

## Background Papers for the 2021 Annual General Meeting

### Motion 1 FROM KENDAL UNITARIANS

#### Misuse of Alcohol

In the October 10 2020 (Vol 5) issue of *The Lancet* it stated:

“...lockdown represents a risk factor for increasing alcohol consumption in people with alcohol use disorders and relapse for those who were previously abstinent”.

This concern was also highlighted in 2020 by others, including Alcohol Change UK:

“Around one in five drinkers (21%) told us that they have been drinking *more frequently* since the lockdown. This suggests that around *8.6 million UK adults* are drinking more frequently under lockdown.”

In their

November 2020 report Alcohol Change UK stated:

“Stress, anxiety and other mental health reasons drive over half of UK drinkers to turn to alcohol during the coronavirus pandemic.”

Addiction to alcohol detrimentally affects all races, classes and genders.

The current pandemic has highlighted the existing dangers of alcohol addiction and dependency and all its associated health and social problems in the UK.

Research and statistics from the 1970's onwards, including from: the UK government, NHS, the police, the Institute for Alcohol Studies, Alcohol Change UK and other agencies, indicate that almost a third of the population of the UK are heavy drinkers, alcohol dependent, have family or friends who are alcoholics, or are victims of abuse related to alcohol misuse.

#### Section 1 - Health problems due to alcohol dependency

In 2019 Prof Sir Ian Gilmore, the chair of the Alcohol Health Alliance UK, said,

“More than 80 people die of alcohol-related causes across the UK every day, and there are more than 1m alcohol-related hospital admissions every year in England alone. This puts considerable pressure on the NHS, as well as other public services.”

In addition to the well-known health risks associated with alcohol dependency - cirrhosis of the liver, increased risk of heart attacks and strokes, dementia and mental illness - in 2018 Kate Oldridge-Turner, head of policy for The World Cancer Research Fund said, “drinking alcohol increases the risk of six types of cancer, including breast and bowel cancer” and pointed out that “We have a social culture in the UK which can be very focused on alcohol.”

In 2019 Dr Richard Piper, the chief executive of Alcohol Change UK, the campaign group behind Dry January, wrote,

“These numbers are shocking: the number of beds used, the cost to the NHS, the sheer number of people suffering as a result of alcohol.”

According to the Office of National Statistics, UK Alcohol Statistics 2020:

“In 2018/19 there were 358 thousand estimated admissions where the main reason for admission to hospital was attributable to alcohol...”

“There were almost 1.3 million estimated admissions where the primary reason for hospital admission or a secondary diagnosis was linked to alcohol, which is 8% higher than 2017/18...”

Statistics and reports since 2009 indicate that over 60% of NHS resources have been spent on coping with alcoholism and alcohol-related diseases. In the last 10 years hospital admissions due to alcoholic liver disease in England have increased by 43%. Prior to the pandemic, at weekends in most cities A&E departments were overwhelmed by dealing with the consequences of drunkenness.

### Section 2 - Cost of alcohol misuse to the UK

According to the Drink Aware Report 2019, the 2016 Public Health England evidence review estimated “the economic burden of alcohol as between 1.3% and 2.7% of annual UK GDP (approximately £21-£52 billion)”.

Added to this figure is the cost of policing alcohol-related crimes, car accidents and domestic violence, which has been estimated by both police and independent agencies to cost approximately 40 million a year.

### Section 3 – Alcohol-related crime and road accidents

In 2019 the Office of National Statistics reported fatalities in reported drink-drive accidents for 2017: “Final data for 2017 shows that between 230 and 270 people were killed in accidents in Great Britain where at least one driver was over the drink-drive limit....this is about 14% of all deaths in reported road accidents.”

### Section 4 - Alcohol addiction, domestic violence and child abuse

Drunkenness plays a part in at least 30% of known cases of child abuse and is the major factor in 60% of domestic violence, especially against women.

Research published in 2019 in the online journal *PLOS-Medicine*, based on the analysis of hundreds of thousands of medical and police data from Sweden over a 16-year period, strongly indicates that men dependent on drugs and alcohol are six to seven times more likely to be domestic abusers of both women and children.

