

QUAKER UNIVERSALIST GROUP NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021

Dear QUG supporter

QUG Annual Conference - LIFE, TIME AND ETERNITY

May 7th, 8th, 12th, 14th, 15th 2021

This is a brief newsletter to explain about registration for our annual conference. We sent you the full details of the conference in our February newsletter, but, to remind you, it will be online only, over two weekends, as follows:

- Friday 7th May – 1900 – Session 1 – **Peter Varney** – from an anthropological perspective
- Saturday 8th May – 1030 – Session 2 – **Philip Young** – from a Christian perspective
- Saturday 8th May – 1430 – Session 3 – **Arif Hussain** – from a Muslim perspective
- Wednesday 12th May – 1900 – Session 4 – **Murray Corke** – from a Zen Buddhist perspective
- Friday 14th May – 1900 – Session 5 – **Julian Barbour** – from a scientific perspective
- Saturday 15th May – 1030 – Session 6 – **Sharada Sugirtharajah** – from a Hindu perspective
- Saturday 15th May – 1430 – Session 7 – Bringing it all together and looking forward

Each of Sessions 1-6 will be about 1¾ hours long and will involve a talk, small group discussion in breakout rooms, and a plenary. Participants can choose which sessions to attend. Session 7 will not have a speaker but will try to summarise the whole conference and look forward to the future.

Because we are using Zoom we will not be charging participants. Each talk will be recorded and put on the website; also in June we hope to publish a pamphlet containing all the talks.

How to register for the conference

You will register for all the events of the conference, even though you may choose not to attend all of them.

We would like you to register by visiting our website, e.g. by clicking on <https://qug.org.uk/>

You will see a registration box on the top right of the homepage.

You will need to state your name, email address and some information to help us register you (which might be your local Quaker meeting, if appropriate).

If you have any difficulty with applying through the website, or any questions, please just reply to this email, giving the relevant information.

When you have registered you should receive an acknowledgement within a week. If you do not hear back from us in this time please email contact@qug.org.uk.

Registration is now open and we will start acknowledging applications from March 1st.

Joining instructions will be sent out to all those registered shortly before the events take place. Full details of when this will occur will be sent to you when we acknowledge your application.

Further details of the speakers at our 2021 Conference

Peter Varney – from 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 University and studied Theology at Birmingham and Ibadan Universities. In Nigeria he encountered Yoruba traditions and indigenous Christianity. He first met the Iban of Borneo during RAF National Service and, after ordination to Anglican ministry, he began research focusing on the merging of Iban traditional beliefs and Christianity. His recent research has focused on Iban eschatological beliefs, which he will include in his conference talk. It can be downloaded from The Free Library: *The modernization of Iban eschatology: Iban burial ritual and afterlife beliefs in contemporary Kuching*, Borneo Research Bulletin. Vol 45.

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.

Philip believes that Love is God and God is Love and that Love transforms the individual and the world.

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).

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.

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.

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.

Contacting us, questions and unsubscribing

If you have any questions or wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter please send an email to Tony Philpott at tonyp@qug.org.uk.