the Guild of Literature and Art to assist struggling authors and artists. He co-wrote a play called *The Frozen Deep* with Wilkie Collins, which was so successful that their troupe was called to present it at the Royal Command Performance of 1857. Long unhappy in his marriage, Dickens fell in love with an actress, Ellen Ternan, and separated from his wife – divorce not being an option for a man of his status – the next year.

From 1859 to 1870, he supervised the *All the Year Round* weekly, in which two of his best-known novels appeared: *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*. His last books were *Our Mutual Friend* and the unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. After his costly marital breakup, Dickens began paid performances of scenes from his various novels, which became more profitable than the royalties from his books. He toured Britain and Ireland, and then the US in 1867/8. While there, he renewed acquaintances with Emerson and Longfellow (who was also a Unitarian).

However, that gruelling tour had stressed Dickens' health to the point that he could barely eat solid food. On his return, he again toured the UK on a series of 'farewell readings' until he collapsed in 1869 from a mild stroke. He recovered and conducted another set of twelve performances early in 1870, then made his last public appearance at the Royal Academy Banquet. He died in his home from a second stroke on 09 June 1870 and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

Dickens' faith was a liberal Christianity that actively sought to alleviate poverty and to treat all people decently. His charitable works included a halfway house for 'fallen' women and the Field Lane Ragged School, which provided free evening classes for the poor. His lasting legacy is that all of his books have remained continuously in print since they were first published.

## WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS

Some of the books mentioned above are better known than others, so a bit more information may be helpful. *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* is a sequence of stories in which the founder and three other members travel singly to remote parts of England, having many humorous experiences in the process. *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* is both a romance and a social critique, with a plot too complicated to summarise. *The Old Curiosity Shop* is another sad story of poverty and abuse while *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty* was Dickens' first attempt at a historical novel, set amongst the destructive anti-Catholic (at least, that was the excuse) Gordon Riots of 1780.

The other four 'Christmas books' (so named only because the five were published in succession) were *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846) and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* (1848) – the first and last involve spectral revelations. *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* was Dicken's last picaresque novel, partly set in America. *Dombey and Son* again has a very complicated plot, not least because the son dies early in the story at the age of six. *David Copperfield* is the story of a boy growing to manhood, ending with many of his friends finding good lives in Australia. *Bleak House* is about a protracted case in the Court of Chancery, where the owner of an estate had left multiple wills, and it actually led to major reforms of that system. *Hard Times – For These Times* was the only novel whose setting was not in London but in a dreadful mill-town in the Midlands. Lastly, *Little Dorritt* is about a girl whose whole family lives in a debtor's prison, though the children are allowed to work outside.

## NEWS FROM TRANSYLVANIA



[From the ICUU website:] On January 13, 2012 the Consistory of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church honors the 444<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the first law on freedom of belief and conscience, and religious tolerance. In January 1568, King János Zsigmond and his court preacher, Dávid Ferenc, had the Diet of Transylvania pass, at its session held in Torda, the Patent of Toleration, which stated: “In every place the preachers shall preach and explain the gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well; if not, no one shall compel them but they shall keep the preachers whose doctrine they approve. Therefore none of the Superintendents or others shall annoy or abuse the preachers on account of their religion, according to the previous constitutions, or allow any to be imprisoned or be punished by removal from his post on account of his teaching, for faith is the gift of God, this comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

The celebrations start in the morning in the Unitarian church of Torda with a worship service that includes a history lecture on the importance of the Act on Religious Freedom. Then, the congregation will walk over to the National Museum of Torda, which was reopened in the fall of 2011 after many long years of restoration. The purpose of the visit is to salute the new exhibition of the famous painting of the 1568 event, which was also restored over the past decade. The painting, entitled ‘The Proclamation of the Act on Religious Freedom at the 1568 Session of the Transylvanian Diet’, was painted by Aladár Körösfői Kriesch in 1896.

The celebrations will continue with an evening worship service in the Unitarian church of Kolozsvár and a concert featuring the children’s choir of the Unitarian High School. The day will be closed with a reception at the residence of the Unitarian bishops, built in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, currently expecting the launching of a major restoration work.

The Consistory of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church thankfully acknowledges the contribution of the Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist international community to the completion of the restoration works at the museum in Torda. Among other things, it was due to the international campaign led in 2009 and 2010 by the International Council of the Unitarians and Universalists, the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council and the International Relations Office of the Unitarian Universalist Association that the renovation works were sped up and eventually finished. This way, the painting, a symbol of the struggle of our liberal faith for the recognition of religious freedom, became accessible again for the public.