University of Oxford Professor Seena Fazel, who led the study, said,

“Treatment programmes for perpetrators have not been very effective to date - probably reflecting lack of high-quality evidence on risk factors that can be targeted.”

In a 2018 report commissioned by a cross-bench group of MPs and peers it was stated that “more than one in three deaths or serious injuries suffered by a child through neglect or abuse is linked to parental drinking”.

This report highlighted that alcohol abuse by parents was behind horrific problems for children and warned that “budgets of alcohol and drug treatment programmes were being cut”. The study found that “Alcohol misuse was implicated in 37% of cases of a child’s death or serious injury after abuse or neglect between 2011 and 2014.”

In reviewing the ‘Vervata Health’ report of 2019 on the link between alcohol and child abuse, Dr Isaac Alexis, trauma surgeon, neurobiologist and former Medical Director for the USA Department of Justice, confirms:

“There is a strong correlation between alcohol and child abuse. To break this cycle and prevent future abuse, it’s important to understand how these two situations interact with each other.”

### Section 5 - Homeless people impacted by alcohol harm

In a December 2016 *Guardian* article, Jeremy Swain, the chief executive of London-based homelessness charity Thames Reach, said:

“Among the homeless people we work with, our figures indicate that super-strength beers and ciders at 7.5% to 9% ABV [alcohol by volume] are doing more damage than both heroin and crack cocaine.”

## Section 6 - Alcohol addiction and mental health

Alcohol addiction and dependency has put a huge strain on all levels of society, especially on mental health services. Voluntary groups have had to deal with the devastating consequences of alcohol addiction: domestic violence, broken homes, unwanted pregnancies, neglected children, suicides, debt, crime and homelessness.

## Section 7 – Alcohol problems during 2020 lockdown

During and after the coronavirus pandemic we also face the hidden pandemic of alcohol addiction. The financial costs of this for the UK run into billions, but the human cost of alcohol addiction, is ruined lives, wasted potential and needless deaths. Addiction to alcohol leaves in its wake social and emotional debris affecting families for decades.

Voluntary groups trying to stem the tide of alcohol addiction and its devastating consequences have been fighting against the odds for years, without adequate support from governments. In the wake of covid19 and all the billions of pounds of resources thrown in that direction, it would be short-sighted in the extreme for government to ignore the crippling effects of an unchecked national pandemic of alcohol addiction.

In conclusion:

There is a desperate health and social need to implement national programmes to take practical steps through education and prevention to help reduce the problems caused by alcohol addiction for future generations. By implementing a policy of constructive action to help reduce the harm of alcohol addiction, the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches could become a positive part of the solution to the problem of alcohol dependency and addiction in our society.

### ***Web links for references used per section:***

#### **1 - Health problems due to alcohol dependency**

[nhs digital statistics on alcohol england 2019 - Google Search](#)

[Alcohol statistics | Alcohol Change UK](#)

[Alcohol Policy UK: Stats & figures](#)

[Statistics on Alcohol, England 2020 - GOV.UK](#)

[Alcohol-related harm and drinking behaviour | The Nuffield Trust](#)

#### **2 - Cost of alcohol misuse to the UK**

[Estimates of the cost of alcohol - IAS](#)

[the-economic-and-social-costs-of-alcohol-related-harm-in-leeds-2008-09.pdf](#)

[New report reveals staggering cost to NHS of alcohol abuse | NHS | The Guardian](#)

[Economic Burden of Alcohol Dependence in Europe | Alcohol and Alcoholism | Oxford Academic](#)

[DP Alcohol and the public purse 63 amended2 web.pdf](#)

[Addiction and its cost to the economy | Broadway Lodge](#)

#### **3 - Alcohol-related crime and road accidents**

[Drink Driving | Frequently Asked Questions | Drinkdriving.org](#)

[Shock drink drive figures as police catch thousands of motorists | The Bromsgrove Standard](#)

[Drink driving: The hidden cost of a humble pint - GOV.UK](#)

[Drink Driving Statistics UK – Drinkdriving.org](#)

[Drink-driving - IAS](#)

[Alcohol-related violent crime 2018: still a national priority? - Alcohol Policy UK](#)

