

## QUAKER UNIVERSALIST GROUP NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2020

Dear QUG supporter

### **Anne Bancroft**

We are sorry to hear of the death of Anne Bancroft who died earlier this year at the age of 97. Anne was the author of our pamphlet no. 33, *Quakerism and Buddhism, the Cutting Edge*.

It was Anne's belief that although there are similarities between Quakerism and Buddhism the differences between them 'should not be papered over in a well-meant attempt at *oneness* ... but should be looked at directly and celebrated as new insights, leading to a richer and fuller life.' Anne's pamphlet is available on our website at <https://qug.org.uk/pamphlets-2/pamphlet-33/> .

An obituary for Anne can be found at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/18/anne-bancroft-obituary>

### **QUG event at the BYM Fringe - 'Is the future of Quakerism universalist?'**

Britain Yearly Meeting is taking place on the afternoon of Sunday November 15<sup>th</sup> through Zoom.

In the past we have usually had a special interest meeting arranged during BYM, but this year there will be no such official meetings.

However, an unofficial 'Fringe' has been set up by a Quaker from Cambridge and we are advertising a meeting on their website at [www.YMFringe.co.uk](http://www.YMFringe.co.uk)

Our meeting will take place on **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November at 7.00 p.m. on Zoom**. Anyone interested in taking part should register their interest by emailing [contact@qug.org.uk](mailto:contact@qug.org.uk). We will send you further details and joining instructions a day or two before the event.

The title of the meeting will be '**Is the future of Quakerism universalist?**' It will be a discussion facilitated by QUG committee members.

### **QUG Annual Conference - LIFE, TIME AND ETERNITY**

**May 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham and/or online**

Further to our last newsletter in August we have now decided definitely to proceed with our annual conference in 2021. We have two options and we will decide on which one to take up early in 2021. Whichever we adopt the dates will be the same – May 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> – so please keep these free if you are interested in attending.

The two options will be:

- 1 We hold a 'blended' conference**, with some willing to go to Woodbrooke in person, but others joining online. Speakers will either come in person or present their talk online (either live, or recorded).
- 2 We hold a conference that is entirely online.** We could have pre-recorded or live talks online over the weekend. We could have discussions – in plenary or in breakout rooms. We would use Zoom or similar software.

We are delighted to confirm that all five of our original speakers are still able to attend in some way or another. They are:

### **Philip Young – from a Christian perspective**

**Rev. Philip Young** is a retired priest in the Church of England and helps out at his local church. He is a member of the Franciscan Third Order. He is also a Quaker and a pacifist. He has enjoyed living in East Anglia since 1980. He loves gardening, sailing and swimming in the North Sea, every day if he can. He writes poetry. He has run the London Marathon five times for Water Aid and once to raise money for the rebuilding of St. Thomas' Church Hall in Norwich where he was Vicar from 2007 to 2012. Before moving to Felixstowe in Suffolk five years ago he was the Environmental Officer for the Diocese of Norwich. He is developing a website which can be found at [www.revolutionoflovenow.com](http://www.revolutionoflovenow.com). Philip believes that Love is God and God is Love and that Love transforms the individual and the world.

### **Sharada Sugirtharajah – from a Hindu perspective**

**Dr. Sharada Sugirtharajah** is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow, Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham. Sharada's research focuses on representations of Hinduism in colonial and postcolonial writings. She also has research interests in Modern Hindu Thought, Religious Pluralism, Interreligious Relations, Hinduism in Diaspora, and Women's issues. Sharada is engaged in freelance work and has led sessions for students, counsellors, social workers, nurses, clergy and multi-faith groups. She has acted as a consultant to various Religious Education projects and is on the International Editorial Board of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. Sharada edited and wrote two essays in the book *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World: An Ongoing Engagement with John Hick* (2012) and also wrote *Imagining Hinduism: A Postcolonial Perspective* (2003). We are delighted to welcome back Sharada, who was a speaker at the QUG's 2012 and 2017 conferences.

### **Murray Corke – from a Zen Buddhist perspective**

**Dr. Murray Corke** is a veterinary surgeon, conservationist and advocate for animal welfare. He is a clinical teacher at the Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge. He is also a

Zen Buddhist. He learned to meditate with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in 1984, before encountering the teaching and practice of Thich Nhat Hanh on a retreat in south Devon in 1992. He then spent time on a number of retreats at Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh's monastery in south-west France. The Cambridge Sangha (Buddhist community), which started in 1993, has been his major support and source of learning over the years. He has been active in the Community of Interbeing since it was formed to promote the teaching of Thich Nhat Hanh and the practice of mindfulness in Britain, leading courses and retreats throughout the country.

