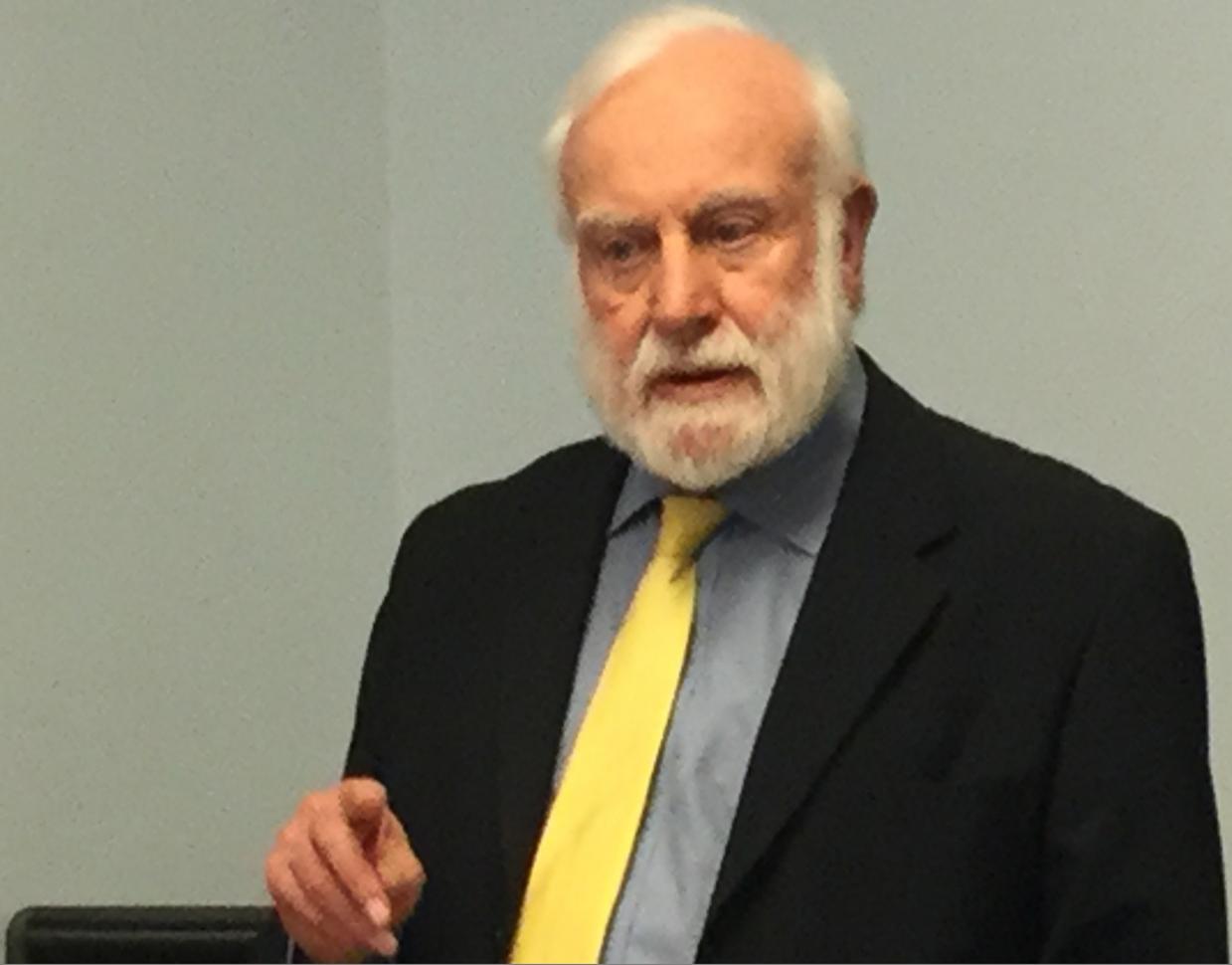


THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN HERALD



The Unitarian Christian Association seeks to strengthen and revitalise the liberal Christian tradition.