#### **4 - Alcohol addiction, domestic violence and child abuse**

[Alcohol in domestic violence and child abuse - Google Search](#)

[Alcohol statistics | Alcohol Change UK](#)

[Consequences: Adult drinking in the UK | Drinkaware](#)

[Alcohol Policy UK: Domestic violence](#)

[Domestic Abuse and Women's Alcohol Issues](#)

#### **5 - Homeless people impacted by alcohol harm**

[Understanding Alcohol and Homelessness | Homeless Link](#)

[An exploration of the role of alcohol in the life experiences of the homeless population in... | Alcohol Change UK](#)

[Drugs and alcohol | Crisis | Together we will end homelessness](#)

[Microsoft Word - Working with Alcohol Use in Homelessness Services](#)

#### **6 - Alcohol addiction and mental health**

[Alcohol and depression | Royal College of Psychiatrists](#)

[Mental Health: Effects of Alcohol on the Brain | Drinkaware](#)

[Alcohol Awareness Week 2020: Speaking up about alcohol and mental health | NHS Orkney](#)

#### **7 – Alcohol problems during 2020 lockdown**

[UK domestic abuse helplines report surge in calls during lockdown | Domestic violence | The Guardian](#)

[Alcohol and domestic abuse in the context of COVID-19 restrictions | Alcohol Change UK](#)

[Effect of COVID-19 lockdown on alcohol consumption in patients with pre-existing alcohol use disorder - The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology](#)

[What has 2020 done to the UK's alcohol consumption? - IAS](#)

[Research: drinking in the UK during lockdown and beyond | Alcohol Change UK](#)

## Motion 2 FROM CARDIFF UNITARIANS

### Fossil Fuel Divestment

The climate crisis has been a concern for Unitarians for some time as demonstrated in General Assembly Resolutions in 2001, 2007, and 2015. “Respect for creation” is part of our Object, and a core commitment of our faith tradition. Albert Schweitzer’s ethic of “reverence for life” calls on us to do all we can to protect human and non-human life whenever possible.

But human and non-human life is severely threatened by the climate crisis. The year 2020 was probably the hottest year on record, and 2010-2019 was the hottest decade ever recorded.<sup>1</sup> The climate crisis is not in the future, it is right now. Already thousands of people around the world are dying, or losing their homes through extreme weather events and failing harvests. The human suffering is real, it is happening today, and it is getting worse. The link between human activity releasing carbon into the atmosphere and these increases in average temperature is well-established through a clear scientific consensus. We know what’s happening. We know why it’s happening. We know what must be done to stop it.

There is now a groundswell of voices all around the world demanding we do what must be done. This is being led by children striking for their own futures. Everyone is now paying lip service to the need for climate action. But the great obstacle to this is, and always has been, the fossil fuel industry. The largest five stock market listed oil and gas companies spend around £150m a year lobbying to delay, control or block policies to tackle climate change.<sup>2</sup> Though they often talk about their investment in green technologies they are still spending billions on exploring new oil and gas sources, and their actual capital expenditure on low-carbon technologies is only about 3%. To prevent the worst of the climate crisis and be compliant with the Paris Climate Agreement the oil and gas reserves must be kept in the ground. But these companies’ business plans are based on extracting and burning them.

The divestment movement is about recognising that in the light of this it is no longer ethical to invest money in the fossil fuel industry, which shows little or no sign of attempting to change its behaviour to respond to the risks of climate change. It is about recognising that one of the most effective means we have to bring about change in the world is our money, and how we invest it.

The divestment movement is growing. Currently around 1100 institutions with more than £9 trillion of assets under management have made commitments to divest from fossil fuels.<sup>3</sup> This includes many universities, local councils, pension funds, and religious group including the World Council of Churches, the Methodist Church, the Quakers, and the United Reform Church.

