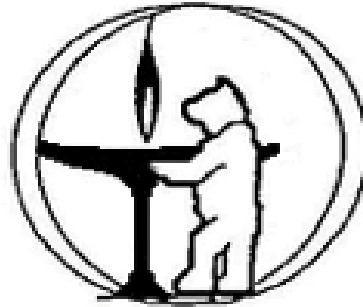


Warwick Unitarians
Newsletter
May and June 2022



The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches 2022

GA was condensed this year into three intense days at the end of April, full of inspiring, challenging and informative meetings on a wide range of topics as well as opportunities for spiritual renewal.

There were, as usual, three major Worship Services for everyone as well as many smaller opportunities to share in worship and/or meditation. The **Rev Wyn Thomas**, a minister who covers the congregations of much of West Wales gave the Anniversary Address entitled *Rocks and Rollercoasters* (well written up by Angela Maher in the April 30th edition of *The Inquirer*) building up in our minds an image of the walls that he sees as he drives through Wales from congregation to congregation, and reminding us how we are like the stones that make up the wall, the rocks that make the wall strong and lasting for the future rather than being the builders simply maintaining the walls from the past just because they are there. The full services were taken by various leaders, often those newly appointed onto the Roll of Unitarian Ministers. For example, **Mark Hutchinson** from the Cotswold Group led a reflection on a *Rose in Wintertime*, alongside Welsh-speaking **Melda Grantham**, as they ran the Anniversary Service preparing for Wyn Thomas.

I commend to you the reports on the Assembly written up so far in the current edition of *The Inquirer*. They include the excellent talk by **Liz Slade**, the Chief Officer of the movement who replaced Derek McAuley three years ago but who had not had an opportunity since then to address the GA in person. Liz encouraged us that ours is a community that has a role to play and a place to thrive in a society that become increasingly secularised and yet is full of people searching for spiritual well-being and connectedness.

The stimulating Keynote Lecture was given by **Indra Adnan**, talking about the *Politics of Waking Up*, and I would expect this to be featured in the next edition of *The Inquirer*

There were four Plenary Sessions, with hymns and prayers (it is so regenerating to sing and worship together with so many other Unitarians) before we tackled the four GA Motions that had been discussed by congregations in advance. The debates were vigorous, some more passionate than others, but all in the end passed by the voting delegates. The Chalice debate recognised the need to try to hold more consultation on such questions, though with independent-minded Unitarians that is an all but impossible task! We need to bear in mind the interests of both the membership that is now and the membership that will be, if we raise our profile.

Along the way in these plenary sessions, we met our Executive Committee and some of the staff at the Headquarters in Essex Hall, including the new Congregational Connections Officer **Lizzie Kingston-Harrison**, **Simon Bland** (Ministry and Congregational Support), **Rory Castle Jones** (Communications), **Gavin Howell** (Safeguarding and Youth Coordinator) and especially important **Andrew Mason** (operations Manager) who had set up the entire conference and brilliantly ensured its smooth running.

The statutory motions, largely left to the last day, then were crowned by the appointment of our own District Minister Rev **Sue Woolley** as the new President.

In addition, over the three days there were 8 'breakout' sessions with 32 different subjects to choose from, covering a huge range of topics from Spiritual Practice to Taizé Worship, from the Women's Group to the Peace Fellowship, from Communications to Governance and from the legacy of Slavery to the Government's Levelling-Up in Education policy to name but a few. Intensive and exhausting, but deeply inspiring!

And over all there were the two big issues of today – the Future for Unitarianism and, sadly, the war in Ukraine. The collection at the Anniversary Service raised almost £5400 for Ukraine.

Do read more in *The Inquirer* and look at the Unitarian websites (<https://unitarian.org.uk> contains lots of interesting information about people, events and initiatives in the movement, as does the National Unitarian Fellowship site <https://nufonline.org.uk>).

And do consider attending GA next year yourself and experience the buzz of being in the company of so many like-minded (or not so like-minded!) Unitarians.

And talking of like-minded or not so like-minded Unitarians, we look forward to hearing the distinctive approaches of Mark, Sue, Diane, Gavin and Angela over the course of the next few weeks. Do come and hear any or all of them – they are each sure to prompt spiritual reflection in one way or another.

Malcolm Burns