Tribute to Tony Cross

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A Fine Summer's Day

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Harvest Sermon: Wheat, Words & Works

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Charity Commitment

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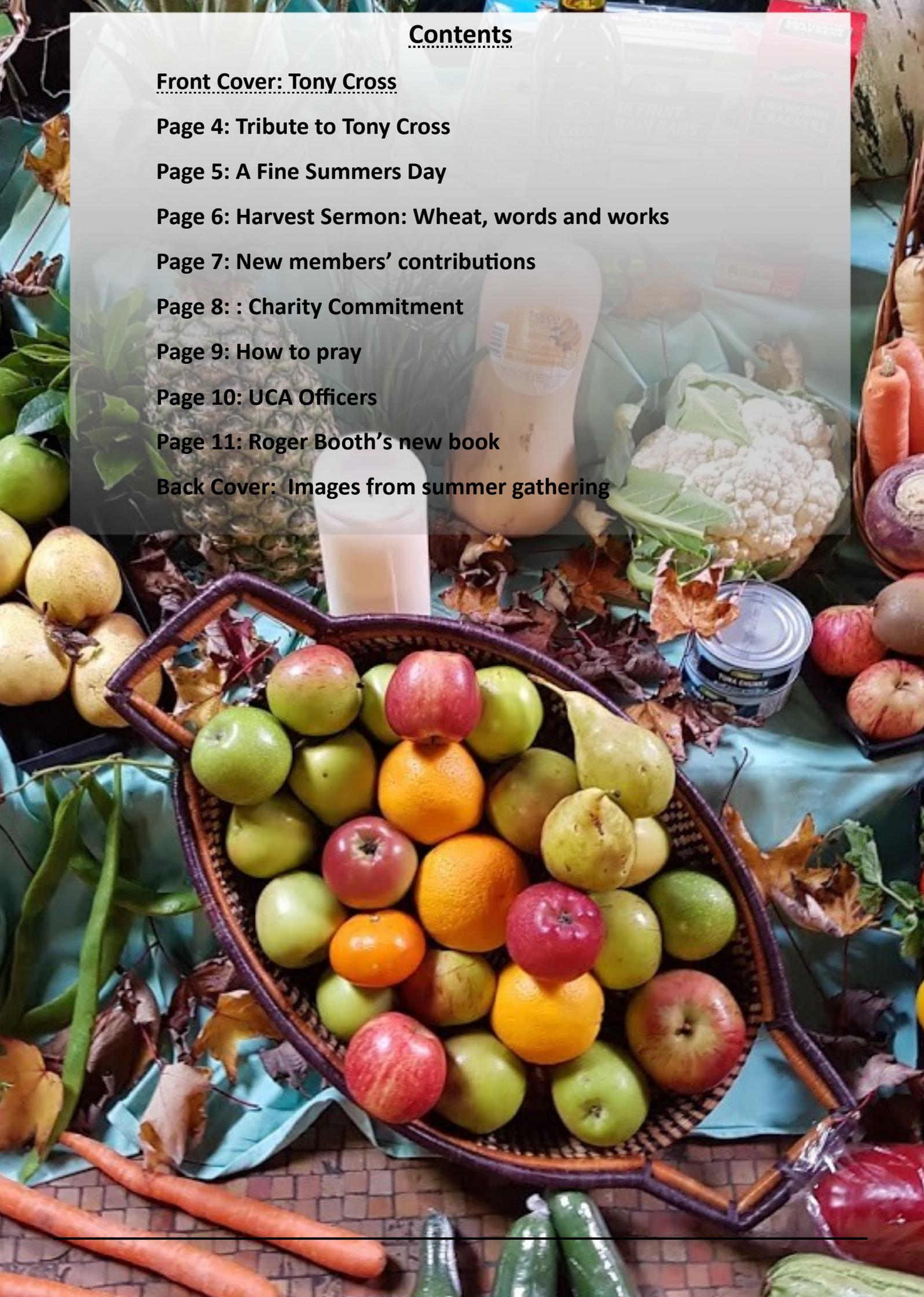
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The Liberal Christian Herald

Editor

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Design

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Unitarian Christian Association

Registered Charity No 101 777 1

Subscribe

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Est. 1991

Printed by

Wheatsheaf Print

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Publisher

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Editorial

By Jeff Gould

This edition serves to connect the events of the summer season with the expectations of harvest celebrations in our congregations. It also pays tribute to the Unitarian Christian Association's founding chairperson, Tony Cross, whose image is on the cover. It documents his presentation that was given on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the UCA, which was held at Essex Hall in London in October 2016.