---

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/14/2020-hottest-year-on-record-nasa> and <https://www.noaa.gov/news/2019-was-2nd-hottest-year-on-record-for-earth-say-noaa-nasa>

2 “Top oil firms spending millions lobbying to block climate change policies, says report” Guardian, 22nd March 2019 (<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/mar/22/top-oil-firms-spending-millions-lobbying-to-block-climate-change-policies-says-report>)

3 Information from Operation Noah

On issues like same sex marriage Unitarians were ahead of the curve, but on this one we are well behind the social justice commitments of other groups. The General Assembly periodically passes a resolution of concern on climate change, but without requiring we apply our principles to our own finances. Perhaps this is because many of us feel we don't understand the financial world. We all have different levels of expertise and knowledge, and different congregations might have varying levels of understanding about investment and ethical investment. But it is important for us to realise that one of the most powerful tools to bring about change we have as an organisation is our investments. "Where your treasure is, your heart is," as Jesus said.

We are also rightly concerned about being responsible stewards of our assets. That's quite right. However there is a purely financial argument for fossil fuel divestment. There is a real risk that the "carbon bubble" will burst and companies will rapidly lose their value when we move to a low-carbon economy. This was the warning given in recent years by Mark Carney, the former Governor of the Bank of England.<sup>4</sup>

We recognise that many of our investments are held in managed funds. In such circumstances it is possible to request a conversation with your fund managers and ask if they are able to supply a "fossil-free" fund. The demand for such funds is growing. It should be possible to either be supplied with a fossil-free fund or seek out other fund managers who are able to supply such a product for their customers. Many "ethical investment funds" are now becoming "fossil free". And so this process is becoming easier. We have found that in our experience managed "ethical funds" give just as good returns as "non-ethical" ones. It is possible to do this ethically and responsibly and rapidly.

The climate crisis is urgent, and so there is a need to do this as rapidly as possible. We consider 2025 to be the very latest date at which this should be done. It should be quite possible to do this in two or three years, but we have worded the motion to give the General Assembly some flexibility. We would be delighted if the General Assembly could do this more rapidly, and we would hope that a report would be given at each Annual Meetings describing progress.

We would like to make it clear that Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd are not proposing this motion on the basis that we've got it all sorted ourselves, or that we are experts. We are on the path to divestment but we're not there yet. Indeed, it is partly because of our feeling of needing more support and guidance from the denomination that we are proposing this motion. We all need to learn together how to do this and support each other.

Although we recognise that each congregation and fund is independent we hope that we will all be inspired to work through the process of divestment.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/dec/30/firms-must-justify-investment-in-fossil-fuels-warns-mark-carney>

### **Motion 3 FROM STOCKTON UNITARIANS**

#### **Provision for Young Unitarians**

For more than 50 years Unitarians have placed a high priority on provision for our young people. A succession of outstanding and inspirational Religious Education and Youth Officers have built on the pioneering work of Rev Dudley Richards – Grenville Needham, Sydney Knight, Glyn Pruce, Celia Midgley, Trevor Jones, Sarah Tinker, John Harley and now Gavin Howell.

That provision has included support for Young Unitarian groups such as the former UYPL, Youth Spirit, IRF and BUYAN, discussion and worship material, the President's Award and Chalice Award schemes, and the organisation of residential weekends, usually at the Nightingale Centre, for Junior, Inters and Senior age groups. Always moving with the times, the golden thread running throughout these programmes, in the words of Gavin Howell, is ***“to nurture and empower Young Unitarians by meeting their social, emotional and spiritual needs”*** – perhaps never more necessary than at the present time as young people emerge from the severe deprivations of the pandemic lockdowns.

As well as providing valuable and enjoyable experiences for young Unitarians, these programmes build strong bonds of friendship and commitment between them which continue into adulthood. Many go on to become active adult Unitarians and this is evident in the number of former participants now in leadership roles at local, district and national levels in the movement.

All this wonderful work has been put on hold by the pandemic and the temporary closure of the Nightingale Centre. As the pandemic recedes there will be many demands on limited resources. We know that we cannot expect a simple return to 'business as usual'. There will, rightly, be reviews of priorities and there will some new ways of working.

**The purpose of this motion is to give the General Assembly the opportunity to reaffirm that provision for Young Unitarians must remain a high priority as we go forward.**

**Clause a)** does precisely that.

**Clause b)** recognises that a thorough review, with full consultation, will be necessary 'post-pandemic'.

**Clause c)** commends the work that Gavin Howell is already doing to explore ways of linking young Unitarians online with events such as 'Cloud9'.