### **Arif Hussain – from a Muslim perspective**

**Shaykh Arif Hussain** was born in Uganda, but moved to the UK at the age of 8. The Shaykh studied at Madrassah Syed Al-Khoei, London, and graduated with Honours in 1988. He then went to Iran for further Arabic and Islamic Studies. Later Shaykh Arif returned to the UK to establish the Al-Mahdi Institute in Birmingham, an important Shi'i Islamic Seminary. He is Co-director of CIMS (Centre for Intra Muslim Studies) and an active contributor to Interfaith dialogue. He has written many academic articles on various Islamic topics, and books including *289 Sayings of Imam Ali* (2017), *Islam and God-Centricity: A Theological Basis for Human Liberation* (2017) and *Islam and God-Centricity: Reassessing Fundamental Theological Assumptions* (2019).

### **Julian Barbour – from a scientific perspective**

**Dr. Julian Barbour** is a British physicist with research interests in quantum gravity and the history of science. He has written several books and papers, most notably his 1999 book *The End of Time*, which puts forward the view that time, as we perceive it, does not exist as anything other than an illusion, and that a number of problems in physical theory arise from assuming that it does exist. He argues that we have no evidence of the past other than our memory of it, and no evidence of the future other than our belief in it.

In addition, our QUG Committee member, Peter Varney, will help to draw the conference themes together at the end of the conference and add an anthropological perspective.

**Peter Varney** is a retired Anglican priest and a member of Norwich Local Quaker Meeting. He has geography and anthropology degrees from Durham and studied theology at Birmingham and Ibadan universities.

### ***Universalist***

The June edition of *Universalist* has been well received and people are delighted that in this time of few 'in-the-flesh' meetings QUG has kept in touch through our journal with some stimulating articles. You should have received the October edition by the time you receive this newsletter.

If you don't get *Universalist* on a regular basis then do join us as a member. You can opt to receive hard copies or the online version. Prices are very reasonable at £18.00 or £12.00 per annum respectively, so do complete the forms at the end of this newsletter (or on our website) if you wish to join QUG.

Thank you so much for responding to our request for items for *Universalist*. Please keep writing: we welcome any articles related to universalism. We are still waiting for

an article on how different religious groups around the world have responded to the Coronavirus: we would love an essay on this.

We would also like some more articles relating to the theme of next year's conference, *Life, Time and Eternity*. One person has suggested that poetry is a good source of ideas for this and someone may wish to take up this suggestion and write us an article – or write us a poem.

Please send any articles to Tony Philpott (by replying to this email), or directly to the Editor of *Universalist*, Shona Lowe, at [shonal@qug.org.uk](mailto:shonal@qug.org.uk). **The deadline for receiving articles for the February 2021 edition of *Universalist* is November 30<sup>th</sup> 2020.**

## And the people stayed home

One of our readers has shared with us this beautiful poem about the pandemic by Kitty O'Meara. Do read it. It can be found at <https://the-daily-round.com/type/image/>

## Our website - <https://qug.org.uk/>

Our website is open for comments at any time, so please use it. For example, it would be good to have some QUG perspectives on how you are coping with Coronavirus and what the future might be post-COVID 19 (if that will ever be possible!). See <https://qug.org.uk/posts/>

## Membership of QUG

Renewals for QUG membership were due on 1st January 2020, so to renew your subscription for this year (or to join QUG for the first time) please complete the membership form at the end of this newsletter or on our website at <https://qug.org.uk/membership/>

Do remember that you can make any payments to QUG by bank transfer. Our bank details are on the membership form.

## Global Meeting for Worship

Our sister organisation in the USA (the Quaker Universalist Fellowship) runs a global meeting for worship every Wednesday. For more details please visit <https://universalistfriends.org/about/global-meeting-for-worship-gmfw#other>  
The webpage will tell you how to request an access link.

## A Question for QUG Newsletter readers

A local Attender at the Quaker Meeting in Congenies in France has suggested that she gathers lots of shells from a beach on the Mediterranean coast for us to make a

Mandala for the garden of the Meeting House. I would like to plan a residential weekend for Spring at which we would build the mandala then spend some time sharing ideas about mandalas.

My initial plan would be to choose a central shell for "The present moment" or "My place of depth" or " My calm place" or "The Spirit" or "The Divine" then on the edges 3 or 4 locations for "My Thinking", "My Feeling", "My Body" and share how we can reach a balance where these three do not try to dominate. Do you have any suggestions? Please send me your reply to Richard Thompson, Maison Quaker, 11 Avenue des Quakers, 30111 CONGENIES, France or [richardthompson1@gmail.com](mailto:richardthompson1@gmail.com)

Thanks - Richard Thompson - Groupe Languedoc (FYM)

## **Correction**

We apologise for the misspelling of Pope Francis in Peter Varney's article *Commonalities of Religious Experience* in the latest October 2020 edition of *Universalist*. The error was not in the original text but it somehow crept in thereafter.