This year has seen a welcome increase in the membership of the UCA. Some new members responded to an appeal to explain why they were

moved to join our ranks. I trust that our readers will be interested to learn what it is that encourages some persons to identify with the objects of our organisation, which clearly remain relevant to the wider sphere of Unitarian Free Christianity.

Please remember that this journal is meant to reflect the interests and priorities of our members, and I would ask that each reader consider making a contribution of whatever length in order to give voice to our diversity.



Tribute to Tony Cross

By Frank Walker

Anthony (Tony) John Cross, M.A., Ph.D., 1933 - 2019

Tony Cross grew up as an Anglican in the West of England. After National Service in the Army he graduated in English at St Catherine's College, Cambridge, and for some time worked as a school teacher. He encountered Unitarians through the Revd E.H. Kersley, minister of Plymouth Unitarian Church, and decided to train for the ministry at Manchester College Oxford under Dr Lance Garrard and Dr Harry Lismer Short.

His first ministry at Plymouth was followed by a period at Lewisham in London. At the same time he also became editor of *The Inquirer*, where his great journalistic gifts became notably apparent. He was a talented and attractive writer, with a wide and cultivated knowledge of the English and European literary heritage. He made *The Inquirer*, despite its inevitable limitations, a very effective journal.

Tony went through many spiritual crises during his life. Always attracted by the monastic life in the Roman Catholic Church (he loved attending retreats at Quarr Abbey) Tony became increasingly drawn to the Catholic Church. He resigned from the ministry and was received into the Catholic Church, becoming a teacher in Catholic secondary schools. (His brother, Barrington, was a teacher in a Jesuit school in France). After some considerable time his Unitarian sympathies revived. He became disappointed with the often inadequate (in his view) ways people were remembered at Catholic funerals. He decided to return to the Unitarian ministry, first briefly in Belfast, and then for many years he pursued a very successful ministry at Hampstead where he

revitalised the congregation. He would have stayed longer, but was called to become Principal of Manchester College Oxford.

His time there was short, but he guided the college into a new path which led to its becoming a full college of Oxford University, specializing in the education of mature students, under the new name of "Harris Manchester", benefiting from considerable new endowments provided by Lord Harris. Tony was an enthusiastic supporter of his successor, Sir Ralph Waller who would bring all this to full fruition.

Tony's aim was to strengthen the Liberal Christian tradition within the Unitarian movement. He became editor of a new hymn book, *Hymns of Faith and Freedom*, a very eirenic and catholic publication with impressively scholarly notes on the writers and their hymns. After his retirement Tony gave tremendous support to small Unitarian congregations in the London area: Bethnal Green, Brixton, Maidstone and others. He continued to write essays and reviews for *The Inquirer* and *Faith & Freedom* and to speak at Unitarian meetings. Tony came to feel that Unitarians were moving too much into a humanistic direction and the appeal of the Roman Catholic Church revived. He called it "the old firm", and revelled in its saints, scholars, philosophers and theologians, as well as its artists and musicians. He found a new home in Blackfriars, Oxford's Dominican college where the distinguished theologian Fr Fergus Kerr became his guru.

Throughout his ministry Tony had frequently conducted services for the Metropolitan Church, a Christian community for gay people. At the end of his life Tony entered into marriage with a

younger Malaysian man, Wai Munsin, in a ceremony at St Columba's U.R.C. Church Oxford conducted by a woman minister. The result was that Tony was immediately informed that he could no longer read from the Bible during Mass at Blackfriars (something he had been doing regularly for many years). Tony then returned to the Church of England and received an Anglican funeral.

Tony was a genuine scholar and during his retirement completed a Ph.D. at Reading University (Oxford would have been far too expensive). He was an expert in the histories of Catholic priests who became Unitarian such as Joseph Blanco White, Robert Rodolph Suffield and Charles

Hargrove; also on Unitarians who became Catholic, like Bessie Parkes, Joseph Priestley's granddaughter (and grandmother of Hilaire Belloc).