[King János Zsigmond and Dávid Ferenc are known to us as John Sigismund and Francis David. (The latter, who founded the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, is depicted in the centre of the painting.) Kolozsvár was the Transylvanian capital and the Diet was the parliament, which could be convened wherever the king chose to do so. (Anyone who is not conversant with that fascinating period should see the feature article in the December 2008 issue – all previous *SUNs* are archived on the SUC website, in case you didn’t know.) The Consistory is the governing body of the TUC, composed of ministers and elected lay representatives from every congregation.]

# THE MANY LAYERS OF YIN AND YANG IN HUMAN LIFE

By Goff Barrett-Lennard

[Text of an address to the Perth Unitarians on 15 May 2011.]

There are a lot of things I could talk about and discuss with you – many of them pressing issues, such as:

- climate change and our impact on the environment
- why wars and even genocide keep happening
- the desperate plight of refugees and how we might influence our government in responding to them
- and a raft of other social issues.

But I've decided today not to tackle any of these things directly – but to open a different window than I have used before onto our nature as humans.

This window uses the old (in China) evocative term *yin and yang* to refer to two things, or two forces, that in some way are quite different or even opposing yet at the same time interlocking and interdependent. The examples I first thought of are 'self and relationship', 'body and mind', and 'person as result and creator'; and I'll mention others. Further kinds of yin and yang in life that have an element of paradox might well occur to you.

**First, on 'self and relationship':** How do we acquire a self-identity or concept of who we are and what we are like? The *potential* to do so is inborn, part of the basic makeup of our kind. But your particular self, or mine, is developed in some way. How? My idea is that this starts from the fact that we are born into relationship: intimately within our mother's body and then in close dependent relation with her and with close others. Thus I feel as many others do that family relationships have a great deal to do with the way we learn to see ourselves, as we are and as we want to be. Families, of course, are nested within societal contexts that provide further levels of relation and influence.

I expect you'd agree that early relationships are decisive influences on our early self. However, we then go on into new relationships. Now that we *have* a developing self this makes for a different start in these new relationships. This self is what we bring to the relationship and in the case of the other person(s) it is their self or selves. I would say that our living self is *vital input* in the forming of the relationship. More generally, the interplay of selves (its 'chemistry', one might say) is formative in all our relationships. And, at the same time, these relationships continue to have crucial bearing on the kind of self any of us is and the continuing evolution of this self. Thus self and relationship affect each other in a yin and yang of mutual causative influence.

**The body and mind issue:** Since the time of Descartes or earlier, Westerners have been accustomed to thinking of body and mind as quite distinct aspects of human existence. Each of these (body and mind) is extremely complex in itself. Neither broad aspect can exist without the other and together they form what I call a bodymind whole.

- Some minds are rejecting of their body, *or view it (in effect) just as a vehicle to drive around carrying the precious sovereign cargo of the mind.*
- Some people refer to their body, or to parts of it, as an impersonal 'it'.
- Or, they are guilty or ashamed of some 'bodily' desires or processes.
- Other people take a very friendly enjoyment in their body self. Their physical being is as much 'me' as their mental or feeling life, and there is virtually no line between them in being the person they are.

I see mind and body as very broad components abstracted from a single whole. The mind has to do with the way in which you or I work mentally and emotionally. The body is the enormously complex physical aspect of our existence. Mind cannot exist without the body and its brain. The brain of course cannot exist without many other features of the body such as the oxygenation of blood and the intricate delivery of this blood to every detailed part of the body. The body is geared in part to being taken care of by our conscious being and relies on our sensory and other awareness in all sorts of ways. Mind or consciousness are, to me, an emergent level of being – emergent from the extraordinary and exquisite complexity of our physical being. At best, body and mind co-exist almost seamlessly in a most intricate yin and yang.

**On being an end product yet self-governing:** We are each a result of a miraculous evolutionary past. It determines in a lot of detail the kind of creature we are. Added to this, the past of our own experience plays a great part in how we confront further experience. Out of all this, any of us is a product of the past that also teems with fresh possibilities. These possibilities lie in the fact of having our own agency, our own formed and forming point of view, an ability to begin things as well as copy them – in more esoteric language, to be a *self-organizing system*.

At the same time, most reflective people would like to be even freer than they are, freer of some weight or involuntary shaping carried from the past. We know that our vaunted ‘free will’ is not floating free, as it were, unencumbered by any predisposition or influence beyond the moment of any particular decision. Yet we feel and show the ability to do things, when the spirit moves us, things that are not just a copy but in some way novel, fresh or expressive of who we are. We *mostly* see ourselves as drivers in charge of where we are going. This yin and yang ties in with a closely related paradox, that of being *at once a determined creature and a determiner*.