Given that online links are at an early stage of development, and cannot ever replace the personal contact that we are all longing for as we come out of lockdown restrictions, **clause d)** of the motion urges the EC to ensure that residential events resume as soon as possible after the re-opening of the Nightingale Centre, to bring young Unitarians together again.

In conclusion we would assert that a religious movement which has no place for young people has no worthwhile future.

## Motion 4 FROM THE FOY SOCIETY

### Transgender Rights

---

#### Gender identity

To be transgender is to know that your gender is different from the gender you were assigned at birth. To be cisgender is to know that your gender is the same as the gender you were assigned at birth.

The motion does not seek to introduce any new rights for transgender people. It also does not seek to remove any rights from cisgender people, either men or women.

Instead, this motion seeks to re-affirm the General Assembly's commitment to transgender rights in the face of ongoing "trans panic" media campaigns which closely resemble "gay panic" episodes from former decades: e.g. <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/12/07/anti-trans-group-bathroom-predator-myth/>, "Our side concocted the 'bathroom safety' male predator argument as a way to avoid an uncomfortable battle over LGBT ideology".

("Biological sex" is sometimes used in an attempt to argue against recognising gender identities. However it is not at all clear what counts as "biological sex". Chromosomal phenotype, hormonal environment during foetal development, physical anatomy at birth, and hormone response during puberty are all potential candidates, but "sex" as defined by any one of these items can and does differ from "sex" defined by any other of them. And as well as disagreeing with each other, each of these biological items forms a genuine spectrum with many people falling in intermediate areas within the spectrum.)

---

#### Transgender rights are human rights

International and national law has recognised gender identity as a civil right, including in the UK. The right to change sex has existed since the Gender Reassignment Act 2004. In addition, gender reassignment status, and a person's sex / gender are both protected characteristics in the UK under the Equalities Act 2010. In UK law, gender and sex are synonyms and single-sex rights are the same as single-gender rights.

Under current UK law, a transgender man is a man and a transgender woman is a woman for all legal purposes. Nearly all public services and government identification, apart from an updated birth certificate, are already available on a simple self-declaration. The NHS will also update medical records on this basis:

(<http://gmmmg.nhs.uk/docs/guidance/RCPsych-CR181-Good-practice-guidelines-for-the-assessment-and-treatment-of%20adults-with-gender-dysphoria.pdf> )

"Once patients formally change their names and style of address, all GP, gender identity clinic, hospital and NHS records should be amended to reflect this change... A simple statement of intent will suffice."

However, unlike these other records, a birth certificate can only be updated by obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate ("GRC") from a Gender Recognition Panel. Part of the process of obtaining this is to live as your true gender for a minimum of two years. The UK government has said: "In too many cases the current system prevents them from acquiring



legal recognition of who they are, denying them the dignity and respect that comes with it. It often leaves trans people in the difficult situation of living in one gender, and holding Government-issued forms of identification, credit cards, driving licence and all other documents in that gender, but a birth certificate and legal status in another". ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/721725/GRA-Consultation-document.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721725/GRA-Consultation-document.pdf) , emphasis added).

The motion affirms that to have one's true gender identity recognised and protected by the state is a civil right, and that people must be able to assert that right without oppressive and harmful barriers.

---

### The self-declaration model

The self-declaration model does away with the Gender Recognition Panel. Instead, the application for a GRC includes a statutory declaration made by the applicant.

A statutory declaration is a signed and witnessed statement, and making a false statutory declaration is an act of perjury. (A false declaration may also be prosecuted as fraud if it is made to obtain any advantage.)

The law in Ireland changed to this simple model for a Gender Recognition Certificate more than five years ago ([https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/birth\\_family\\_relationships/changing\\_to\\_your\\_preferred\\_gender.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/birth_family_relationships/changing_to_your_preferred_gender.html) ). Other countries already using a self-declaration model include Denmark and Malta.

If this model was brought into law in the UK or by devolved governments in the UK, there would be no change to the existing self-declaration process for most government identification (including a passport) and for medical records, because all these records are already updated on request. But obtaining a birth certificate that also shows a person's true gender would be cheaper, simpler, and shorter.

In the UK, the Equalities Act 2010 allows single sex spaces or the provision of single sex services where it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim to provide the service. This right would not change under the self-declaration model.