Tony was both Unitarian and Catholic, not an easy combination. His preaching style was conversational, highly intelligent, deeply spiritual, often moving and passionate. You could listen to Tony with the greatest interest and enjoyment even when you disagreed with him. He was a man of great gifts and energy, with strong conviction who served all his churches with devotion and integrity. He is a portion of the loveliness which, once, he made more lovely, and we are all the better for knowing him.

A Fine Summer's Day

By Jeff Gould

The Summer Gathering of the Unitarian Christian Association was held in the splendid surroundings of the Stratford Unitarian Free Christian Church in East London on Saturday, 20 July. The congregation's minister, Julian Meek, along with members of the church, hosted the day's events. It was an opportunity for many people who attended to visit this modern structure for the first time, and to learn of the church's history, as it is rooted in the ever-evolving community of that part of London. The previous church served as the home of the congregation from 1869 until 2006, and the current building was erected in 2007. The goal of the day was to explore the theme, 'Who We Are', by way of gaining clearer insights into the great diversity of faith-based beliefs held not only within the UCA, but also within the wider sphere of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. The worship service, which followed the buffet lunch, led naturally into an afternoon of group exercises, whose activities encouraged participants to share their own religious roots and to speak openly about their

contemporary expressions of faith.

The event benefited from the attendance and participation of a healthy number of persons who were new to the UCA. It was also a special day for this particular affiliated society of the General Assembly, in that the newly-appointed Chief Officer, Elizabeth Slade, took part in the proceedings, and was kind enough to engage in a question-and-answer session with those present. The Rev Martin Whittle, who serves as the London District Minister, attended and contributed to both the worship service and the Q&A session at the end of the gathering.

Who We Are

The day was enhanced by the welcome of the congregation, the glorious summer weather and the quality of the fellowship that graced the occasion. The deaths of founding member, Tony Cross, and longstanding member, Marjorie Manley, were acknowledged. Gratitude was expressed to the Rev Alex Bradley, who represented the UCA at the funerals of both persons, who were held in high regard by the organisation.

Harvest Sermon: Wheat, Words and Works

By Anna Jarvis

This earth is an incredible place. Just looking around the windowsills, and at the table at the front, so much delicious food for us to enjoy. And all of this has been grown, or made from plants that have been grown, in many different countries around the world. Some of it will have come from local farmers, but there's definitely a pineapple over there that's had a much longer journey to get here! We don't actually have any wheat – can't generally buy that as it is in the shops – but we do have bread, so it is here!!

One of the slightly more out-of-the-way things I've done in my life is obtain a Level 2 Diploma in Horticulture from Reeseheath College – I had an allotment at the time and thought it would be a good idea to know a bit about what I was attempting to do. I came out the other end with my qualification, but not a clue how I'd got it, and a much greater respect for anyone who manages to grow anything! But most of all it left me with a huge appreciation for the privileged life we lead, with food, fresh-frozen, dried, packeted, and formed into ready to microwave meals, available for us 24/7. We can even pay to have other people cook it for us – with the number of cafes and restaurants on our high street, we are well and truly spoiled for choice.

So much to be thankful for. And so we come to church today to say thank you – whether we are saying thank you to our God, or to Mother Earth, or the people who work so hard to make it – I can't imagine being able to stand up for a week if I went through a day of strawberry picking, but the farmers, and agricultural workers, the pickers and casual labourers, they go on day after day.

And we are particularly aware of the need to say thank you because of the contrast of our lives with so many others across the world – we've all seen the images of children with stick-like limbs, and swollen tummies (those swollen tummies aren't caused by a good meal, but instead by the Kwashiorkor Syndrome, where young children

do not eat enough protein, causing edema of the gut. Not pretty. And even in this country, Church Action on Poverty have set up a campaign called End Hunger Now – and the food banks are struggling to keep up with demand.

A recent report from the United Nations Food & Agricultural Organisation suggested that as many as 8.4 million people in the UK struggle to put enough food on the table, equivalent to the entire population of London.