*But is our **determining** individual or is it interconnected and relational?* For practical purposes we often decide and do things outside the immediate presence of anyone else, not at their behest and *not, at least within our awareness*, under the influence of a communal or cultural other. In those cases what we do does not seem like any kind of ‘partnering’ activity. However, perhaps such partnering in some form (maybe not externally active now) is always in the picture. Although any of us is *a person* and can *seem* to be acting outside any relationship is that credibly in our nature, or, are we fundamentally interdependent beings – *both individual and partnering at the same time*? I would argue that the latter is true, that our determining is never completely separate, individual and not linked to any other person or group we have been or are engaged with. To me, each person both stands apart as a whole conscious being and at the same time is inherently interconnected and relational in basic nature and process.

**The aspect of being both one and many:** *Our 100 billion-cell brain, with its astronomical range and variety of interconnections is a fantastically complex system capable of functioning in diverse modalities.* We bring this versatile complexity to our relationships, for example, with each different parent, with any siblings, a grandparent, partner or lover, significant teacher, any close friends or mates, a boss and/or workmates, or an opponent, bully or enemy we’ve not been able to avoid. We are much too complex to respond in one standard way in all of these varied relationships. Rather, I believe we naturally develop and apply a somewhat different pattern or modality of self in each context. Our plurality is distinct in each person, for we are one as well as many. We are, in effect, a singular yin and plural yang interwoven.

**To conclude then:** The idea of yin and yang is one window through which to see and talk about our nature as humans, a nature at once fascinating, baffling in its seeming contradictions and in some ways disturbing. In the vast journey of life on earth we humans are a very recent experiment, lording over our non-human relatives but not yet tested for long-term viability. We are deeply social-relational beings who largely define ourselves through each other yet take great pride in our individuality and distinctiveness. All of our yin and yangs make for great richness and a sometimes-precarious balance. Personally, I am both really hopeful and truly worried about the collective us.

[Dr. Barrett-Lennard is a specialist in psychotherapy and a counselling; also a founding member of the Perth Unitarians and a recipient of the Order of the Flaming Chalice award. (More on p. 10.)]

## ANZUUA NEWS

The *Under the Southern Cross* anthology is close to the first draft stage. The editor, Rev. Andrew Usher, has received over 120 pages of original material from 45 contributors.

The work of the Ministerial Training and Website groups is continuing.

Auckland UC is forming a planning group for hosting the 2014 ANZUUA Conference.

The ANZUUA Council has recognised Sally Mabelle’s incipient group in Kinloch on the North Island (see bottom of p. 11) and agreed to list it on the website.

## YOU'RE NOT SICK, YOU'RE JUST IN LOVE

By Jeff Kramer

Somewhere deep in your brain, memory mates with imagination and gives birth to anticipation. With all the subtlety of a car crash, your limbic system - the most ancient region of the brain - converts the happy thought into raw emotion. Hypothalamus: check. Pituitary: check. Thyroid and adrenal glands: Check. Your heart-beat leaps to jogging levels. Electrical impulses skitter round your system. Perhaps you feel breathless or sick to your stomach. You may even suffer piloerection - i.e., goosebumps. Congratulations. You're in love.

"Love is an imbalance, but it's part of the normal continuum", says Dr. James Fallon, Professor of Anatomy and Neurology at the University of California. "This may take some of the romance out of it. But something is happening." On Valentine's Day, that something happens more than ever, and quite a bit goes on in the central nervous system. Love's first anatomical flickers begin in the pre-frontal cortex, the section of your brain which enables you to anticipate being with another person - even one you've never met.

This so-called memory of the future engages the ancestral fight-or-flight response of the lower brain, which is responsible for involuntary functions such as stammering, tripping, drooling, exchanging astrological signs and laughing too loudly at someone's jokes. Endorphins fuel the chemical cocktail. Similar in structure to the drug, morphine, these create a sense of bliss. They leave lovers feeling joyful - but not in the early going.

During the initial stages of attraction, endorphins trigger cells in the midbrain to produce dopamine, a powerful natural amphetamine. It tells the brain to select a plan of action - any plan. Against so powerful a force, the amygdala, home of the brain's inhibition centre, normally attempts to introduce a note of caution. "You could get hurt", it warns the love-struck. But unless the risk is sufficiently dire, the amygdala is swept away by the hormonal tsunami.

Intent on acting on your amorous intentions, your conscious mind selects from a menu of options ranging from the clumsy to the catastrophic. You can't even eat - all those hormones have turned your digestive tract to jelly. You're so keyed up that merely bumping into your prospective partner is enough to trigger the startle reflex. When your loved one comes round the corner, super-normal levels of norepinephrine enter your bloodstream, causing your pupils to dilate, your blood pressure to climb and your artery walls to swell. Your heart starts pumping overtime.