---

### Request to the Chief Officer

Finally, the Chief Officer is requested to lobby for the self-declaration model during government consultations and on other suitable occasions.

As a liberal religious body, the General Assembly should provide a distinctive religious point of view that promotes freedom of conscience to relevant Government consultations. The motion asserts that the right to an honest and personal expression of gender identity is indivisible from freedom of conscience and from freedom of religion.

The authors hope that the motion will also inspire our congregations and the General Assembly's youth and religious education programme to continue to celebrate transgender individuals, support transgender rights, and explore diverse gender identities, but the motion does not commit to any specific budget or actions.

## Motion 5 FROM THE FINDHORN UNITARIAN NETWORK

### Code of Ethics

#### Justification for this Motion

Every credible organisation has a code of ethics. In the UK the Baptist Union has a code of ethics<sup>5</sup>, the Church of England has guidelines<sup>6</sup>. The Methodists also have a code of conduct<sup>7</sup>, and Pastoral Care UK does as well<sup>8</sup>. Even politicians are supposed to abide by a 'ministerial code of conduct'. Reputable organisations all have both a code of ethics and a transparent and robust mechanism for applying their code, and for bringing people to account who transgress the code.

There have been several notable incidents over the past years where a Unitarian office holder or employee's conduct has been of concern. There are instances where the EC and other Unitarian bodies have not been able to explain their reasons for not appointing a person to an office or post, simply because while unethical behaviour has been known to have occurred, there has been no formal procedure to address the issue of concern. This is not fair to the individual concerned, because they have no avenue to defend themselves against an allegation, and it is not fair to the people who should have the right to make an informed decision. Even if the details are confidential, the record of a breach of a code of ethics should be sufficient to justify non-appointment. If a code of ethics were adopted, it would be possible for the GA to record a breach of the code after due process has occurred. Even if this were not publicly broadcast, a chapel, society, or national office could require any candidate for employment or office to permit a question to be asked, and the findings made known in appropriate circumstances.

More than half our churches have spiritual leaders who are not accepted by the Ministerial Fellowship, and this includes some Ministers who choose not to be members of the Fellowship. Most lay leaders are not on any GA role. However, locally they are seen as the Unitarian Minister. Often, they have the title Revd. Some are interfaith Ministers. Many lay leaders are very well regarded by their chapel, and in their local community they are recognised as Unitarian faith leaders. Therefore, at least locally they represent UK Unitarians. Some have little or no formal training. If any local Unitarian leader were to breach ethical standards, they could bring UK Unitarianism into disrepute. The GA has no mechanism to disassociate itself from the actions of a local lay or Ministerial leader. Further, a chapel who finds their spiritual leader has breached ethical practice may find it hard to dismiss their office holder or employee. If it were a clause in the terms of appointment that a finding against the person in terms of the GA Code of Ethics would be grounds for dismissal, this could provide an effective mechanism.

What exists at present are Ministerial and Congregational Guidelines that have been ineffective in dealing with situations in a timely manner, and a GA Roll of Ministers that has not led to anyone being struck off until after they have left the Unitarian fold. Typically, what happens at present is that congregations become divided when a spiritual leader acts unethically, and many people leave the chapel. Then, the Minister or lay leader is free to continue in their role, or to seek employment or office elsewhere in the Unitarian

---

<sup>5</sup> [CodeOfEthicsForMinisters%20\(1\).pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/Clergy%20Guidelines%202015.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/1404/counc-mc17-18-ministerial-code-of-conduct-january-2017.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.pastoralcareuk.org/public/docs/pastoral-care/PCUK\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Good\\_Practice\\_in\\_PC\\_Rev\\_20.09.pdf#](https://www.pastoralcareuk.org/public/docs/pastoral-care/PCUK_Guidelines_for_Good_Practice_in_PC_Rev_20.09.pdf#)

community. The UK Unitarian community is diminished by the loss of members, and by criticism from former members.