Speaking on behalf of the charities behind the End Hunger UK campaign, Niall Cooper, Director at Church Action on Poverty, said: "You might imagine that in modern day Britain we all have enough food to eat, or that hunger is only experienced by the few. Yet we see working parents missing meals so that their kids can eat, and vulnerable individuals turning to charities on a daily basis to get a meal. This is simply unacceptable. That's why we're calling for an urgent, national conversation about what needs to be done, by the Government and others, to ensure that children get the food they need to give them the best start in life, and that nobody in the UK needs to go hungry."

Words, whether of thanks, of prayer, or of campaigning, are so important. I am always shamed whenever I meet up with one particular other minister, who never begins a meal without saying grace – whereas I am often too busy thinking of what I've just been doing, or planning what I'm going to do next, that I don't even really taste what I'm eating, never mind remember to give thanks for it.

But there's something even more important than giving thanks – actually that's not true, it's something that's a much more meaningful way of giving thanks – and that's through our works – our actions. One classic harvest hymn speaks of how God gives to all earth's creatures sufficient food. At first glance, that sounds like self-centred

hypocrisy – we know that so many of earth’s children are starving. But perhaps we should remember that it is humans that have unbalanced the equation – humans that have created the injustice of mountains of food going to waste in some countries while children die in another. And it is humans that must right that wrong. We may have wheat – we can speak words of justice – but both are meaningless unless they go alongside works of love.

So I’m going to ask for a commitment, from everyone here who can. Actually, three commitments – and none of them are that hard. The first is to make the effort to truly appreciate the wonderful food that we have – when you’ve made that meal, whether it’s a three-course meal made from scratch, or a microwave special, taste it, savour it and enjoy it. But before you do that, give thanks for it – try to build just a minute into the start of every meal time to say a prayer of thanks, to acknowledge the hard work, the back breaking labour in many cases, and the sacrifice

You might imagine that in modern day Britain we all have enough food to eat, or that hunger is only

experienced by the few

of the animals, that went into the meal in front of you. But finally I ask you to try to move that prayerful thanks into action. At this church we support The Mustard Tree – which runs a food bank, and is often swamped by demand. Whenever you can, bring a can – or two if you already bring one – or some toiletries – anything that will

be needed by individuals and families that just can’t provide for themselves in the current economic situation.

So let there be a harvest of wheat – and all the many other wonderful foods that are grown in this country and abroad. Let there be a harvest of words – imagine millions of people around the world taking time to give thanks for their food, to give thanks to those who worked to produce it, to give thanks to the earth which has provided – even if we are not very good at sharing it. And finally let there be a harvest of works, as we campaign to end hunger and do our small part in helping local families, and families in far away countries, put

New Members’ Contributions

James Wilson

I have joined the UCA as relatively “new” Unitarian, having spent a number of years mostly walking a Buddhist path, but with a (more recent) parallel exploration of the bible and Christian teachings (especially meditative aspects and mysticism). I joined the UCA as I am interested in deepening my understanding of the Christian tradition and would like to be part of a community that identifies as Christian, but within a liberal, free-thinking framework. As a volunteer healthcare Chaplain, I’m hoping that deepening my understanding of Christian teachings will help me work with Christians in a hospital environment.

Anna Jarvis

I was brought up a Methodist, and as a child was very devoted to my Christian faith - and then for a number of reasons, both personal (conflict with church member) and theological (homophobia within the church hierarchy), I left, aged 14. I threw the baby out with the bathwater (Jesus out with the church) when I left, and for

years couldn't even say the word 'Jesus' without inwardly cringing. But now, having trained as a minister, and being more emotionally ready to re-engage with my past, I am feeling the need to re-discover my connection to and understanding of the historical Jesus, and in particular re-find the inspiration for political and social activism that he modelled.

Charles Owen

I do not profess to be a religious or spiritual expert but have yet to come across teachings more authentic than those of Jesus. For me these teachings are true and I try (usually with difficulty) to live my life by them. In good conscience, I would say Jesus was, at the very least a spiritual genius and possibly more. On the latter point, I would say I just don't know. I would not describe my views as a faith but more of something which I have become convinced of over the years. I think I may have finally found an organisation I can comfortably be a member of; I appreciate the lack of dogma the UCA brings and lack of requirement to adhere to doctrine.