All those swinging hormones may even cause you to have a more active dream-life - in which case you might start dreaming about someone else. If that happens, congratulations one more time. You go through this all over again.

[Jeff Kramer wrote a humour column for the *Orange Country Register*, a Los Angeles daily newspaper until 2009. We think this was published in February, 1998, but couldn't find it in their archives. Kramer now lives in Syracuse, New York, and writes a weekly column for *The Post-Standard*.]



Further with St. Valentine's Day matters, consider a famous economist's views on the subject:

Let us assume *man* to be *man*, and his relation to the world to be a human one. Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust, etc. If you wish to enjoy art you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you wish to influence other people you must be a person who really has a stimulating and encouraging effect upon others. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a *specific expression*, corresponding to the object of your will, of your *real individual life*. If you love without evoking love in return, i.e., if you are not able, by the *manifestation* of yourself as a loving person, to make yourself a *beloved person*, then your love is impotent and a misfortune.

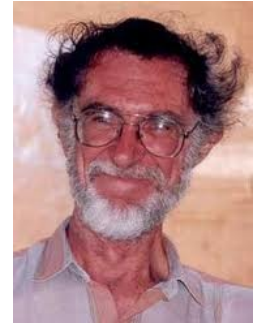
Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

[Surprisingly, Marx actually wrote three collections of poetry in his younger years, all of them dedicated to Jenny von Westphalen, his future wife. They finished up living in poverty in London and only three of their seven children lived past the age of eight.]



## THE ANSWER'S IRELAND

Who gave Australia the tunes to sing, the tunes of songs so grand?  
Songs to inspire, full of beauty and fire – the answer's Ireland.  
Know when you sing of Jack Donahue, that he was a Dublin man  
And Dennis O'Reilly is travelling still with a blackthorn in his hand.



Who raised a ruckus at Castle Hill, who there defied the crown?  
'Twas the same rebel boys who in '98 'gainst odds would not lie down.  
Oh, but they made Samuel Marsden fret and ruffled silver tails,  
Why, the words "Croppie Pike" were enough to strike fear into New South Wales.

Who agitated at Ballarat for Joe Latrobe's death knell?  
Who was it raised up the five-starred flag and damned the traps to hell?  
Who was it gathered beneath that flag, where solemn oaths were sworn?  
Who would not run from the redcoats' guns, upon Eureka morn?



Ned Kelly's dad was an Irish lad, the Kellys all died game.  
Brave Michael Dwyer's bones are buried here, we'll not forget that name.  
Who could resist Larry Foley's fist, and Foley wore the green.  
Who led the anti-conscription ranks in 1917?

John Dengate (1966)

We may as well mark St Patrick's Day, for once. John Dengate is a retired primary teacher, well known in Sydney's Irish and folk music circles for his witty (and often satirical) songs and poems. The melody is based on an Irish rebel song called 'Roddy McCorley' – just search the title on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) to hear it. John is said to have written it to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin.

As for the names mentioned in the song, John ('Bold Jack') Donohue (1806–1830) was an Irish nationalist, transported to Australia in 1825. Sentenced to convict labour in the western Sydney region, he escaped and became a bushranger until he was shot by police. (One version of 'The Wild Colonial Boy' uses his name.) Dennis O'Reilly is the subject of an eponymous song by and about early Irish settlers in Australia.

The second verse refers to the convict uprising of 1804 in what is now northwestern Sydney. Some of those were Irishmen who had taken part in the 1798 Rising in Ireland, known there as 'Croppies' because of their short haircuts (a symbolic rejection of the bewigged aristocracy). They often had only pikes for weapons – just long blades attached to poles. The Rev. Samuel Marsden, known as 'the Flogging Parson', was a wealthy landowner and magistrate at the western settlement of Parramatta when the uprising took place.

Charles Joseph Latrobe was Governor of Victoria during the Ballarat gold rush of the early 1850s, which attracted some 10,000 people. The miners became increasingly aggrieved at having to pay for licences while not being allowed to vote or buy land. However, Latrobe had resigned and been replaced by Charles Hotham by the time of the Eureka Stockade confrontation of 1854, in which police and soldiers killed over 30 people. Most of the miners were Irish, as were Peter Lalor and some other leaders of the Ballarat Reform League.

The reference to Michael Dwyer (1772–1825) is of interest, as he was a leader of the 1798 Rising whom the British were unable to capture until he surrendered on his own terms. He and his family were sent to Sydney in 1806 and were given 100 acres of uncleared land in the southwestern Liverpool region, where he served as Chief of Police for seven years!