A critical issue is how to deal with office holders and employees, and in particular Ministers and lay leaders, who seek to apply for a post in a different church. For many reasons, it is not always appropriate to seek a reference from their current congregation. This is because it means that the first church is not 'destabilised' if the application does not proceed. However, in some instances, the church making an appointment has soon discovered things that should have been made known prior to appointment. If it were part of the recommended appointment procedure to agree that the church seeking to make an appointment can ask for disclosure of any GA records under the code of ethics, the matter might be addressed in a confidential manner for both the applicant and the chapel.

Each Unitarian church that chooses to affiliate with the GA, has the power to make its own decisions. Therefore, if the General Assembly adopts a code of ethics, each chapel, district or society will be able to choose to adopt the code, and this will need to happen for the Code to be effective.

The code of ethics could also protect the GA from the risk of appointing a person to a national post who has been found to have breached the code of ethics.

The Ministerial Fellowship has at various times in the recent past considered a code of ethics, but has so far made no substantive progress toward recommending or adopting a code of ethics. Even if the Ministerial Fellowship were now to act, this would be insufficient because a ministerial code of ethics would not apply to the leadership of a majority of Unitarian churches. Further it would not necessarily apply to districts, to the GA Staff, or to affiliated societies. Therefore, while the Ministerial Fellowship might wish to contribute to the preparation of the Code of Ethics, or to adopt its own code of conduct, the challenge is broader than the remit of the Fellowship.

The task of preparing a code of ethics can be assisted by reference to codes developed by other denominations and other organisations with similar structures and objectives to the GA.

## **Motion 6 FROM THE LONDON DISTRICT & PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY (LDPA), THE PEACE FELLOWSHIP, AND TWELVE FULL MEMBERS**

### **Interfaith Red Cross Memorial Peace Appeal**

The purpose of this GA motion is simple: to take decisive action to help save millions of lives and alleviate massive human suffering worldwide by supporting a new interfaith appeal, incorporating and building on our established Unitarian-inspired Clara Barton Appeal, for urgent Red Cross emergency humanitarian and medical aid whenever and wherever they are desperately needed.

This motion is fully in the spirit of the Charter for Compassion, affirming as it does the ethic of the Golden Rule, and which our General Assembly endorsed in 2011; a GA resolution in 2014, which encouraged timely support for urgent Red Cross appeals; and a 2016 GA resolution, calling for humanitarian aid to millions of victims of war and refugees whose lives remain in acute and immediate danger.

The Clara Barton Disasters Appeal, itself directly inspired by the Charter for Compassion and our 2011 GA resolution, was launched in April 2012 on the occasion of the centenary of the passing of Clara Barton, the Universalist founder of the American Red Cross. The British Red Cross acknowledges the staunch and outstanding support it has received since its inception from the Unitarian Peace Fellowship and the generosity of several congregations, districts and individuals, including the current and former GA Presidents and GA Honorary Members, who have consistently supported its appeals.

To date the Clara Barton Appeal has raised a total of **£113,665** for Red Cross emergency appeals for victims of war in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Gaza as well as humanitarian and medical aid and succour to refugees and victims of natural disasters. Its latest urgent appeal, in response to the world's worst disaster since 1945, has raised £5,448 for the Red Cross UK and Global Coronavirus Emergency Appeals.

This new interfaith Red Cross Memorial Peace Appeal acts in the spirit of the Charter for Compassion and that perennial wisdom proclaiming the Golden Rule at the heart of all the great religious traditions, East and West: a spiritual ethic nobly expressed in the Talmud and Qur'an:

If you save one life, it is as if you have saved the world'. (The Talmud)

'Whoever saves one life saves all of humankind'. (The Qur'an)

It commemorates the over one hundred million people killed in wars and armed conflicts over the past century, the countless millions of others who have perished in natural disasters and honours alike the peacemakers and the Red Cross and other internationalist organisations and charities who have embodied the true Samaritan spirit in deeds of practical mercy and compassion.

In the face of the unprecedented global suffering and massive humanitarian and medical crises we witness worldwide the movers of this motion are convinced that it is only by working in close partnership with other faith communities, particularly Quakers, Baha'is and fellow liberal religious idealists, that Unitarians can most effectively witness to the ideals we profess.

In the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh and other moral and religious exemplars may we act in the world now to live that religious ethic of practical compassion and mercy by defending the weakest and most vulnerable and saving lives.