Charity Commitment

By Cathy Fozard

Some of you may remember an article published in the Herald, December 2018. The Rev Phil Waldron, minister at Ullet Road Church, Liverpool, Southport Unitarians and Wirral Unitarians, wrote about Ullet Road Rebels, a football club for refugees and asylum seekers. The club was founded by Phil and a colleague, Chris Allen, to address the needs of the many refugees and asylum seekers in their community. They wanted to demonstrate integration and inclusivity; a football club seemed a good way to do it. Initially, the football club was funded by donations from wedding couples and guests celebrating their wedding at the church and Phil and Chris managed to provide kit, boots, training equipment, pitch fees, laundry costs and travel expenses. Just a reminder, when Phil wrote his article in 2018, asylum seekers were receiving £37.75 a week to live on. I don't expect much has changed since then.

In October 2018 the Unitarian Christian Association donated £1000 to help the football club. Phil and Chris, naively, were told that running a football would cost about £2000 per year. This has proved to be wrong. At the last Ullet Road Church Rebels FC meeting the treasurer explained that they spent over £4600. For example, Ref Fees over the year were £540, Pitch Hire was £1,597.08, sporting equipment was £1,223.40 and laundry £576.

Last year the Rebels played in the Zingari Combination League, which was a learning experience for the players, coaches, Phil and Alan. They are now playing in the Merseyside Christian League and from the very start they have felt much happier with the meetings and the fellowship on the playing field. Also the Rebels have a new Sponsor who have bought their new football kit, Chy, a Chinese restaurant that is located on Renshaw Street. Ironically that is the street where Ullet Road Church's previous chapel stood, the Renshaw Street Chapel.

At the UCA annual general meeting in March 2019, it was decided to adopt Ullet Road Rebels as our designated charity for 2019 -2020. We are hoping that members will support this worthy cause by organising some fund-raising events, perhaps a raffle, cake sale or coffee morning. The UCA officers have agreed that any monies raised by members or donations received from members will be matched funded by the UCA.

Please let us know about your fund-raising event and send some photos. We will be featuring the results of fund-raising activities in a future edition of the Herald. All articles should be sent to the editor of the Herald, Jeff Gould jeffreylanegould1959@talktalk.net



How To Pray

By Lucy Harris

Luke Chp 18 vv 10-14 - How To Pray as taught by Jesus, according to Luke, unpacked

Be **not** like the man of good practice, the Pharisee:

- thankful that I am able to give of my resources, that I have been able to remember and exercise proper practice

Be like the tax collector:

- able to thank God for being God

“Lord Lady Life:”

- able to recognize that I am in being, weakly or grandly, through the work of God only, whilst yet, in my partialness and particularity, I am full of myself

THENCE

- able to recognize and trust the mercy of God, of grace, of Shiva Nataraja, of universal right relation

“Have mercy on me, a sinner.”

- in God’s searching for “me”

- in God’s vibrating as “me”

- in God’s already having dealt with the dread consequences of my missing the mark, in wrapping it up in all manner of marvellous ways that make sense of all the pieces, and show up even

my grief, disquiet and urge for new order

my sense of sin and sinfulness

my “my”

for the idols that they are

- able to respond to God’s search for me in a surrender and a search for God

For **this** type of prayer is true movement towards God; true listening; the beginning of integrity; the true humility of the Benedictine and the Water Way; the way of compassion; the way of fellowship, the way of Jesus:

Lord Lady Life:

Have mercy on me, a sinner.



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*An apology to Ian Bradbury for not crediting him with the photos of the
AGM in the Easter edition of the Herald.*

DOWN TO EARTH

Thoughts of a Free Christian

ROGER P. BOOTH

B.D., Ph.D., LL.B., A.K.C.

In this book, Dr. Booth seeks to assist potential followers of Jesus who might be deterred by a scepticism about the supernatural elements, such as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection.



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Paperback: £8.99

9781528901383

E-book: £3.50

9781528957243



Participants in the Summer Gathering at the Stratford Church, London.



Jeff Gould leading worship at Stratford.



Side exterior of Stratford Church.

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