The Kelly Gang were the most famous bushrangers of them all – more about them on the last page. Laurence Foley (1849–1917) was a professional boxer who never lost a fight and retired at the age of 32 with sufficient prize money to open a hotel and a boxing academy in Sydney. As far as we can determine, his only Green credentials came from being the leader of a Catholic 'larrikin' gang in Inner Sydney as a young man. In 1871, he fought his Protestant counterpart, Sandy Owens, in a street for 71 rounds before the police intervened – Foley was considered the likely winner.

Lastly, attempts to introduce conscription during World War I were fiercely opposed by many groups, not least by those of Irish extraction. They were far more interested in completing the work of the Easter Rising than in going to war 'for King and Country'.

## REPORT ON THE ICUU CONFERENCE

By James Hills



The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) hold their main Council Meeting every two years and this year it was at Dumaguete City in the Philippines – the first time the meeting has been held outside of Europe or North America. The ICUU is devoted to fostering connections between Unitarian and/or Universalist groups around the world. The volunteer Executive Committee comprises Rev. Brian Kiely of Canada as President, Pauline Rooney from Adelaide as Vice-President, Rev. Dávid Gyery of Transylvania as Secretary and (as of the elections conducted at the meeting) Galen Gisler from Norway as Treasurer. In addition, there are three Members-at-Large: Rev. Nihal Attanayake of the Philippines, Rev. Celia Midgley of the UK and Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana of Burundi. The EC is supported by Executive Secretary, Rev. Steve Dick, and Program Coordinator, Rev. Jill McAllister, from the USA.

These biennial Council Meetings are a mix of business and conference activities that help in many different ways to build community, capacity, sharing, understanding, friendships, love and tolerance, increasing our knowledge of what it means to be a Unitarian and deepening our spiritual understanding in justice-seeking faith. Anyone can attend the Conference and sit in at the Council Meetings, but only delegates from the Full Member groups can vote.

There was a Richter 6.8 earthquake about 70 km away two days before the conference commenced, followed by a tsunami warning and many aftershocks, so many people were concerned about the potential for worse problems. Fortunately, Galen Gisler is a geophysicist and was able to provide a good summary of the risks associated with such events and, while not discounting the possibility of further activity, allayed many fears.

The meeting was attended by 71 people representing U\*U congregations from over 20 different countries including Romania, Germany, Mexico, India, the Czech Republic, Uganda, Hungary, Burundi, Denmark, Norway, Kenya, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Canada, UK, USA, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. From ANZUUA, we had Pauline Rooney, James and Renee Hills, and Michael McPhee – Pauline was the only one who had attended an ICUU Council Meeting before.

The Council meetings were held at the South Sea Island Resort in Dumaguete City, which proved to be comfortable, affordable for members and provided



excellent food. The photograph on the right shows the building where most of the meetings were held. The photo on the left shows the accommodation with the tree growing through the roof, which seemed to be fairly common at this resort – obviously, the thatch has to be adjusted to prevent leaks if the wind blows strongly! The main bar area had two trees growing through the roof, one from inside and one from outside.



During the opening introductions, the ICUU president mentioned that Unitarian Universalists are found in over 50 countries and that we are *not all the same*, we are an indigenous expression of liberal religion, we all give safe harbour and share a beacon of love and justice. We observed this during the Conference as we came to understand the diversity and breadth of spiritual expression of people and groups who gather under the name of Unitarian Universalists, ranging from atheists to liberal spiritual communities through to the deeply Christian.

A half-hour worship service was held every morning and evening, conducted by people from many countries in their respective traditions and often involving music. Francisco Gaitan from Mexico held a service in Spanish, introducing chocolate as a gift from Latin America (*chocolatl* is an Aztec word) complete with a chocolate communion. Josphat Maynye, a young man from Kenya with the most engaging smile, held a service with four prayer subjects – prayers for the warm hearted people of the Philippines and for the recent



victims of the floods, landslides and earthquake; for the people of Somalia, Syria, Egypt and Libya for peace, stability and prosperity in their countries; for peace in his country of Kenya and for the conference organisers, the people attending and the families they had left behind at home. He then played the guitar and we walked around shaking hands and greeting people from around the world while singing his adaptation of a Kiswahili song, *Jambo Sana*. Rev. Diane Rollert from Canada held a service on justice – there were many inspiring moments during our days together.





We had an interesting video link talk by Bruce Knotts, director of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office – the UU-UNO ([www.uu-uno.org](http://www.uu-uno.org)). The UU-UNO represent UU views to the UN, historically the views of the US and Canadian congregations. He would welcome other UU groups like ANZUUA letting the UU-UNO know what Australian and New Zealand views are on campaigns they are mounting, so they can say they also represent Unitarians in Australia and New Zealand on the campaign and garner greater support. His talk was excellent and the ICUU advised they will make a copy of his talk available for download and viewing by congregations. I recommend we all take advantage of this when it is available.

