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A Christmas bonus

This newsletter could be seen as a Christmas bonus, being the fourth to be published when there are usually only three in a year.

It should be seen as an indicator that U3A Wellington City's new committee intends to make a good thing even better. A variety of enhancements including changes to the newsletter are planned for next year.

Looking ahead, as the holidays are now our main priority, I look forward to seeing you all at our first lecture in Term 1 of 2024 on Friday 16 February. Season's Greetings!

Philip Harrison (president@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz)

Introducing Philip Harrison

Philip Harrison, U3AWC's new President, was born in Yorkshire and came to NZ in 2004 to retrain as a General Practitioner after a medical career that spanned four disciplines – as a hospital physician, international clinical researcher, medicines regulator and part-time emergency medicine doctor.

Working in primary care in New Zealand was, he says the most complicated and intellectually demanding thing he had ever done. In 2010 he set up and directed the fast-growing Hutt City Health Centres. He also found time to be an undergraduate and postgraduate teacher and a GP trainee examiner and later provided locum holiday relief to GPs around the Wellington region.

Philip retired at 71, two years ago, fearing he might not have a life after work, but wondering if he had the capability to start over. Luckily, he found both in U3AWC!



Philip Harrison, U3AWC president, snapped while flying over Victoria Falls earlier this year.

Building and involving the membership

Philip is passionate about U3AWC and simply cannot believe he had never heard of it until four years ago. He does not consider he is even a modest replacement for our previous President (now an Honorary Member) but is brimming with ideas for how U3AWC can evolve and thrive.

For example, he would like to involve its members more in what we do and how we do it, making greater use of technology for those who want to be involved that way. He would like to know more about "who we are", are we building membership early enough and how long do people remain members? What are our interests and how are they evolving?

Looking ahead, he says change is never without risk or difficulty. But maintaining the status quo is unlikely to be risk free either.

He is thinking of bringing in half-hour meetings before lectures once a month.

"This would allow members to ask questions about what our committees are doing, why, and allow individuals to seek their advice about such matters.

"And if no one turns up, that's OK, we'll put them back to two-monthly, or if a lot do come, we can schedule them more often. There is so much expertise out there and a tiny contribution can make U3AWC better than it has ever been."

New teams focus committee functions

The September Annual General Meeting named a 13-person committee, a mix of newcomers and experienced members.

Those returning include Treasurer John Rutherford and Secretary Tricia Walbridge, Membership Secretary Faith Atkins, Lecture Programme Co-ordinators Gill Sutherland, Brian Pauling and Philip Harrison (now President), Special Interests Group Co-ordinator Linda Beckett, Front-of-House Co-ordinator Jeannie Buxton and Sue Dale who is in charge of Visits and Events.

Joining them are Libby Clark and Simon Louisson as Lecture Programme Co-ordinators, Janet Tyson as Newsletter Editor (supported by Saskia van Stockum) and Malcolm Wheeler as IT Co-ordinator.

At its first meeting the committee endorsed Philip Harrison's proposed reform, designed to better meet the legal requirements of the Charities Amendment Act 2023, and make more efficient but less structured use of everyone's time.

The aim is to separate governance, strategic, and fiscal responsibilities from operational management, which becomes the role of the subcommittee teams. Those teams can be more independent and flexible in their operation and decision-making, with no requirement for minutes, and the ability to co-opt extra people with expertise as needed. For instance, we hope to identify additional technical capabilities within our membership to assist with projects next year.

There is now a seven-member Executive Committee (EC), including President Philip Harrison, Treasurer John Rutherford, and Secretary Tricia Walbridge. Linda Beckett, Gill Sutherland, Janet Tyson and Faith Atkins who also lead subcommittees. Other subcommittee leaders will bring issues to the EC meetings and be consulted as needed.

Seven subcommittee teams

IT Co-ordinator Malcolm Wheeler has set up generic contact emails for each subcommittee, designed to reduce spam coming to personal emails and allow for easy transfer of information across the group. The teams, with contact details, are:

- *Finance* (treasurer@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) – led by John Rutherford
- *Lecture Programmes* (programmecoordinators@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) – led by Gill Sutherland
- *Special Interest Groups* (specialinterestgroupcoordinator@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz)– led by Linda Beckett
- *Events (visits, courses and other activities)* (events@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) – led by Sue Dale
- *Membership (incorporating front of house, outreach and marketing)* (membershipsecretary@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) – led by Faith Atkins and (frontofhouse@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) represented by Jeannie Buxton
- *Editorial - incorporating newsletter, website, reporting to members and mass email communications* (newsletter@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) – led by Janet Tyson
- *Systems (IT) (incorporating website technical coordination* (itcoordinator@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) – led by Malcolm Wheeler

A similar standard is followed for the emails to the President (president@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz) and Secretary (secretary@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz)

Have your say about events and activities – and anything else

Most of the subcommittees will be in action over the holiday period. You can read the results of their endeavours in the first newsletter of 2024, to be published on Monday 6 February. But before then, we welcome thoughts and input from you the members. You can email newsletter@u3awellingtontcity.org.nz or any of the other contacts listed above.

We are always keen to get your feedback on any aspect of U3AWC activities and welcome suggestions for lecture speakers or special interest groups.

Lecture planning in high gear



U3AWC members enjoyed a visit to the Halfway House pioneer garden in Glenside.

Securing speakers for the 2024 Lecture Programme goes into high gear over the summer months.

The four-person team programmecoordinators@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz – Gill Sutherland, Simon Louisson, Libby Clark and Brian Pauling – has met and compiled a long list of potential speakers which, barring a few reservations, was ratified by the Committee.