I also attended a workshop on using technology and the prevailing view was that using electronic social media like Facebook, Twitter etc. is key to connecting with younger people.

The ICUU family grew during the Conference as, during Wednesday's business meeting, we had a formal welcoming in of two Full Member groups – the Assembly of Unitarian Christians of Burundi in Africa and the NPB, a Dutch liberal religious community of over 3200 people. You can see an interview with a number of members attending the ICUU at <http://uuwithoutborders.blogspot.com.au>, including Wies Houweling from the NPB. Then, the Bishop of the Transylvanian church (the oldest Unitarian group – 450 years) presented this newest group with a crocheted tablecloth (representing hospitality), candlestick and a copy of the 1568 Edict of Religious Toleration by Unitarian king, John Sigismund. The Unitarian Church of Transylvania has around 45,000 adult members, second to the USA (160,000), followed by Hungary (25,000), Khasi Hills Unitarians in Northeast India (10,000), Canada (5,000), Netherlands (4,300), UK (3,700).

The Unitarians in Africa struggle with poverty, hostilities against LGBTI people, injustices and other freedoms we take for granted, yet they reach out with compassion and tolerance to those in worse situations and create miracles with small amounts of funds; e.g., in Kenya, many UU church families have an AIDS orphan living with them. The Uganda UUs run a home for children orphaned by AIDS and a primary school.

The UU Church of the Philippines has 2000 adult members and many children! Most of the 29 congregations are on the island of Negros but there are two in Manila. The UUCP is very active in social justice, advocating for a national bill for reproductive health, operating a micro-loan program for villagers, running training sessions and participating in international programs to raise funds for medical supplies for villagers. Their premises is located very close to the four universities in Dumaguete and they are trying to raise \$400,000 to build a dormitory to provide safe local accommodation for female University students.

We went on a bus trip after the conference to visit two of the congregations north of Dumaguete – the original trip further north was impossible due to bridge damage from the earthquake a week earlier. These, like most of the congregations, are in remote rural mountainous areas. We travelled over very rough, rutted and steep roads to reach these congregations. The people are very poor, live in small bamboo houses about the size of a king-size bed and many had walked 5 km to reach the church where we met. While the climate is good for farming, poor access to water and the indentured servant-like conditions for farmers who do not own their own land create conditions that keep many of the Philippine UUs in severe poverty. Average income from crops, animals and wages in these remote areas is around \$400 per household per year and costs regularly exceed income. In spite of this, people are warm-hearted, welcoming visitors with open arms.



While gaining an adequate income is a challenge, so is access to education. This was one of the priorities the women raised – only primary schooling is provided in the local village so they have to find funds to board their children for them to get a high school and university education. Health care is also limited with the nearest person with some medical knowledge being a midwife, at least an hour away by vehicle down on a steep rutted mountainous road.



Six of the congregations on Negros Island have support from partner UU congregations in the USA for community capacity building programs – reports on these programs and how they have been set up are available at: [www.uupcc.org/ccb.html](http://www.uupcc.org/ccb.html). A fundraiser at the ICUU meeting helped raise a few thousand dollars towards the dormitory project – however, significantly more assistance from international communities will be needed to realise this, as the Sunday collections from the poor congregations typically total around \$1. See <http://filipinasafehousing.org> for information on this project – it is a cause truly worth assisting.



## ADDENDUM FROM PAULINE ROONEY

I found the recent ICUU Conference and Council Meeting to be one of the most inspirational ever. For me, the expanded understanding of what Unitarian faith concepts can offer other cultures was reinforced when the Executive Committee and some of the conferees in the 'pre-tour' attended the Sunday service of a small congregation in one of the very poor areas of Manila. The 'church' was a blue plastic roofed area between two buildings, and the chairs and tables were brought in from nearby homes for the service. There were approximately 60 in attendance, of which 50% were under 15 years of age.

The service itself was very similar to that we would expect in our churches *but* the most surprising thing was that it was led by a 12-year-old girl called Irish. All present, including the children, participated fully in the meeting, which included reciting the UU principles, during which Irish was confident, mature and very much in control of the process. Rev. Brian Kiely, the ICUU President, gave the address, which touched on kindness and respect for each other, a necessary message when family violence is all too prevalent. It was a thought-provoking experience when we ponder the role of youth in our church and can sometimes be overly concerned about the church as a building rather than a collection of like-minded people living with purpose.

For me, the wonderful part of the experience in Dumaguete City was meeting Unitarians from so many different countries, at one in our search for faith but from widely different circumstances, bound by the intention to understand each other. If our reports have inspired you to be involved in the future, plans are currently being made for the 2014 Conference to be held either in New York City or Boston.

## REPORTS FROM MEMBER GROUPS

From Jane Brooks of Adelaide UC: Rob MacPherson's contract as Pastor has been extended until September 2013. This will give us time for a properly conducted search for a permanent minister and we expect Rob will be an applicant. He intends to make Religious Education the heart of his ministry from the children's Sunday Club to adult RE courses. The second of the 10-week 'Build Your Own Theology' courses is now being conducted, and Rob is planning to run an Introduction to Unitarian Philosophy later in 2012. Part of the RE program is a series of guest speakers from other faiths – starting with Lindy Abram from Buddha House. Rob has recently been awarded his PostGrad Diploma in Contextual Theology with distinction.

From Sally Mabelle of Auckland UC: We just returned from our annual camp-out at Huia in the Waitakere Ranges National Park, where the theme was 'Meet Your Neighbour'. We had beautiful walks in the bush, kayaked on the bay, played silly card and spoon games, and had a team quiz night guessing which sage said which 'wise saying' – Gandhi? Buddha? or Winnie the Pooh? We also played 'name that tune', and sang wildly and often out of tune while laughing and remembering the 'oldies'. We shared a few delicious meals and enjoyed a service without a sermon – instead of one speaker, we broke up into three groups to discuss how we could be more 'neighbourly' and more connected with ourselves, our extended family, our work-mates, and our own Unitarian community.

Brisbane UUF had a guest speaker from Friends of the Earth, who had been brought up as a Unitarian in the United States. She related the FOE's guidelines to our Seven Principles.

Christchurch UUs have set up a KIVA team and are actively approaching working with younger people.

Melbourne UC is looking at setting up a KIVA group and raising more funds for that organisation's micro-loans in developing countries. They now have David Bottomley, son of the legendary Rev. William Bottomley (minister there in 1925–1949) giving some talks there. Also, their member, Pam Baragwarnath, historian and author, spoke on the historical role of the Mechanics Institutes in Scotland and Australia, examining the links between the philosophy of the MIs and Unitarianism.

Perth Unitarians regret to report the passing of Helen Barrett-Lennard, a founding member who was awarded the Order of the Flaming Chalice in June 2010. (Please see the Summer 2010 issue for details of her life.) They also had visitors from Napa, California, one of whom gave a talk on 'The Future of Religion'.

Spirit of Life UF reports that, as of their last AGM, Virginia (Ginna) Hastings is now their president and Laurence Gormley is vice-president. They now have a part-time minister conducting one service per month and there has been a resurgence in attendance.

Sydney UC recently heard a talk by police officer-turned-author, Pam Newton. She gave a PowerPoint presentation of her 'spiritual journey' to Mali and then to India, where she lived with Tibetan Buddhists.

## MEDITATION: A TOOL FOR SUCCESS

By Sally Mabelle

When you think of meditation, what comes to mind?

I'm not talking about some 'holier than thou' type of rigorous practice, I am talking about the simple act of sitting still and allowing yourself to open to your authentic self behind your everyday personality...that is your human 'being-ness'.

Meditation for me is a daily way to reconnect with my inner essence...the simplicity of who I really am, beyond all the daily stresses and dramas and goals and ambitions of life. It is a way to create an open invitation each day for authentic inspiration to 'drop in' and visit.

There are many styles of meditation that I've tried, and I find the simplest and most practical one is merely closing the eyes and observing the gentle rise and fall of the breath, known to some as Insight Meditation or *Vipassana*.

Focus attention on your heart area and observe the subtle motion of expansion and release of your breath. It can be helpful to inwardly say to yourself, 'in' and 'out' as you watch the flow of your breath.

If you find yourself being distracted by some other pain or irritation or sensation, merely notice it and name it. For instance, if you notice your jaw feels tight, you might say, 'clenching', 'holding', 'tightening' or whatever is presently rising.

You might feel your back aching, and you name the feeling, 'aching, aching', 'burning, burning', 'pulling, pulling', 'tightening, tightening', etc. What you will notice is that the dominant sensation will continually change and shift. The focus of your attention can rest on the dominant sensation, and when that fades away or shifts, gently return your attention to the breath, 'in, out'. You might then, for instance, become aware of someone rustling a paper, so you inwardly say, 'rustling, rustling'.

It's important to notice while meditating that the one doing all this observing, namely YOU, does not change and shift. YOU are always the same...it's your thoughts and sensations that constantly shift and change, not YOU.

As you continue this process, even for as little as five or ten minutes, a sense of peace, calm, and clarity begins to come into your awareness, even in the midst of personal dramas and outside stresses happening.