The list chosen has been designed to provide a diversity of topics and presenters ranging over 15 categories including business, history, arts and culture, health, science, and technology. The 2024 programme will include presentations from 59 speakers.

Although various factors obviously affect the turnout, the biggest audiences in term 5 of 2023 were for medicine, music, geology and social topics such as retirement and decision-making. The next newsletter will list the topics for Term 1 2024.

Events continue to be popular

Events continue to be very popular with members. During the past year, over 400 people have taken part, Events Co-ordinator Sue Dale (events@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz) reports.

The October holidays saw visits to the Aston Norwood Cherry Blossom Festival, two tours of the Parliamentary art collection a visit to the New Zealand Police Museum, a piano recital at Expressions Gallery in Upper Hutt, and attendance at *The Importance of Being Earnest* at Circa Theatre.



Viewing the Parliamentary art collection

Most events included morning or afternoon tea or a lunch, during which members enjoyed socialising and got to know each other a little better. This plays an important part in fostering friendship and collegiality.

Please note that Sue Dale is taking a break over Christmas but has an exciting programme planned to start from January 2024. Details will be advised later, but it will probably include a visit to the Circa Pantomime, *Treasure Island*, a couple of "bus odysseys", a trip to a notable homestead, an art tour,

"roast nights" at selected Wellington restaurants, and visits to local places of interest.

"As always, suggestions for future events will be cordially received and carefully considered," Sue says.



Visiting the Stansborough historic woolen mill.

Honorary Life Membership for an exceptional President

Barbara Crump, who stepped down at the AGM after five years as President, and nine years on the committee, was awarded honorary life membership of U3AWC. She was presented with a certificate designed by Saskia van Stockum. Making the presentation, Tricia Walbridge said Barbara had an amazing list of achievements during her "five exceptional years" as president.



Former President and now Honorary Life member of U3AWC, Barbara Crump is pictured at the cocktail party held to thank volunteers for all their support during the year. At left is Treasurer John Rutherford and at right Bruce and Gwen Levick.

"I think you will all agree that Barbara's contribution to U3A has been outstanding, all delivered with her unique warmth and friendliness, her efficiency, and her huge commitment," Tricia said. "She led us through those difficult Covid lockdown days when many of us found our Zoom lectures every Tuesday and Friday a lifeline in what was otherwise a lonely and isolating time for many. And before leaving her position she was able to announce a successful transfer to Stripe for our subscription payments system, an achievement which I know has taken many hours of negotiation on her part."

The AGM also gave a vote of thanks to three other retiring committee members: Newsletter editor Rae Julian, Website administrator Alison Dixie, and Lecture programme co-ordinator Sue Driver.

Valuing the volunteers

"Without all of you we would be nothing". Philip Harrison's words sum up the immense importance of the network of volunteers who underpin every activity of U3AWC. Some 85 people are involved throughout the year in a range of support roles from registering those arriving for lectures to hosting special interest groups in their homes.

The always willing assistance of the Embassy Theatre is also much appreciated. As a thank you, each year volunteers are invited to a cocktail party, this year held on 23 November at the Victoria Bridge Club (another event excellently organised by Sue Dale).

New payment system now in full operation

The Stripe payment system has recently been extended to operate for new members as well as for renewals. Making the change involved an enormous amount of work, led by Barbara Crump and involving Membership Secretary Faith Atkins, along with IT consultant Sam Devoy. The lengthy and often frustrating negotiations have delivered a much more streamlined and user-friendly service at a lower cost.

Given the changeover issues, some members may not be sure whether they have in fact signed up for the 2023-2024 year. If you email Faith Atkins (membershipsecretary@u3awellingtoncity.org.nz) she can quickly confirm whether your membership is current.

Look to the website for the latest news

Our website www.u3awellingtoncity.org.nz is your go-to for the latest news and information. In future, we intend to more closely integrate all our communication sources, including the excellent weekly emails.

The *Membership* tab gives you the easy steps to sign up as a new member online.

If you missed a lecture, the *Lecture* tab will take you to the archive of recent presentation material as slides or speech notes.

The newest section under the *News* tab – Non U3AWC Talks/Events includes the growing number of events other organisations think our members might be interested in. At least eight pre-Christmas listings are there as well as some calling for longer term planning.

Adding up to another big year

The numbers show that U3AWC has had another successful year:

58 lectures were delivered over a five-term year, with average attendance of **183** people and several events attracting audiences well **over 200**.

1168 people were members as at November. A warm welcome to the **75** new members who have signed up since August.

85 volunteers filled a wide range of essential support roles.

437 people enjoyed one or more of the **25** special interest groups.

250 members enjoyed events between August and October, with a total of **400** taking part over the year.

Dates for your diary

As noted above, events co-ordinator Sue Dale is taking a break over Christmas, and the events programme resumes in January. Look out for emails giving dates and details.

- **Tuesday 23 January 2024** Exec Com meets
- **Monday 6 February** Next newsletter published with Term 1 lectures and Special Interest Group news
- **Friday 16 February 2024** lecture 1 Term 1
- **Tuesday 20 February** – lecture 2 Term 1
- **Friday 23 February – NO LECTURES**, theatre in use for Arts Festival
- **Tuesday 27 February** – lecture 3 Term 1, regular Friday and Tuesday lectures until Tuesday 16 April, with a break for Easter on Friday 29 March.

Time to enjoy the Christmas break, and look ahead to 2024, when we hope to see you all again – ideally encouraging a friend or two to join up as well!

U3A Wellington City, www.u3awellingtoncity.org.nz



A spectacular display for U3A visitors at Aston Norwood Cherry Garden