It is from this space that your most inspired and authentic self will voice itself. You can keep a notebook by your side to capture any of the inspirations that come to you from this centered place.

Throughout the day, practice noticing yourself, that YOU behind all of the surface activity, the observer, the ONE that never changes. The one that is solid and steady and sure. This is your authentic self. This is the self that will guide you to more authentic activities and relationships. This is the self which will lead to your own personal version of success, in your own authentic way.

Enjoy your practicing and I'd love to hear how it goes for you.

[Sally Mabelle is a member of the Auckland Unitarian Church, originally from Pennsylvania (via Colorado and Hawai'i). Her qualifications include a BA in Rhetoric and Communication Studies and a Master of Education. She is an international speaker and a specialist in 'the voice of leadership'. You can see more about Sally and her business operations on her website: [www.sallymabelle.com](http://www.sallymabelle.com).

Sally is currently living in Kinloch on the Western Bay of Lake Taupo (central North Island). She is wanting to connect with other like-minded people in the area to have a monthly Unitarian meditation and/or discussion group meeting at her place. Please contact her at [sally@sallymabelle.com](mailto:sally@sallymabelle.com) or on +647 376 5022 if you know people who may like to participate.]

## MORE IRISH-AUSTRALIAN HISTORY



Lest anyone find it odd that Australian folk music extols lawbreakers of various kinds, it should be borne in mind that British rule in many colonies (especially Ireland) was often severe to all but the wealthy few. The Irish convicts who were transported for political reasons saw themselves as prisoners of war and, therefore, fully justified in trying to escape. Some were content to stay in Australia but sought to live as free citizens of an independent nation.

Over the decades, many convicts received their tickets-of-leave and even grants of land – but even the free settlers were under the autocratic rule of appointed colonial Governors. So it was that, in 1854, the Ballarat Reform League called for democratic reforms, amongst other demands. In the lead-up to the battle at the Stockade, the miners unfurled the Eureka Flag (shown above) and swore an oath “by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties.” After the event, the thirteen leaders who were tried for sedition and treason in Melbourne were acquitted, to great public acclaim. A Legislative Assembly with full white male suffrage was promptly granted.

At just that time, Edward (‘Ned’) Kelly was born at Beveridge in Victoria, the son of a freed Irish convict. The family had many run-ins with the law, though the number of acquittals indicates a vendetta on the part of the police. Nonetheless, Ned did take up cattle duffing with his brother, Dan, and others. After police search parties took three lethal casualties, his gang was declared outlaws by a special Act of Parliament in 1878. The Kelly Gang went on to rob banks in Euroa, Victoria, and Jerilderie, New South Wales, then took control of the town of Glenrowan, where they prepared for a siege by forging iron armour and helmets. The four men held out against thirty Victorian police for two days until Ned was wounded and the others killed. Ned Kelly was hanged in Melbourne in 1880 – ironically, his judge was a Protestant from Northern Ireland.

But there was also a Unitarian from Northern Ireland (pictured above) who was transported to Australia in 1850! John Mitchel (1815–1875) was the son of a Presbyterian minister who joined the liberal Remonstrant faction in the schism of 1829. He trained as a minister but became a solicitor, often defending Catholics in the hostile Orange-dominated courts. Moving to Dublin, he wrote for a reformist newspaper, *The Nation*, and then started his own, *The United Irishman*, in which he exhorted Protestants to join with Catholics in resisting exploitative British rule. He was tried for sedition and sent to Bermuda, then to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), but he escaped in 1853 and went to the US.

Reunited with his family, Mitchel first lived in New York and started a radical Irish nationalist newspaper, *The Citizen*. However, he sided with the South in the Civil War and two of his sons died fighting in the Confederate army (while a third lost an arm). After the war, and a brief imprisonment, he resumed the Fenian cause and eventually worked as their financial agent in Paris. In 1875, he returned to Ireland to run for Parliament in the seat of Tipperary. His election was invalidated because he was a convicted felon, but he stood again and won by an increased vote. Only his sudden death averted a constitutional crisis.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

For a number of reasons, including the time spent in the Philippines, I was only able to manage a 12-page issue this time. My thanks, as always, to the contributors and I am confident that we can get back to 16 pages in future, especially given the material mentioned in the congregational news from Melbourne and Perth. But, everyone else, please keep sending your articles, poems, jokes or even comments and suggestions to me at: [michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au](mailto:michael.mcphee@optusnet.com.au).

Sorry about the ‘filler’ piece on p. 2 but literary reviews are definitely not my specialty. However, if you read the synopses of those books on Wikipedia, you’ll see where my trouble was coming from.